

**Hospital chaplains on the Covid-19 frontline**

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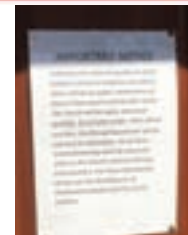
**Helping world's poorest fight coronavirus**

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# Amazing students use skills to make life-saving NHS kit

**Greg Watts**

Engineering students at St Joseph's College in Upper Norwood have been designing and manufacturing life-saving components for the NHS as it battles Covid-19.

Using 3D printers, students are producing valves for ventilators for patients suffering from Covid-19 and adjustable headbands for full-face visors for NHS staff. The students began doing this after the University of East Anglia contacted the college to ask if it had any 3D printing equipment.

The students identified areas of the valve that could be strengthened and improved. They emailed their 3D design models to the University and were given approval to put their modified valves into production.

They have been working in shifts, 24 hours a day, from their bedrooms and kitchens at home, used social media to communicate with each other.

A small engineering firm in Italy, where the pandemic has devastated the population, came up with an idea to replace the snorkel on full-face scuba masks from sports retailer Decathlon with a valve, turning it into a ventilator.

"We can produce seven Charlotte valves at one go," said 18-year-old student Yatana Tensue. "Each print run takes just over three hours. By running the machine 24 hours a day, we can produce just over 50 valves every day."

The students ensure that both the valves and the adjustable headbands are safe, tested and thoroughly cleaned before dispatching them to the University of East Anglia, which acts as a central hub for distribution.



*A patient wearing one of the innovative redesigned scuba masks*

Headteacher David Garrido said: "There is nothing more important than society pulling together at this time.

"I'm delighted that our students are thinking of others at this time. Their contribution will save lives."

Dr Simon Hughes, director of the diocesan Education Commission, said: "I was delighted to hear this story when David Garrido brought it to my attention. It has been picked up widely through our social media feeds and, I hope, that over time the boys, and the staff involved, will get the recognition that they deserve.

"The ongoing discussions nationally about

the availability of PPE have made this project all the more pertinent and necessary.

"The ingenuity and creativity that underpins the design and manufacture are brilliant. The entrepreneurialism is similarly impressive but, above all, the sheer hard work and effort are truly inspiring and humbling.

"All at the Education Commission are extremely proud of what has been achieved. No doubt, the boys will carry forward into their future life and careers, the many lessons they will have learned from engaging in this project."

"I hope the boys and staff will get the recognition they deserve... the discussions nationally about the availability of PPE have made this project all the more pertinent and necessary... the ingenuity and creativity that underpins the design and manufacture are brilliant."

**Dr Simon Hughes, director of the diocesan Education Commission**



*St Joseph's College*



*Bishop Paul Mason: Each patient is of equal value, and health care rationing must be avoided*

## Doctors must remember each person matters

With hospitals under pressure from the number of coronavirus cases, the Bishops' Conference of England and Wales has urged doctors not to forget that each patient is of equal value.

Bishop Paul Mason and Bishop John Sherrington, members of the Healthcare Reference Group, and Bishop Richard Moth, the lead bishop for the Church's Mental Health Project, say moral and legal principles must be adhered to as the NHS seeks to care for those suffering from the virus.

"What may well be on all of our minds is what provision will be available if I, or a loved one, is in need of treatment and life-support in these circumstances," the bishops say.

"As Catholics our starting point is that we are all made equally in the image of God. Human value is not a measure of our mental or physical capacity, our societal function, our age, our health or of any other qualitative assessment. God made each of us and in so doing gave us all equal dignity and value. This is never lost during sickness or dying.

"It is important to bear this in mind in any discussion of resource allocation and medical rationing when the tension between the appropriate treatment and scarcity of resources has, in most people's experience, never been so visible.

"A decision against offering a certain life-prolonging treatment to an individual must never be a judgement based on the worthwhileness of that person's life, including their age or other social characteristics, but a pragmatic decision about the likelihood of him/her benefiting from the intervention given their medical condition.

"This principle has been upheld in case law repeatedly and the NHS Constitution itself is clear that we should deliver care and support in a way that achieves dignity and compassion for each and every person we serve.

"Until the current pandemic, resources have always been allocated according to medical need and benefit to the patient. This approach must be complemented by maximising scarce resources for the common good and so prognosis and the likelihood of benefit becomes the overriding criteria."

The bishops add that people with underlying health conditions should discuss the sort of treatment they may want with their families so that good communication is possible in a crisis.

# The imagination can stoke the fires of your faith

Bishop Paul Hendricks

Celebrating Holy Week and Easter under lockdown had a strange feeling of unreality for me, isolated from all that normally helps us to imagine the great events of our salvation.

It was very different on my recent pilgrimage to the Holy Land, with the Catholic and Anglican dioceses of Southwark. There, the places and the land itself brought those great events vividly to mind.

One day while in Jerusalem we walked the Way of the Cross, before celebrating Mass with the Easter readings and the accompanying canticle “*Christians, to the Paschal Victim offer sacrifice and praise.*”

In a way, it was the same movement we have every Holy Week, from Good Friday to Easter Sunday, but one that is greatly accelerated!

This movement from Cross to Resurrection reminded me of the beautiful *Agnus Dei* from John Rutter’s *Requiem*. In between and among the verses, there are three very memorable and evocative sets of words.

First, very quietly and sombrely the choir sings, “Man, who is born of a woman, hath but a short time to live, and is full of misery. He cometh up and is cut down like a flower. He fleeth as it were a shadow.” Then another part of the choir sings, “In the midst of life, we are in death”, with the “we are in death” repeated quietly several times.

Then a sudden dramatic climax: “Of whom may we seek for succour? Whom may we seek for succour? Whom may we seek for succour? Whom?” Then, again, but this time very loudly, “Agnus Dei...” and the accompanying brass and drums beat out the rhythm of the earlier phrase, ‘We are in death, we are in death.’

But then there’s a sudden hush, and a pause, and the flute comes in with the haunting plainchant tune of the Easter Cantic, “*Victimi Pachale laudes immolent Christiani.*”

And that one simple phrase of music, played so gently, calls to mind all the mystery and the joy and the wonder, which I always associate with the first appearances of Jesus after his Resurrection. Whenever I hear them read, I imagine a scene tinged



The Old City of Jerusalem.  
Photo: Image by David L of Pixabay.

with that delicate early pre-dawn light, which makes our surroundings feel like another world – a world where anything is possible. It seems almost dream-like – and yet these are events which were to stamp themselves onto the memory of the disciples, creating a witness that has endured and inspired over the many centuries since.

This is reflected in the quiet confidence with which the choir sings the concluding phrases, taken from John, Chapter 11, with the flute echoing its earlier tune. “I am the Resurrection and the Life, saith the Lord. He who believeth in me, though he may die, yet shall he live. And whoever liveth and believeth in me, shall never die. Shall never die.”

It seemed to me that listening and responding to such music, is rather similar to what we were doing in the Holy Land, allowing those amazing places to speak to us, with their many associations and implications.

Guides on prayer by the diocesan Spirituality Commission can be found at [www.southwarkdsc.org.uk/ways-into-prayer](http://www.southwarkdsc.org.uk/ways-into-prayer).

I’m reminded of something that C S Lewis said in *Surprised by Joy*. When he was still an atheist he read a book by George MacDonald, and realised later that this had “baptised his imagination.” It had prepared him in such a way that, when he heard the Christian message, it already found an echo in his heart.

Though we may have been believers for many years, there is still an important role for the imagination, particularly in these times when visible helps to our faith are in such short supply!



## A kind man who disliked fuss

Archbishop John celebrated the funeral Mass of Archbishop Peter in private at St George’s Cathedral on 30th March.

Archbishop Peter died on 6th March at the Royal Marsden Hospital in Chelsea. He was 76. He had received the sacraments and prayers of the Church, and his former secretary, Fr Philip Glandfield, was with him when he died.

In his homily, Archbishop John spoke of how Archbishop Peter never enjoyed the pomp of ecclesiastical high office. “No matter how splendid the occasion, Archbishop Peter maintained a ‘no fuss’ approach which, together with his gentle and good humoured shepherding, endeared him to so many people during his varied ministry as a priest and bishop.

“Two things in particular have struck me very powerfully in these weeks since his death. The first is the genuine simplicity with which he lived his priestly and episcopal ministry. There was nothing lavish about his lifestyle. He liked good, honest food, not too fancy, and a well-made gin and tonic. There was nothing of the ‘prince bishop’ about him, but everything of the servant shepherd.

“The second thing that has struck me has been the number of people who have been in touch to share with me their memory of Archbishop Peter. Some were impressed by an aspect of his leadership, or by how he dealt with a particular situation, or by his wise counsel.

“But most moving has been to hear from those for whom he made a crucial difference in ways that perhaps hardly anyone else ever knew. A family to whom he took hampers of food, the counselling for someone which he paid from his own pocket, the supportive phone calls and personal charitable donations.

“If a person’s life is a mosaic of memories, then Archbishop Peter will be remembered, above all, for his instinctive kindness, flowing, as it did, from his love for Christ.

“While he took his love for Christ and for the Church with the utmost significance, his personal lightness of outlook was joyous and engaging.

“When I went to see him at home in Whitstable, just before he was transferred to hospital, I asked ‘Is there anything you need.’ ‘Yes,’ he said, with that characteristic twinkle in his eyes, ‘a coffin!’ “In the last days of his life, he was looked after wonderfully at the Royal Marsden Hospital. With his appetite waning, his last meal was the unlikely combination of ice cream and a Peroni beer.

“When I imparted the Apostolic Pardon, and anointed him with the oil of the sick, his eyes remained closed with no external response. But taking his hand, he squeezed my fingers with such a firm grip. It told me that even then, towards his final hours, as it had been throughout life, faith in Christ was alive at the very core of his being.”

Following the Mass, in keeping with diocesan custom, the coffin of Archbishop Peter was buried in the cathedral crypt. Once the Government allow churches to reopen for public acts of worship, a memorial Mass will be celebrated for him.

The Pilgrim is now online, making it possible to read all the editions since it was launched in 2011.

To view it, visit the diocesan website and click on a link on the left hand side of the page.

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[www.rcsouthwark.co.uk](http://www.rcsouthwark.co.uk)

Area bishops  
Kent

The Kent pastoral area is awaiting the appointment of a new bishop. In the meantime, matters concerning it should be directed to its episcopal vicar, Canon John O’Toole.  
01732 845486  
[johnotoole@rcaos.org.uk](mailto:johnotoole@rcaos.org.uk)

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Archbishop John celebrating the funeral Mass for Archbishop Peter in an empty St George's Cathedral.

# Across the archdiocese, Mass is brought to you

How you can participate in Masses across the Archdiocese of Southwark, streamed live online

The following parishes in the diocese of Southwark broadcast Mass via a livestream on the internet. To access them, visit the parish web site or [www.mcnmedia.tv](http://www.mcnmedia.tv), [www.churchservices.tv](http://www.churchservices.tv), or [www.catholicstv.org](http://www.catholicstv.org).

## South-east London

- Beckenham: St Edmund of Canterbury
- Borough: Most Precious Blood
- Brixton Hill: Corpus Christi
- Bromley: St Joseph
- Camberwell: Sacred Heart
- Catford: Holy Cross
- Eltham: Christ Church
- Erith: Our Lady of the Angles
- Forest Hill: St William of York
- Kidbrooke: St John Fisher
- Lewisham: St Saviour
- Sidcup: St Lawrence
- Pollards Hill: St Michael
- Sydenham Kirkdale: Church of the Resurrection
- Woolwich: St Peter

## South-west London

- Balham: Holy Ghost
- Battersea: Salesian chapel
- Carshalton: Holy Cross
- Carshalton Beeches: St Margaret of Scotland
- Clapham: St Mary
- Clapham Park: St Bede
- Coulsdon: St Aidan
- Croydon West: Our Lady of Reparation
- East Sheen: Our Lady Queen of Peace
- Ham: St Thomas Aquinas
- Morden: St Theresa of the Child Jesus
- New Malden: St Joseph
- Streatham: The English Martyrs
- Tooting Bec: St Anselm
- Waddon: St Dominic
- Wimbledon: Sacred Heart

## Kent

- Ashford: St Teresa of Avila
- Bearstead: St Peter
- Dartford: St Anselm
- Dartford: St Vincent
- Dover: St Paul



- Folkestone: Our Lady Help of Christians
- Gravesend: St John the Evangelist
- Maidstone: St Francis
- Mongeham and Sandwich: Our Lady, St John and St Andrew
- Pembury: St Anselm
- Petts Wood: St James the Great
- Rochester: St John Fisher
- Sittingbourne: The Sacred Heart of Jesus
- Walderslade: St Simon Stock
- Westerham: St John the Baptist

## Walsingham

The National Shrine of Our Lady of Walsingham is streaming Mass each day at 9.30 am, 12 Noon and 6pm (Latin) alongside the Divine Office, Adoration of the Blessed Sacrament, Rosary, Divine Mercy Chaplet, spiritual reading, talks, etc. See [www.walsingham.org.uk](http://www.walsingham.org.uk)

## Live-streamed Masses in other languages and from other countries

- Filipino: <https://www.youtube.com/channel/UC0gEpyPtbSAeDldsULmo4rA>
- Ghana: <https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCRsgTp9r3pO43sg48fQyOPw/videos>

- India (Goa): <https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCz7jxJODQdFhWmnt-7LASWQ>
- Italian: <http://twitch.tv/scalabrinilondon>
- Nigeria: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=L1zLU18Goqg>
- Polish: <https://aberdeen-pl.rcda.scot/msza-online/>
- Portuguese: [http://twitch.tv/scalabrini\\_london](http://twitch.tv/scalabrini_london)
- Spanish: visit [www.churchservices.tv](http://www.churchservices.tv)
- Syro-Malabar: <https://holyfamily.rcda.scot/syro-malabar-mass/>
- Vietnam: <https://www.facebook.com/pg/Catholicsaigon/posts/>

## The Vatican

Daily Mass from the chapel at Casa Santa Marta with Pope Francis. [www.youtube.com/channel/UCxlfefyl9g9A5SGWA4FvGIA/videos](https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCxlfefyl9g9A5SGWA4FvGIA/videos)

## The Holy Land

The Christian Media Centre, based in Jerusalem and Nazareth, also provides live streaming, as well as current updates about the situation in the Holy Land. See [www.cmc-terrasanta.org/en](http://www.cmc-terrasanta.org/en)

## Helping vulnerable families through the virus crisis

In response to the coronavirus crisis, the Catholic Children's Society is helping families in Southwark diocese who are facing exceptional difficulties and need support with food and basic essentials.

So far, the Catholic Children's Society has helped over 1,200 families - and 2,000 children - throughout London and the South East. It has provided funding for food and basic subsistence costs.

"Every day we hear of families facing desperate situations as a result of this crisis" said Dr Rosemary Keenan, Catholic Children's Society CEO.

"While we welcome the Government's emergency financial support package, gaps in the provision and delays in its delivery have left many parents unable to feed their children.

"The Catholic Children's Society is only able to respond to this crisis thanks to the generosity and kindness of our supporters.

"The response of the Catholic community has been incredible. Parishes, schools and individuals are offering real hope to local families when they need it most."



## Archbishop John's online messages

During this period when churches are closed, Archbishop John has been using the internet to reach out to people. During Holy Week he made several short videos, including one for young people. He also recorded an Easter message on Easter Sunday.

## If you have any news

If you have any news on how your parish is handling the Covid-19 crisis, send your stories to [pilgrim@rcaos.org.uk](mailto:pilgrim@rcaos.org.uk)

# There's online help to support your faith

Despite the closure of churches during the current public health crisis, there are many resources online to help to you in your faith. Below is a selection covering liturgy, the Bible, prayer, Catholic TV and radio, and much more.

Some include apps that can be downloaded to your mobile phone.

**n The Catholic Church Pope Francis**  
[www.vatican.va](http://www.vatican.va)

**Latin Patriarchate of Jerusalem**  
[www.lpj.org](http://www.lpj.org)

**Catholic Bishops' Conference of England and Wales**  
[www.cbcew.org.uk](http://www.cbcew.org.uk)

The Bishops' Conference has produced a downloadable prayer sheet for spiritual communion when participating in Mass online.

**Southwark archdiocese**  
[www.rcsouthwark.co.uk](http://www.rcsouthwark.co.uk)

The archdiocese will be sharing daily readings, Gospel passages and reflections on the diocesan Facebook page and highlighting various resources, opportunities and news about life in the diocese on Twitter and Instagram.

You may also like to visit our You Tube page to revisit some homilies from various services throughout the past year.

**n Radio**

[www.heavensroadfm.com](http://www.heavensroadfm.com) (broadcasting from St John's Seminary, Womersley).  
[www.premier.org.uk](http://www.premier.org.uk) (ecumenical station in London).  
[www.spiritradio.ie](http://www.spiritradio.ie) (ecumenical station in Ireland).  
[en.radiovaticana.va](http://en.radiovaticana.va) (broadcasting from the Vatican in 47 languages)  
[www.bustedhalo.com](http://www.bustedhalo.com) (USA)

**n TV**

[www.ewtn.com](http://www.ewtn.com) (USA).  
[www.relevantradio.com](http://www.relevantradio.com) (USA).  
[www.saltandlighttv.org](http://www.saltandlighttv.org) (USA)  
[www.catholicstv.org](http://www.catholicstv.org) (USA)

**n The Bible, liturgy and catechesis The God Who Speaks**

[www.cbcew.org.uk/home/events/the-god-who-speaks](http://www.cbcew.org.uk/home/events/the-god-who-speaks)



**Benedictine Father Christopher Jamison, who has set up [www.alonetogether.org.uk](http://www.alonetogether.org.uk), says: "This is a new and difficult journey for most people, but experienced guides give us hope along the way."**

**The Bible Society** (resources for Catholics)  
[www.biblesociety.org.uk/explore-the-bible/word-on-the-go/](http://www.biblesociety.org.uk/explore-the-bible/word-on-the-go/)

**The late Raymond E. Brown**, leading Catholic biblical scholar  
[www.raymondebrownss.weebly.com](http://www.raymondebrownss.weebly.com)

**Crossroads Initiative, evangelisation**  
[www.crossroadsinitiative.com](http://www.crossroadsinitiative.com)

**Franciscan Media**  
[info.franciscanmedia.org](http://info.franciscanmedia.org)

**Scott Hahn**, popular Catholic author  
[www.scotthahn.com](http://www.scotthahn.com)

**Liturgy office of the Bishops' Conference**  
[www.liturgyoffice.org.uk](http://www.liturgyoffice.org.uk)

**Centre for Catholic Formation**  
[www.ccftootingbec.org.uk](http://www.ccftootingbec.org.uk)

**Catholic Charismatic Renewal**  
[www.ccr.org.uk](http://www.ccr.org.uk)

**Southwark Catholic Youth Service**  
[www.facebook.com/scys.uk/](http://www.facebook.com/scys.uk/)

**Lifeteen for young Catholics**  
[www.lifeteen.com](http://www.lifeteen.com)

**n Prayer**

**Lectio Divina.**  
[www.lectio-divina.org](http://www.lectio-divina.org)

**Daily prayers for Lent**  
[www.lentinisolation.com](http://www.lentinisolation.com)

**Bible readings**, Bible resources, prayers during Lent, and saints of the day.  
[www.catholic.org](http://www.catholic.org)

**Alone Together**  
[www.alonetogether.org.uk](http://www.alonetogether.org.uk)

**Southwark Spirituality Commission**  
[www.southwarkdsc.org.uk](http://www.southwarkdsc.org.uk)

**Pray the rosary** online with people around the world.  
[www.comepraytherosary.org](http://www.comepraytherosary.org)

**Pray the Divine Office** each day.  
[www.universalis.com](http://www.universalis.com)

**A daily prayer podcast** from Jesuit Media Initiatives featuring readings and music.  
[www.pray-as-you-go.org](http://www.pray-as-you-go.org)

**Tyburn Convent**  
Live streamed perpetual adoration with the nuns at Tyburn convent  
<https://adoration.tyburnconvent.org.uk>

**A range of resources**, including online videos, podcasts, homilies, and daily Mass at 12.15pm (GMT) from Bishop Robert Barron's chapel.  
[www.wordonfire.org](http://www.wordonfire.org)

**The Taize community** are broadcasting Evening Prayer live each day at 7.30 pm (GMT) on its Facebook page:  
[www.facebook.com/taize/](http://www.facebook.com/taize/)  
[www.taize.fr](http://www.taize.fr)

**Live streaming of the Divine Office** in Latin from the monks of the Abbey of Barroux in France.  
[www.barroux.org](http://www.barroux.org)

**A Catholic social network** of prayer around the world. [www.hozana.org](http://www.hozana.org)

**Daily prayers and reflections** from the Irish Jesuits. [www.sacredspace.ie](http://www.sacredspace.ie)

## Supporting seafarers in Kent

John Fogarty, Apostleship of the Sea (Stella Maris) port chaplain to the Medway and Kent coast, is still supporting seafarers, despite not being allowed to visit ships during the covid-19 lockdown.

Because he is classified as a key worker, John is continuing to provide pastoral care and practical help to seafarers through the Covid-19 crisis.

Seafarers are vital to the UK's efforts to overcome Covid-19. Without them the NHS wouldn't have vital medical supplies and equipment, there would be no fuel, and supermarkets wouldn't be able to stock much of the food they sell.

"I am keeping in touch with seafarers who mostly contact me for a chat or sometimes for assistance in getting phone cards to call their loved ones, or when they are out of the UK," said John.

"Most of the people I have been in touch with, although on lockdown on their vessels, are happy that they are not exposed to the virus and that they are safe.

"I don't have anybody who has not been able to get home."

To help seafarers through the crisis, John has prepared packs containing woolly hats, chocolates, rosaries, and spiritual reading. These are delivered to the ships in port and left at the bottom of the gangway.



## Liturgy resources for children

A new Sunday liturgy for families with children of primary school age has been created by Ten Ten Resources during the period of church closures. Following the structure of the Mass, the liturgy includes an animated film of the Sunday Gospel, a short homily on video and an act of spiritual communion.

Other free resources available include daily prayers for home.

To sign up for free resources from Ten Ten, go to [www.tentenresources.co.uk/prayers-for-home](http://www.tentenresources.co.uk/prayers-for-home)

## Delivering meals to the homeless

The Manna Society at London Bridge is working with Southwark Council to deliver meals to the homeless. The meals are cooked at the day centre and then Southwark Council arranges the delivery. On average, 65 meals a day are currently being cooked.

The day centre was closed on March 31 because it was felt to keep it open could put both staff and users at risk of catching Covid-19.

The Manna Society has proposed to Southwark Council cooking a further 100 meals a day for rough sleepers in temporary accommodation.

## Priest dies of Covid-19

Fr Gerry Flood, 89, has died of Covid-19. His death occurred in Princess Royal University Hospital in Farnborough.

Fr Gerry had recently been a resident at Coloma Court care home in West Wickham.

## Alpha course available online

The Church of the Holy Innocents in Orpington is to run an Alpha course for adults online.

The ten week-course will begin on Friday, 1st May from 8pm to 9.30pm. It is open to everyone and can be joined by signing up to the video conferencing platform Zoom.

Alpha is a basic introduction to Christianity and involves talks and discussions.

Holy Innocents has run six Alpha courses for adults and also courses for young people.

If you're interested in joining the course, email Stephen Walsh at [orpingtonalpha@rcaos.org.uk](mailto:orpingtonalpha@rcaos.org.uk) or phone 07778 612050.

## Teachers make videos for pupils

With schools still closed, teachers have turned to the internet to offer encouragement to pupils at home.

Staff at St John's Catholic Primary School in Gravesend have made a video featuring the song "Can't Stop This Feeling."

Deputy head teacher Caroline Barron said: "I'm part of a Facebook group and saw that other schools had done videos similar, and I thought if they can do it, we

can do it.

"So I emailed all our staff from teachers, teaching assistants, those still at the school teaching key workers' children and we all did our bit to make the video."

Elsewhere, staff at Stella Maris Catholic Primary School in Folkestone have recorded several messages for pupils to let them know they are thinking about them.

## Live-streamed Masses for the sick and NHS staff

Bishops are live-streaming Masses for the sick and their families and NHS and social care workers in several cathedrals across England.

In April, Masses were celebrated at Westminster Cathedral and Arundel Cathedral. Further Masses will be celebrated at: Leeds Cathedral on 7th May; Newcastle Cathedral on 14th May; Shrewsbury Cathedral on 21st May; and Middlesbrough Cathedral on 28th May

The Masses will be celebrated at 7pm. To participate, visit the cathedral web sites and click on the link.

# The Church is not a building

Fr Stephen Langridge

Recently, I was sent a photograph of a father and daughter watching our parish's first ever livestreamed Mass on a mobile phone. It is an image that reminded me of my own childhood growing up in a Catholic family where Sunday Mass was simply part of our life.

Since my ordination, providing the Mass for the people is what I do. It is part of my priestly identity. So what happens when that is no longer possible? What happens when, in response to the government's request to stay at home, protect the NHS and save lives, a decision is taken to close churches and forbid public acts of worship?

For many priests this has been an existential crisis. What is a shepherd without his sheep? Will the people come back when the lockdown is lifted? Can we return to ministering as if nothing had happened? How will our parishes survive financially?

The coronavirus has brought to the forefront the tension between maintenance and mission. It has taken from us the model of the Church in which we minister to those who show up.

Now the only option is to become what Pope Francis describes in the *Joy of the Gospel*: parishes 'capable of self-renewal and constant adaptivity... the Church living in the homes of her sons and daughters', rather than 'a useless structure out of touch with people, or a self-absorbed group made up of a chosen few'. The only option for us now is to become once again a missionary Church.

Here at St Elizabeth of Portugal in Richmond, our immediate response to the lockdown was determined by a clear understanding of what we were trying to achieve as a parish. Our parish vision has three elements: we are called to evangelise, to build up our community, and to find new ways of bearing witness to Christ's love.

The challenge for our parish leadership team was to consider how to adapt in order to continue fulfilling our stated purpose of 'raising up intentional disciples who joyfully live out the mission of Jesus Christ'. How could we continue to be a blessing to the people of Richmond?

We spent time mapping the various activities in the parish to see what we could move online. We asked ourselves what the new needs of people in lockdown might be and whether we could address them. And we tried to identify dangers posed by an extended period of lockdown: relationship issues within families, isolation and loneliness; challenges to the faith.

We also asked ourselves what opportunities the current situation might offer us to reach more people. Finally, having ascertained what was possible, we had to work on a communications strategy to ensure people knew we were not going into hibernation for the next few weeks.

For us, livestreaming seemed preferable to offering pre-recorded events online. We wanted people to feel they were participating and to



give them a chance to interact with each other - we even started offering an online *Blind Date* after our Sunday Mass! We decided to set the camera up at the side of the altar to create a sense of intimacy, and we scrapped the prepared homily series in favour of addressing the questions people were asking in this new reality and to galvanise them to think of others and find new ways of bearing witness to God's love.

For those without access to the internet we developed a network of 'Guardian Angels' telephoning older parishioners once or twice a week to check in and ensure they had some human contact.

Our experience has been extraordinarily encouraging. We soon found that other parishes were coming to us for advice. Nearly a hundred people signed up when we agreed to share our experiences in a Divine Renovation webinar. We had dioceses at home and abroad asking permission to copy our Guardian Angels initiative.

Although live Masses are readily available online, we found that what people really want is their own parish. This is so true that even production quality is not particularly important. When relations are strong in a parish, people don't mind if the live-feed has a glitch or there's an issue with the sound. They want to see their own pastor. He is the face of the Church's personal care for them and, if he makes an effort, he will find that his people are incredibly grateful.

As we look towards an easing of the restrictions I think these extraordinary circumstances raise questions for the future. Our parishes need to be engaged in both maintenance and mission but Pope Francis has been very forthright in his condemnation of 'self-referential' parishes, and of that clerical mindset that sees the Church in terms of administering sacraments and RCIA programmes. As the Holy Father puts it: "Mere administration cannot be enough. Throughout the world, let us be permanently in a state of mission."

The Church exists to evangelise, that is to proclaim Christ in such a way that people come to conversion. We have to minister to people who show up, but we are called to much more than that. It would be a mistake to go back to an exclusively maintenance mindset.

A characteristic of the maintenance model of the Church is

that we sacramentalise people without evangelising them. In this Year of the Word we have a wonderful opportunity to rediscover the primacy of the evangelisation.

In the Church it has always been Word and Sacrament. In fact, when we look at the documents of the

Second Vatican Council and the Catechism of the Catholic Church, it is Word *then* Sacrament. This sacramental fast is a time for us to encourage people to feast of the Word of God.

The present situation is also a wonderful opportunity to move away from the clericalism that has hampered the mission of the Church. That mission does not depend on a building and nor is it carried out exclusively by the ordained minister. This is a time to mobilise the baptised.

We cannot continue to use lay people to build up the Church. It is time to use the Church to build up lay people, equipping them to become the primary agents of evangelisation in today's society. Already during our extraordinary Lent in Isolation we have seen examples of committed lay faithful taking up that challenge. We are witnessing a new movement of the Spirit raising up people "with a new evangelising fervour and a new capacity for dialogue with the world

whereby the Church is renewed." It would be a tragedy if we thought we could return to business as usual.

Finally, the recovery of our missionary identity will necessitate structural and cultural changes in our dioceses. Pope Francis acknowledges "there are ecclesial structures which can hamper efforts at evangelisation." Often an overly bureaucratic culture within dioceses will discourage rather than facilitate innovation.

Many priests are reluctant to try new things if the message from central office focuses on risk aversion and pitfalls rather than the advantages of adopting new methodologies. 'Ecclesial structures' include our parish and deanery configuration.

Consideration of priestly well-being, as well as the financial problems caused by the lockdown, require us to ask whether it is right to keep current structures on life-support rather than reconfigure our deaneries and parishes for mission.

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**'Listen, my son'**  
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Buckfast Abbey

God calls to us constantly, longing to guide those who yearn for life and desire to see good days into the way of peace. The Rule of Saint Benedict helps us to hear God's voice, in the Holy Scriptures, in the sacred liturgy and in our brothers in community. If you are a single man longing to live your Catholic faith in a way which brings great joy as it demands the best of you, consider whether God is calling you to be a Benedictine monk at Buckfast Abbey. Please reach out to us, and we will do all we can to help you.

# Hospital chaplains on

Fr Mark Higgins, a Catholic chaplain at St George's Hospital in Tooting, explains what it has been like being on the front line in the battle with Covid-19.

How to describe being a hospital chaplain at this time? ... Busy?... Frightening? ... Intense? ... Probably, though I would just settle with *different*.

There is never going to be a time when being a Catholic chaplain at a large hospital such as St George's, is going to be quiet. And while, I must admit, there is at times a look of fear or anxiety in some of the faces of visitors strolling the perimeter, the grace of holy orders and the confidence I have in Divine Providence, has kept my heart and mind free from all worry over these last few months.

What certainly has changed on a very practical level is that, all of a sudden, old friends, former parishioners and even editors of diocesan newspapers have become interested in my work here, asking about the reality of life on the front line, and how hospital chaplaincy has adjusted into "the new normal" of a lockdown Britain, where the reality of a potentially serious infectious disease is on the forefront of everybody's mind.

So here we go with some of my reflections.

In some unexpected ways my job is less busy. There are far fewer admin staff on site, there are almost no visitors permitted in the hospital and there are fewer patients coming in and gradually recovering following elective procedures.

My work is far more focused on new patients who have been admitted with respiratory illnesses and where it is either suspected or confirmed that they have contracted Covid-19.

Of course, as a Catholic chaplain, my focus is on seeking out and serving members of the Catholic community, befriending them, offering them a source of support and encouragement and, above all, bringing them Jesus Christ, both through my priestly character and through the sacramental ministry He has ordained me to participate in.

Without the presence of family visitors in the hospital, and with far fewer parishes currently giving me referrals, I have very much operated through the skills I picked up through my youthful formation in the Legion of Mary. I visit a lot of people, starting with those whom I think might be Catholic given some personal attribute such as their surname, but also a lot of patients whose only significant feature is that they have entered the hospital over the previous 24 hours.

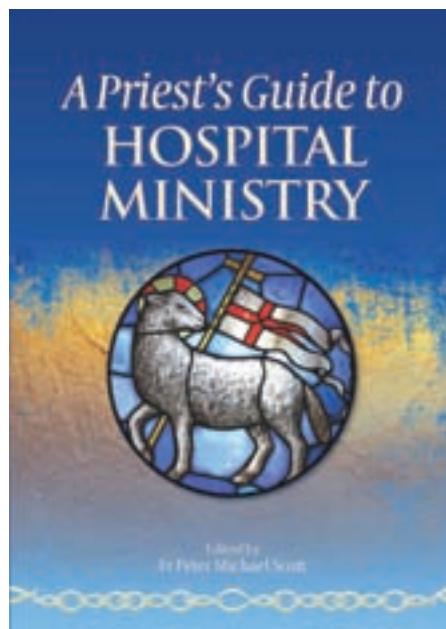
Non-Catholics are often grateful that someone has taken the time to come and see them on a personal level, to listen to them, and to offer them a priestly blessing and a word of encouragement. Sometimes I am then able to connect them with a chaplain of their own faith if that is something they ask for.

For Catholics, I always offer them the opportunity to go to confession, and for those



with coronavirus, following the Sacrament of Confession, I make sure to anoint them. Unfortunately I have seen patients decline rapidly from the illness, and to pass from this world into eternity perhaps even only 24 hours after having first met them.

Some, tragically, have declined the offer of the sacraments, and their fate is now known to God alone. For me, these instances offer a cautionary reminder on the importance of frequent confession and the need to never



take for granted that Almighty God will give me another day of good health, or another opportunity to receive the sacramental absolution which, as our faith teaches, is capable of altering an eternity, of snatching a soul from the fire.

For all the staff of St George's, chaplains included, there is a necessary extra degree of 'seriousness' and "carefulness" about our respective work or profession, and this is very noticeable. There is the frequent and tiring donning and doffing of personal protective equipment, there are the hands that have long begun to harden and sore through the minute-by-minute application of the alcohol-based sanitiser.

All this takes place against the backdrop of the unflinching need to offer excellent care to all patients, and to treat fellow colleagues with respect and courtesy.

Morale at this hospital remains very high. This is partly because the hospital has created extra spaces in which the staff can relax, and there is the provision to visit our chapel and be in the presence of the Our Lord in the Blessed Sacrament, or to take a walk through the grounds on a sunny day.

Above all, though, morale has certainly been helped by the generous donations for our staff which have streamed in from businesses, individuals and local community charities. The weekly round of applause which takes place on a Thursday evening, and the pictures stuck to the windows of so many homes in this area, keep the staff here motivated.

And these acts of kindness and recognition have helped me on a personal level, as I

realise I am a small part in this big societal effort to help those among us who have been infected with coronavirus, and to try and prevent as many further infections as possible.

From the Catholic community I have received help from a number of local clergy, above all Fr Peter Littleton who has generously volunteered to come in twice a week and assist me, but also from Frs Patrick Pullicino, Shaju Varkey, Peter Audu and George Boronat; these priests have shown great courage in offering their services for when need may arise in the future, and have already come in for some training and orientation for if this need suddenly arises.

This hospital is also fortunate to have a religious sister who works here twice a week, Sr Agnes Young FMM, who helps to co-ordinate visiting clergy and to guide them towards the sacramental needs that their priestly character enables them to fulfill.

Each one of us, one day, will come to our last illness, and I know I will be glad to have a priest by my side to administer the sacraments. I thank God at this time there is no shortage of holy priests willing to assist me at the hospital, passing through the obvious fear that comes through daily close proximity to coronavirus.

As we all know, most people do and will make a good recovering from this particular infection, but all the same, by God's grace I hope and pray that even if this were not the case I would still be here, supported by these priests, following the call that the Master has given us.

# Covid-19 front line



Alfred Banya, lead chaplain at King's College Hospital and a permanent deacon serving Our Lady of Sorrows in Peckham.



In my secular work, I was assistant director of public health in one of the boroughs in south London for several years but took early retirement about three years ago. I am presently the lead chaplain at King's College Hospital, heading a team of chaplains and volunteers who provide pastoral and spiritual support to patients, relatives and staff.

Heading a chaplaincy team was never a role I imagined myself in, and neither did I envisage an event such as the Covid-19 pandemic demanding of me both my pastoral and my public health knowledge and skills, in the way that it has done.

My role as head of chaplaincy has been impacted on tremendously by the nature of Covid-19. To that end, co-ordinating the delivery of pastoral and spiritual care has become quite challenging. The chaplaincy team I lead has experienced reduced capacity because our usual volunteers and honorary chaplains who, under normal circumstances help us, have been unable to come in any more.

Similarly, some of the faith leaders in the community have either been self-isolating or have underlying health conditions that put them at increased risk if they came into the hospital. So I have had to work differently with the various faith leaders, ensuring that they are able to support patients and relatives remotely, for example, over the phone.

In preparation for the unfortunate increase in hospital deaths, I have also been responsible for liaising between the hospital's lead medical examiner and the local faith leaders regarding revised arrangements for

death certificates and how relatives are sent these, following the death of their loved ones in hospital.

In a separate role, as the bishops' healthcare advisor for the Archdiocese of Southwark, I have had on some occasions to liaise with the archdiocese on this and other Covid-19 related matters.

Furthermore, my responsibility as head of chaplaincy during this time has meant that I make sure those chaplains who are not on site full time are briefed when they come in, so that they are up to date with the current Covid-19 situation in the hospital.

For example, I liaise with the infection control team to help manage anxieties that chaplains, like many healthcare staff, have had regarding availability and appropriate use of personal protective equipment when visiting Covid-19 patients.

While my chaplaincy role is non-clinical, I have found my undergraduate training in medical microbiology, post-graduate training in medical parasitology and my doctorate in health research have all been very useful in giving me the confidence to liaise with clinical staff and senior hospital managers on such issues.

Our chaplaincy team supports patients, relatives and staff across the three sites that fall under King's College Hospital Trust; these are Denmark Hill in Camberwell, and Princess Royal University Hospital in Farnborough, and Orpington Hospital.

Even during this challenging time, the chaplaincy team has remained available 24 hours a day, seven days a week on these sites. If staff wish to talk to one of us or to refer a patient, they can call us anytime via the hospital switchboard.

While as chaplains we have continued to be available all the time, what has dramatically changed is that due to precautions against Covid-19 infection, visitors have been restricted. A chaplain may be the only non-medical patient who is at the end of their life, sees.

I have found this quite challenging and needing to prepare a lot more emotionally, psychologically and spiritually before attending to a Covid-19 patient. Prayer and the acceptance that it is God's mission and not mine that I am exercising in such situations has become even more important for me.

The chaplains must wear protective clothing. This has been quite challenging for me since I am used to getting close to patients and showing empathy through my expressions. This has become quite difficult when I am wearing a mask, apron and gloves. It is even more challenging for my colleagues who are priests when they anoint patients during the administration of the Sacrament of the Sick.

With restrictions on hospital visits and many relatives self-isolating, support for relatives has in many cases been over the phone, and at times by email. In some cases, where

relatives are unable to come into hospital, we co-ordinate the times of prayer with relatives so that as we are praying in the hospital, they are also praying at home for their loved one.

For the few relatives who may be able to visit, I make sure that the chaplaincy team co-ordinates with the ward staff so that the chaplain visits the patient when the relative is with them.

Covid-19 has proven to be one of the NHS's biggest ever challenges. As chaplains, it has tested our resolve to stay hopeful and positive. Covid-19 is the kind of experience that heightens spiritual distress and challenges one's world view, belief and faith.

For me, and I believe the same would be for my colleagues, we have had to dig deep into our spiritual resources to keep going. The chaplaincy team begins each day with prayer and reflection, which prepares us to face the day ahead.

Moreover, we try to celebrate any little success that we make in overcoming barriers to supporting patients, relatives and staff that Covid-19 presents to us. Most of all, we check on each other to ensure they are OK.

I was asked recently what was the one message I would say to people during this period. My reply was to be a good neighbour, and that we are all each other's keeper during this time.

It's okay if occasionally we cry on each other's shoulders as we face the unprecedented challenges that Covid-19 presents

# There are so many things to cherish - we should not be afraid

Joanna Bogle

It would be wonderful to be able to say that the coronavirus lockdown has been spiritually beneficial for great numbers of us all, bringing time for contemplation, prayer and reflective reading.

It has honestly not been quite that way for me: but it certainly has taught me to value Sunday Mass more, to ache to be there at church on Sunday morning, and to rejoice in belonging to the Church and to know that we are always in the care of a good and loving God.

For the first couple of Sundays I tuned in online to Mass at the Shrine of Our Lady of Walsingham, and it was an inspiration. How thrilling it was to be able to participate, online, in the great re-dedication of England to Our Lady. This event now takes its place - in such extraordinary circumstances - in the long story of the Church in our country.

The fact of its happening during this plague, with the nation in lockdown, added to the drama. For me, an added aspect was being asked to talk about it on a Catholic radio station in the USA.

As we live in a small flat, it was easiest to do this outside, so I was walking in the evening up and down a suburban street in south London, talking to a team in America - who were five hours behind me - about the medieval dedication under King Richard II. One of life's stranger experiences.

My usual Sunday Mass is at the Church of the Most Precious Blood at London Bridge, and as life under lockdown got into a pattern, online Mass with Fr Christopher Pearson became part of things.

The church also has Evensong on Thursdays in the Anglican tradition, as it is part of the Ordinariate of Our Lady of Walsingham. The core of Ordinariate members gather via Zoom



Live-streamed Mass from the Catholic National Shrine of Our Lady at Walsingham

- I am not sure our singing is as tuneful or united as we would like it to be, but we do our best! We hold the usual gathering with a glass of wine afterwards, but each of us at home and getting a glass of something from the fridge or wine-rack.

Using the excellent Magnificat booklet, to which I have subscribed for years, has meant a lot during lockdown. It has prayers for morning and evening, the text of the day's Mass, and interesting information about the Church, saints, and stories from Christian history.

Having the booklet - beautifully illustrated and pleasing to handle with its traditional creamy tissue-pages and proper red and black printing - next to my bed has been part of life for a long time, and has come into its own in these strange and sometimes worrying days.

We do not need to be afraid: the prayers we were taught as children still make sense. "O angel of God, my Guardian dear..." I found myself praying when worrying about all the cancelled plans for 2020, hopes postponed and an uncertain future for so many things.

The internet provides some

glorious music. I am listening to *O Sacred Head* as I write this. And friendships matter, and neighbours have been kind. At one time, caring for a sick relative, I could not get to the shops and people in the street were magnificent.

We all need a project for these lockdown days. Mine has been to compile a handbook to accompany the Catholic history walks that I lead around London, something that has been long planned.

I get emails from Americans asking if I can tell them about London places connected with Catholic history. They mostly mention Thomas More: in fact, they don't know about any London Catholic history except Thomas More.

So this book will tell them about Saxon saints and heroes - Erconwald and Elphege and Etheldreda - and about ancient churches destroyed in the Great Fire, and hospitals for lepers at St James and St Giles. And it will be "warts and all": ghastly things, like Protestants burned alive under Catholic laws at Smithfield, Catholics disembowelled at Tyburn.

Thank God for more tolerant days. Studying history, leading walks



The Church of the Most Precious Blood in Borough.

and reading in great depth has opened up the stories of the centuries, the ideas, the attitudes, the lessons we should learn (and probably won't!). Lockdown has brought time to put some of this together: watch out for the book's

publication in due course.

When this lockdown is over, we will have many new and difficult things to face: one lesson which we need to keep re-learning is to thank God for the small everyday blessings, and to trust in Him.

## A time to notice things - and bake!

Lucy Russell

We have been taking a daily walk to Sholden through the fields behind our house in Deal. It takes an hour there and back and there is plenty of nature to enjoy along the way.

Despite walking to the village and completing a circuit of it on foot every day for almost four weeks, we had never used the village shop, until today.

I have prayed the Our Father at least once daily over the past month: "Give us this day our daily bread...". We have plenty and are very blessed, but I didn't stockpile and therefore ran out of flour two weeks ago.

A friend told me yesterday that she had heard the Sholden village shop had bread flour! So today, while James, Edgar and I walked a lap of Sholden, my husband went into the Village Stores to

investigate. The bread flour had sold out at 10 am, but there were 3kg bags of plain and self-raising flour!

Glyn bought one of each. I was delighted! To keep him and my 14 and 11-and-a-half-year-old boys fed, I usually bake a ginger or a lemon cake on a Monday and a batch of oat cookies on a Wednesday, so that the huge multipacks of Mini Cheddars and two-finger Kits Kats actually stand a chance of lasting the week.

But for the last two weeks I haven't been able to bake. I have, however, just taken a Victoria sponge out of the oven. When it cools, I'll fill it with some of the jam that James and I made yesterday.

There is a house in Sholden where jars of sweet orange marmalade and garden plants are set out for sale on the wall outside.

Money from the sale of the plants is being raised to help pay for materials for scrub bags for NHS frontline staff.

On our walk around Sholden on Tuesday last, James asked whether we could make some jam using the raspberries in our freezer (grown in the garden last year) and set up a small stall outside our house to raise money for the NHS.

I liked his idea, so yesterday we made six jars and this morning he set out his stall. Within an hour and twenty minutes he had sold out! He made £18. He had asked for £2 per jar, but a friend from church passed by after dropping a meal to Fr Duncan. He saw the stall and bought two jars for £10.

We are going to leave the money raised in the money box for marmalade and plants in Sholden on our walk tomorrow. James sometimes teases about the walk



we do, and how if we are doing it every day for months it could become very boring.

But, as the trees come into leaf and the crops grow, there is something new to notice each day. Doing the walk over and over again also means there is time to notice things, think about things and let ideas develop. This week flour and jam have been by-products for our walk.

There are lessons for life here. I often wanted to press pause and just enjoy the children instead of rushing from school to music lessons to football training. Now someone else has pressed pause. Life is certainly different and not always easy, but thankfully, we are also finding silver linings.

It has been a joy to share our walks to Sholden. We have time to talk, to notice things, to think new things, and to buy flour.

And now, I'm going to use some of the plain flour and get a loaf going in the bread machine.



# The Old Testament prophets

Father Ashley Beck

I am writing this piece on the Wednesday of Easter week: at Mass the Gospel reading from Luke chapter 24 is the enchanting account of Cleopas and his friend meeting the risen Jesus on the road to Emmaus.

In the story, they say to each other, "Were not our hearts burning within us as he talked to us on the road and opened the scriptures to us?" Earlier on we're told that Jesus, "starting from Moses and from all the prophets, explained to them the passages...."

In these articles for the Year of the Word we looked at the books of Moses, the first five books of the Bible; so this month we will look at the prophets. We probably hear now the prophets read at Mass more than other types of writing from the Old Testament.

We can identify a whole 'prophetic movement' as part of the whole history of the people of Israel, not limited to the books which bear the prophets' names: so the key figures of Nathan and Elijah appear in the historical books.

The movement stretches over many centuries from the book of Amos (probably set in the 8th



century BC or earlier) down to the period of the return from the Exile in Babylon to the 4th century (the second part of the book of Zechariah). The order of books in most Bibles is not chronological.

The editor of the Revised New Jerusalem Bible describes the prophets as "the conscience of Israel." We tend to think of prophecy as a prediction of the future; but for these figures this is about challenging the people and their rulers and calling them to repentance - for ruin and judgment are coming.

Sometimes they offer hope at the end of his, sometimes they don't.

Bad things happen because of sinfulness: idolatry, trusting in military might, oppression of the poor. God's chosen people have turned away from him.

Rather than go through them all I want to concentrate here simply on one of the prophets, to give you an idea of the prophets' overall importance. In late Lent, not long ago, we have some weekday Mass readings from Jeremiah, depicted here in Michelangelo's Sistine Chapel.

We still use the word 'Jeremiah' to describe someone who is rather gloomy, and Michelangelo has captured this well. Because of his sufferings and accusations against him the Church sees him as pointing forward to Our Lord in his Passion.

The book of Jeremiah does not have a straightforward structure; it is distinctive because it is all built around the prophet's rather difficult relationship with God. He knows he has been called from his mother's womb to be a prophet, but he is self-aware and know that he's not up to the job.

He is profoundly reluctant to be a difficult person, to challenge others; he knows this will be resented; but he is faithful to God all the same.

At the beginning of the sixth

century the kingdom of Judah faced gradual dismemberment and destruction at the hands of the great empire of Babylon: this would culminate in the destruction of the Temple in Jerusalem in 586.

Jeremiah's message is straightforward - these things have happened because they have been disloyal to God. At a time of national crisis, he is seen as subversive: so he is attacked, thrown down a well and narrowly escapes death.

These well-known words sum up his challenge at such a time; he is talking here of the rulers, priests and false prophets: "Without concern they dress my people's wound, saying Peace! Peace! when there is no peace. They should be ashamed of their loathsome deeds."

Jeremiah is challenging those in power and calling them to account: although Jesus in his ministry follows in the footsteps of the prophets, the Church which is his Body hasn't always been good at that. Too often we have allied ourselves with the rich and powerful.

The witness of the prophets has to be a source and inspiration for the social teaching of the Church, and Catholics are more aware of this than in the past, perhaps because we hear the prophets read at Mass.

The worldwide crisis caused by the Covid-19 pandemic demands new prophets, new Jeremiahs, to speak awkward truths to those in power, to challenge the way we live: the best example we have is Pope Francis.

Traditionally we see the Emmaus appearance as a prototype Mass - the opening up of the Scriptures and the breaking of bread, when the friends recognise the Lord. For most of us, recently our experience of the Mass has been remote. The Body and Blood of the Lord seem a long way off, and we haven't been able to receive Holy Communion.

The Bible, however is not: it is, or should be, in our homes. We can read the scriptures at home and reflect on them. It is fortuitous that we're marking this Year of the Word at a time when we can't go the church: we're given the opportunity to open our Bibles at home and encounter God's word, we should be particularly attentive to the prophets.

• Fr Ashley Beck is assistant priest of St Edmund's, Beckenham, and teaches at St Mary's University, Twickenham. If you are interested in the new MA degree in Catholic social teaching, email [ashley.beck@stmarys.ac.uk](mailto:ashley.beck@stmarys.ac.uk).

## Helping world's poorest when Covid-19 strikes

As the coronavirus pandemic began to spread, Aid to the Church in Need (ACN) quickly announced a £4.3m aid package. John Pontifex describes the Catholic charity's response to a world-wide crisis, in which the poorest and most disenfranchised communities are especially at risk.

Stuck in Uganda, with all flights to Italy cancelled, St Francis de Sales missionary Fr Thomas Varghesev wrote this message to ACN: "When we see that thousands of people fall in Europe and the US where medical systems are so far advanced, we thought: what will the situation be if corona embraces the poorest countries in the world, where there may not be hardly 100 functioning ventilators in the whole of the country? It will be disastrous."

In voicing these fears, Fr Thomas was not alone. From Burma (Myanmar), the charity received this email from a priest who, because of the precarious position of Christians in the country, asked to remain anonymous: "We, too, are alarmed by this worldwide crisis and, together as one Christian community, we are praying for the wellbeing of the entire community. We fondly remember your organisation [ACN] too."

ACN has received appeals and messages of prayer and solidarity from bishops and other clergy from as many as 50 countries, many of them witnessing a sudden and very worrying spike in coronavirus cases.

Among these messages were some from contemplative orders who eagerly responded to ACN's "bell of prayer" initiative, in which monks and nuns were invited to pray for the world in this time of catastrophe.

Within 48 hours, ACN had received messages from 35 congregations spread across 17 countries. Within a week, that number had grown to 50 congregations from 30 countries.



Two themes run through many of the messages. Respondents stressed the importance of prayer, and the comfort that is drawn from a community of faith that is literally worldwide.

Among the first to respond to the crisis, was Sr Annie Demerjian, the Jesus and Mary Sister, with whom parishes in Southwark have close links.

Writing to ACN from Damascus, in Syria, Sr Annie wrote: "It is very painful what the world is passing through at this time." She gave a message of faith that applied as much in the streets of Aleppo, where she and her volunteers provide emergency food for housebound elderly, as in the streets of London, which she visited recently as a guest of ACN.

Her words also point to the second major theme present in many of the messages received by ACN; namely a call to respond to the crisis with action - deeds founded in faith. She wrote: "The pain and suffering is there but we must also not forget the resurrection is there every day. We need to help the people who are most in need. We need to help each other [and] lift each

other's spirits."

All this explains ACN's decision to offer urgent aid. This has two main strands: to help priests desperate to reach out to their communities, and to support sisters - many of them are frontline carers, working in hospitals and other healthcare units.

As Dr Thomas Heine-Geldern, executive president of ACN (International), put it: "As a rising tide of human suffering related to Covid-19 makes itself felt around the world, the demand for social and spiritual care is soaring."

He added: "It is our wish that this aid, made possible thanks to our benefactors, will help ease the burden on our courageous religious, who stand on the front lines, bringing God's love and compassion to our suffering brothers and sisters."

ACN's coronavirus aid priorities countries where persecution is most severe.

From Pakistan, reports from respected Catholic news agencies claim that Christians and other minorities have been denied access to food and other emergency aid given in response to the pandemic. NGOs refusing to give food vouchers to minority

**Ukraine:**  
Sr Andrea Masliy prepares Covid-19 food parcels in the Ivano-Frankivsk diocese.

faith groups, saying that only Muslims were entitled to them.

Fr Emmanuel Mani Yousaf, of the National Commission for Justice and Peace, said that Christians and other minorities were just as badly affected by the coronavirus lockdown as the Muslim majority population.

Fr Yousaf said: "Everybody is affected by the virus, irrespective of religion. Reports of NGOs discriminating on religious grounds are very sad to hear. It shows a very narrow mind set at work."

With other reports of religious minorities including Christians suffering disproportionately, ACN, as a charity for those persecuted for their faith, stands ready to provide further assistance - pastoral and humanitarian.

What is clear from project partners is that, lacking medical facilities, high unemployment and with communities living in tightly packed villages and towns, poverty-stricken groups are likely to be hardest hit by the virus.

Personal hygiene - lack of hand-sanitiser and protective equipment and little or no capacity for social distancing - means bishops and other project partners are warning of a high Covid-19 incident rate in their countries.

While we are praying for Covid-19 victims in the UK and those who are care for them, the message from the suffering Church is this: please also remember to pray and act for those in developing countries who are especially vulnerable. As the disalced Carmelites in Jalingo, Nigeria, put it in their message to Aid to the Church in Need: "Our community is ever so grateful to ACN and all your benefactors for all you have done for us over the years."

"We always remember you in our prayers - may the Lord be pleased to hear all our prayers as we cry out to him in this great time of need."

For more information about ACN's work and the charity's response to the coronavirus, visit [www.acnuk.org](http://www.acnuk.org).

# Life and faith in a lockdown, with new avenues to explore

John Bateson

From my window, I can see trains passing along the main line into Victoria Station. Ordinarily they would be crammed with people heading into central London to begin a day's work; now they are almost empty.

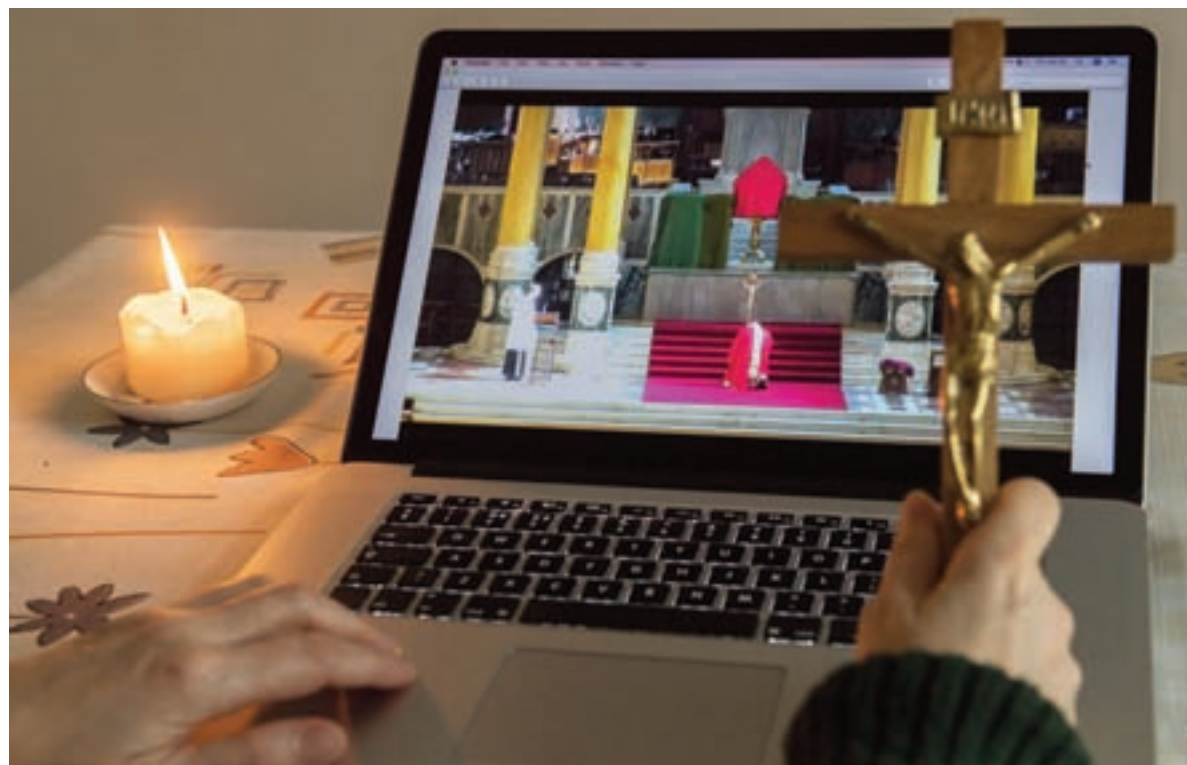
But the silence that descends after they have passed is unexpectedly broken by the lively chatter of bird song, an unusual sound in these parts.

The streets in this normally frantic part of London have become strangely quiet, too. An outing to collect a pizza last Saturday evening and I could have been walking through a ghost town, not one of busiest night spots in London.

Changes like these have been taking place everywhere since the lockdown was declared. In some ways, they are profoundly unsettling because they remind us not just of the threat of illness and the reality of social isolation, but of the fact that some people have lost their entire livelihood as a result of business closures. An air of uncertainty hangs over us as we try to gauge the future.

But amid this crisis windows of opportunity have also been opening and allowing unexpected sources of light to enter. A number of people I've spoken to have told me that now everything is closed up and there is nowhere to go they are experiencing a general slowing down and calming of life.

It's as if we have stepped into a new space, one we knew existed but which we have put off entering. In this space time seems to have changed, as all the business we have



been used to living with melts away and we are faced with a whole new set of possibilities.

When I phoned my cousin, who is now working from home and has two children of primary school age, I was surprised at how upbeat he sounded. He told me that rather than the mad round of activities which consumed them all he was now able to spend more time with his family than he had done before, and as a result he felt happier.

There is also the question of what we value and believe to be important in these unusual times.

Like others, I have been stepping out of my front door on a Thursday evening and banging my pots in support of key NHS workers.

We celebrate and support the work of doctors, nurses, therapists and a whole load more people whose skill and expertise we realise are so essential in helping us weather these trials. We could add a whole raft of other people too, like those who deliver our food and ensure essential supplies are kept flowing.

The fact that we are now not able to meet one another face-to-face in our work, social or family settings

has imposed limitations that we are all still grappling with. In our search to maintain contact with one another we are turning increasingly to technology to help us out.

For many of us who struggle with IT this is something of a step out of our comfort zone, but technology comes in many shapes and forms and choosing the right one can open up a whole set of new possibilities.

Zoom, for example, was until last week a multi-coloured ice lolly that I'd enjoyed as a child. But as I discovered it is also the name of an online appliance that allows people

to talk to one another and which is being used increasingly up and down the country to connect work colleagues, friends and families.

Odd as it may sound, technology has also helped us maintain our relationship with God. One prime example of this is how we access Mass. Now that churches are closed priests across the country are engaged in livestreamed services, which means that with minimal technical know-how we can still participate in Mass in a way that is meaningful.

To see a face of a priest on television may not be quite the same as being there in person with him and other people, but when I tune in and see the priest on my screen I know there are others doing the same.

This sobering reality helps to make up for the odd bouts of frustration I sometimes experience at not being able to do things in the 'normal way', but set in the context of the wider situation and what people are having to go through, this is a small inconvenience.

It also helps to remind me that God is not confined to buildings and that we can be in His presence in our living room just as much as we can in a church.

Facebook may not be everyone's favourite way of interacting, but the fact is that many people now use it as a means of communicating and sharing with one another. Items of news, personal stories, holiday photographs, paintings and a whole lot more find their way onto this online platform for us to sift and sort and discard according to our personal preferences.

But one thing I have noticed in this present crisis is how people are engaging and interacting with one another on Facebook on issues of faith and spirituality, often with a genuine sense of respect and sincerity.

In this period of self isolation, Facebook has become a way for people to connect with each other in these matters, people who may be on the other side of the globe but who have something to say or show that gives us support and encouragement on our faith journey. I have a friend who is a Jesuit in India and he posted a video of a short sermon that he gave which I found very helpful.

Yes, social media can be a big distraction, but in the last couple of weeks I have read and seen items that show how social media platforms such as Instagram and Facebook can be a wonderfully creative way of building up and supporting our spiritual lives.

It has also shown me that far from being the Godless nation some might suspect we live in there is, in fact, a genuine enthusiasm and thirst for the things of God. We may not, of course, agree with everything we see and read but being challenged about our faith may be no bad thing.



# Amid the silence, it's faith that helps prisoners through the crisis

**Fr Valentine Erhahon, Catholic and managing chaplain at HMP / YOI Isis in Thamesmead, describes how Covid-19 has affected his ministry in prison.**

Things have changed, but we hope it is not forever. The system we are currently living under in the prison is now known as the "self distancing regime". It is the first of its kind, untried and untested, but builds on existing policies and procedure and updated according to the latest health advice. The prisoners now spend more time locked up in their cells than at any other time in our prison's history.

Just like in the rest of society, as of Thursday, 19th March, gatherings to conduct services in the chaplaincy for different faith groups have ceased. From study groups to group activities, the daily routine within the prison has had to come to a dramatic halt, a shock that no institution, particularly one with an atmosphere as volatile as a prison, wants to face.

Our usual weekly Catholic Mass is celebrated as others throughout the world are: in solitude, without parishioners - who, in our case are made up of prisoners, officers, volunteers and visitors, all of whom particularly cherish such a time to meet with their God and their neighbour.

Before the lockdown, our chapel orderlies (prisoners who are tasked with helping out in the chaplaincy) helped me stow away our chapel chairs, without knowing when they would next be laid out for Mass. This was a symbolic act to show that, for the first time in the history of the prison, group services in the chapel had ceased.

However, hope is found in the

Mass that is still celebrated by myself, with the prisoners present only in their photographs, laid out on the side altar, as it is also found through the prayers of all chaplains who continue to pray alone for our prisoners, for their families, for the staff and for the world.

In my first letter to all the prisoners, advising them that all faith services had now ceased, I told them that: "Every week some of you made the time to come to us in the chapel. It is now the time for us, your chaplains, to come to you in your cells and walk this painful road with you."

We have now moved chaplaincy to the wings. Chaplaincy has adapted and thrived. Each week the prisoners receive a 'faith-in-cell' pack to practice their faith in the confines of their cell. Uniquely to

prisons, the luxury of internet access, and therefore access to live-streamed Mass, is denied.

A prison creates stress and daily anxiety for all who work in such a challenging environment. With the outbreak of Covid-19, fear, confusion and suspicion is added to this. I remember when the lockdown began, Dominic, a chapel orderly, having read the letter I sent to the prisoners, made a very wise and moving statement. "Thank God I have faith," he remarked.

He recognised that his faith is what would see him through any hardship that would come. Faith is what is seeing many a prisoner through this time. Faith is helping them find meaning, purpose and to create a structure. Faith is not confined to the chapel but now lives

with them in their cells.

For our prisoners who have lost a loved one due to Covid-19, faith has been there for them through a time when they would ordinarily be released to attend a funeral and grieve with their families. Faith has

Lajuan setting up the PA system and controlling the projector.

I miss our laughter, I miss getting upset with those talking at Mass, I miss the many complex questions the young men raise at Catholic studies, I miss their unique ways of

**"I miss our laughter, I miss getting upset with those talking at Mass, I miss the questions and I miss their unique way of praying**

not gone underground; faith is now a lived-in-cell experience.

Of course, the silence in the chapel is deafening. I miss hearing Dominic reading the first reading and ringing the bells. I miss Liam reading the second reading. I miss

singing and of praying. I miss seeing the prison officers at the back guarding the service.

I miss the sisters of the Missionaries of Charity playing our piano, teaching the men how to pray, and going around the wings to play table tennis with them. I miss our volunteers coming in each Sunday to Mass, I miss them visiting the wings, talking to the men, encouraging them. Most of all, I miss our congregation at prayer.

One evening, as I was walking away from the wings, one prisoner shouted my name through his cell door. Inside the cell was dark so I could not tell who it was. He asked me to sing Amazing Grace to him. I sang the first verse while standing by his cell door. When I was done, he thanked me, and I walked away.

I discovered his name is Tyron. The Greek origin of Tyron is 'king'. What an inspiration his name has brought. It gives me hope that Jesus, the King of the Universe who died and rose again from the dead, will see us through this difficult time.

For now, we look forward to our first Sunday back, when our chapel will again be opened for congregational Mass, and the prisoners will walk into a chapel on that Sunday morning to the tune of the *Hallelujah* chorus from Handel's *Messiah* and an enveloping atmosphere with grace and joy.



## Diary dates - May

In line with Government regulations, all diocesan events for May have been cancelled.

However, the liturgical calendar for May is:

- 1: St Joseph the Worker
- 2: St Athanasius, bishop and doctor of the Church
- 4: The English Martyrs
- 20: St Bernadine of Siena, priest
- 21: The Ascension of the Lord
- 25: St Bede the Venerable, priest and doctor of the Church (right)
- 26: St Philip Neri, priest
- 27: St Augustine of Canterbury, bishop
- 31: Pentecost



If you have an event, e-mail details to us at [pilgrim@rcaos.org.uk](mailto:pilgrim@rcaos.org.uk)



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# It's the people you miss most as we live through these challenging times

Fr Anthony Charlton, parish priest of St Thomas of Canterbury in Canterbury, reflects on adapting to Covid-19 during Lent and Easter.

Well, it has certainly been a Lent and Easter like no other we have known before. Here at St Thomas of Canterbury, it has had its high and low points as it will have had across all our parishes. What has been very moving are the number of messages and phone calls that we have had from the people of the parish checking if we are OK.

From the beginning, Archbishop John and the archdiocese gave us clear and explicit instructions on what we, as clergy, had to do and had to stop doing. We also knew from the administration side what had to be done with our parish office and staff.

This was helpful in knowing what we had left to structure our time and focus our energies on. Personally, I found the letter that Archbishop John sent to all the priests on Maundy Thursday affirming and encouraging, reminding us to keep our eyes on Christ Jesus.

For years, we have reminded everyone of the words from the document on the liturgy from the Vatican II, that the source and summit of the Christian life is the Eucharist, and how no one except the priest is able to be present and celebrate Mass.

Parishioners have related to me different ways they have been praying at home. Many have been able to be virtually present at live-streaming Masses. The liturgical rhythm of Holy Week and Easter is a wonderful stabiliser in times of crisis!

Very quickly, people in the parish offered help to those who were isolated and in need. Our wonderful St Vincent de Paul team became the hub of orchestrating our volunteers to shop or generally look out for people we knew were vulnerable in the parish community, but also in a wider field.

Our finance committee worked to ensure as much as possible that donations could continue to be made to keep the parish bills paid. We are also blessed with people who look after our website and this has been a lifeline both practically and spiritually for us as a community.

The city is so quiet but on my walks or shopping trips, I am still approached by those looking for money. I even had a mother a small child knock at the door at 10pm one night looking for help. But on the positive side we can hear birdsong, breathe fresher air and get undisturbed sleep - though on the streets the rats are more noticeable.

There are many small triumphs to cherish. One of the rough sleepers gave me a home made Easter card.

People were initially a little stunned not being able to go into the church let alone come to Mass. We



are privileged here in St Thomas' to have our doors open all day, every day and, as a city centre church, it is a service that is well used, as people drop by for prayer and quiet reflection.

Withdrawing this was hard. Equally hard is having to stop visiting our hospitals, care homes and personal homes; we have many elderly people who look forward to a visit from a priest or a eucharistic minister.

I know WhatsApp groups of parishioners have been set up to support others as people look out for each other. I have used video conferencing occasionally. We hope to be able to livestream our Sunday Mass soon, but we did not have a webcam ready. I know many parishioners have viewed services, particularly at Easter, from the Vatican but also from the many churches streaming their services around the UK.

My biggest concern still, are those who do not have access to the internet and therefore the resources our site and other sites offer.

Because of the social distancing and potential to transfer disease through paper, we have not posted material. This will be a very isolating time for them. I have tried to phone those we normally visit with Holy Communion.

Like everyone else we have had to delay our RCIA, first communion, baptisms, marriages and confirmation. We had hoped to baptise two adults and received several adults into full communion at the Vigil.

Our last few sessions with the RCIA group before Easter were done via Zoom. It is disappointing for all but we look forward to celebrating all these events with even greater appreciation of their significance and joy later in the year.

Very early on we hit a low point as a parish when one of our loved and well known parishioners unexpectedly died from the virus. This shock brought to us very quickly the seriousness of the situation, hitting at the heart of the community as it did.

As I write, because she had no next of kin, we are unable to find out if there has been a funeral. Similarly, the cremation of another parishioner with no one present was heart breaking. A funeral's rites, rituals and the family and friends who attend them can, perhaps, be

taken for granted at times, and this impact of the virus has shocked us all.

I certainly miss very much being with the parish community. As I am sure all priests felt, when we realised what we could not do sacramentally and pastorally for the foreseeable future, there was loss and with the loss, a type of grief and bereavement.

Our whole 'reason to be' seemed to have been taken from us. After a little time and with prayer and reflection we realised the need to minister was always there - it had never gone away - but it now had to take a different shape and be communicated through different channels and media.

I am, perhaps, much more aware of how much of my day, as a parish priest, is centred on being with people, seeing them face-to-face and being able to understand their needs and how best I can serve them from this personal contact.

Speaking on the telephone or emailing, however efficient, is one step removed from this for me and I realise more forcibly how much human contact feeds and nurtures my own ministry.

If you had asked me, before this crisis, would I have welcomed not going to so many meetings or events or visits but having the occasional evening off, my reply would have been, "Yes, definitely!"

But now I am missing that contact; with the sick and dying, with the schools and the school children, even with our numerous committees. I miss them all.

It has been good to be with Fr Sylvester Adeniyi CSSP and Canon John O'Toole, as we share the Presbytery. Having been a priest for 43 years is an advantage when it comes to enforcing enclosed community living! There is also a great sense of comradeship in sharing what we can of the Mass and sacraments.

St Thomas's has always been a 'community of communities' in the 700 people who attend Sunday Mass each week. Many individual communities are self sufficient and look to protect their own particular culture in the way they worship.

On top of this, however, I believe there is always a loose but enveloping gossamer blanket of identity in belonging to the St Thomas community. I would like that blanket to still be there, and perhaps to be more obvious to all of us in its joys and obligations, when we all get back to celebrate the Eucharist together as the source and summit of our Christian life. We are very blessed.

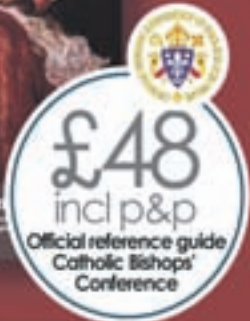
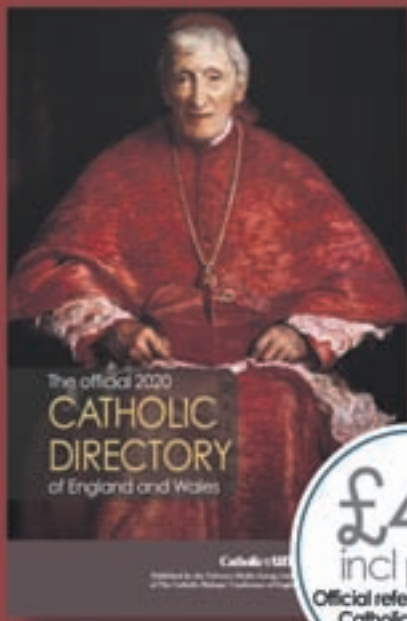
This time is a great challenge to all of us. Yet our faith leads us more than ever to centre our lives on Christ and to trust in him and allow him to lead us in the time of darkness into the light.

He is reassuring us with his words: "Do not be afraid."

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