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St Gregory the Great

**Palm Sunday
5th April 2020**

Welcome to our second eNewsletter. You can unsubscribe from this eNewsletter mailing list at the bottom of this email. If you have not received this email directly then you can sign up via our website. Please read on to find out more about how we are using the internet to keep in touch and also how to watch Mass on Sunday 9.30am live on facebook.



Dear brothers and sisters in Christ,
I suspect that by now for some of us the initial novelty of shut down may be wearing off but if so we can offer up the loneliness or the family hassle in a spirit of penance not just for ourselves but for our suffering world.

Fathers Urbi et Orbi last Friday which I hope you saw or have seen, as the universal church prayed with him before the Blessed Sacrament. It was profoundly powerful and moving, underlining as it did our catholicity and, as I was saying last week, the utter centrality of Our Blessed Lord in the Sacrament, the mass and the priesthood. The whole church throughout the world was united in silent supplication before our saviour there. Also impressive was the universal call to prayer for all people of faith, whatever it might be, both reminders that as Peter Hobbs reminded us last week, our faith is nurtured by being with others in community, which we still are of course.

The pandemic is reinforcing the need for community and solidarity. In this moment that we live in imposed isolation, we realise how much sharing is necessary. The virus has revealed that the church's mission is needed more than ever. This is a time of grace as well as tribulation. Being brought face to face with the fragility of life will lead more people in our secular society to reflect on religious questions. Across the world the light of faith is being kept alive in our families and in our homes through prayer and acts of solidarity, while digital technology is offering new ways for the church to connect with people and to bring them together. One suspects that after all this both the church and the world will be very different - and better. So hang on in there!

Our community doesn't just consist of us struggling here on earth but also of those rejoicing in heaven. An important part of our church community is the church triumphant in heaven, the communion of saints who are with us and for us, some of whom are powerful intercessors against the plague. The most famous of whom is ST ROCH, patron saint of plagues but also of dogs and dog lovers, so he was obviously a good egg! He is also patron of Montpellier in the south of France, where he came from and it so happens that I was there on his feast day, 16th August last year for great celebrations so luckily I'm well in with him. His iconography in Christian art is rather unfortunate as he's normally depicted showing a bare leg and pointing to a plague mark on it. Whatever his image, he's a powerful friend. This is his prayer -

O Blessed Saint Roch, Patron of the sick, Have pity on those who lie on a bed of suffering.

Your power was so great when you were in this world, That by the sign of the cross, many were healed of their diseases.

Now that you are in heaven, your power is not less.

Offer then to God our sighs and tears

And obtain for us that health we seek

Through Christ Our Lord

St Corona. Pray to them all.

This Sunday, **Palm Sunday**, we begin the celebration of the most important week of our christian year, Holy Week, the so-called Great Week, culminating in **The Easter Tridum** -the Mass of the Lords Supper, Good Friday and the Easter Vigil. Sadly, we are unable to celebrate fully as we normally do. I will live stream the Mass of the Lords Supper at 9pm to at least link us to the Tridium and we can then join with bigger celebrations elsewhere for Good Friday and the Vigil, either from St Peters Rome or from St Chads, our cathedral in Birmingham. It is good to remember that our parish is part of a much bigger communion.

The introduction to the Palm Sunday liturgy reminds us that since the beginning of Lent until now we have prepared our hearts by penance and charitable works.

Today we gather to herald with the whole Church the beginning of the celebration of our Lords Paschal Mystery, that is to say, of his Passion and Resurrection. For it was to accomplish this mystery that he entered his own city of Jerusalem. Therefore, with all faith and devotion, let us commemorate the Lords entry into the city for our salvation, following in his footsteps, so that, being made by his grace partakers of the Cross, we may have a share also in his Resurrection and his life.

So this Sunday we welcome Our Saviour as he enters Jerusalem in triumph and prepare ourselves during the week to celebrate the greatest mystery of all, his memorial gift of the mass and the priesthood, his passion and death for us on the cross and his rising in victory over all human evil to give us eternal life. The Easter Tridium is a wonderful thing to celebrate in these terrible times as it is our absolute assurance that ultimately all will be well. This Sunday try and read the passion of Matthew (26:14-27:66) either alone or together in your families and perhaps put some greenery at your door or in your window to welcome Our Blessed Lord. On Good Friday we can celebrate the Solemn Liturgy of the Cross with the whole world and Pope Francis from Rome and watch in Gethsemane which will be broadcast from St Chads. Finally we will celebrate the resurrection and Christs and our triumph over sin and death, foreshadowing Gods final triumph over this pandemic. There is a new solemn intercession in this years Good Friday Liturgy -

Let us pray also for those who suffer the consequences of the current pandemic, that God the Father may grant health to the sick, strength to those who care for them, comfort to families and salvation to all victims who have died.

Almighty ever living God, only support in our human weakness, look with compassion on the sorrowful condition of you children who suffer because of this

tribulation, grant that we may all find comfort in your merciful love. Through Christ our Lord.

One feels that on Good Friday the whole of nature should mourn yet for us in the north the opposite is true as it bursts into the beautiful new life of spring. That's part of the miracle of Good Friday as Wagner notes in his opera Parsifal with it's wonderful musical description of the glory of spring in the Good Friday music. The Tridium is all about bursting into beautiful and glorious new life after the darkness of suffering and death. Try and enter fully into it's mystery, it's beauty and its triumph and above all into the love and life of God that it wins for us.

Those of you who are lucky enough to have been to Jerusalem will know that as you enter The Basillica of the Holy Sepulchre you see the stone where Christs body was anointed whilst at Golgotha where the crucifixion took place is a magnificently ornate chapel. There's a strange legend that Adam was buried here and that at the crucifixion his skull emerged and was symbolically washed with Christs blood. These poems describe the church:

THE HOLY SEPULCHRE

THE STONE OF THE ANOINTING

It is a quiet introit.
 No triumphant tympanum
 Or high-pillared portico to greet the greatest act of all.
 On entering
 You see not Calvary or empty tomb but
 A flat slab, low, a stone,
 Where Christ the Lord's dead body lay
 Whilst lovingly anointed.
 In Sabbath-limbo
 Like all of us,
 Lying between death and life.

CALVARY

The far away green hill it is not
 But a rock
 Below which Adam also lay in death
 Dying ,above hung Christ crucified.
 His precious blood, quickening streamed, Downhill, down-rock Onto Adams skull
 emerging, The whole human race transfusing In Bloody Benediction.
 So here no dark and dreary shrine,

Gold and Silver And Light, in Hope
All-blazing.

God bless you all and protect you this most Holy Week, Fr Alex

Livestreaming Mass

Fr Alex is livestreaming Sunday Mass at 9.30am:

- Join online at Fr Alex's facebook page at <https://www.facebook.com/alexastinosb>

Fr Alex is livestreaming Mass of the Lord's Supper at 9pm on Holy Thursday:

- Join online at Fr Alex's facebook page at <https://www.facebook.com/alexastinosb>

Follow the daily Readings at Mass:

<https://universalis.com/mass.htm> or <https://www.alivepublishing.co.uk/daily-mass-readings/>

Make an Act of Spiritual Communion:

This can be done whilst you watch a live stream of Mass being offered.

My Jesus, I believe that You are present in the Most Holy Sacrament.

I love You above all things, and I desire to receive You into my soul.

Since I cannot at this moment receive You sacramentally, come at least spiritually into my heart.

I embrace You as if You were already there and unite myself wholly to You.

Never permit me to be separated from You.

Information on Livestreaming Church's:

- A list of Live Streaming Church's in Archdiocese of Birmingham is available: [link](#). It also includes a link to the daily readings and how to make an Act of Spiritual Communion.
 - Our nearest Live Stream Church is at St Joseph's in Whitnash join online at: <https://www.mcnmedia.tv/camera/st-josephs-whitnash>
 - St Chad's is also livestreaming at <https://www.mcnmedia.tv/camera/st-chads-cathedral-birmingham>
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The Sick and Housebound: Steven Alford, Mary Barratt, Dennis Barratt, Mena Burn, Sophie Connor, Gary Denstone, Gabrielle Edwardes, Patricia Elliott, Mary Foster, Maciej Grudzinski, Anne Hamilton, Maureen Harper, Brian Harrison, Anthony Hathaway, Tony Jones, John Kemp, Phil Kendrick, Margaret Lamb, John Leary, Mildred Madden, Peggy Madden, Rory Mahon, Mary McCarthy, Mary Murphy, Helena Myczko, Anne Parkinson, Rachael Perks, Vera Roche, John Somers, Cristina Valentino, Sue Wilmore, Barbara Woodgates, Margaret Young, Kathleen Coleman, Kirsty Taylor, and all the sick in our hospitals, nursing homes, own homes and known to us.

Lately Dead and their bereaved: John Palmer, Bridget O'Hagan, Ann Kingland, Vicenza Tagliaferri, Dom Louis ODwyer OSB.

Kids Corner

Dear children, I hope you are being your usual little angels at this tricky time and doing what mum and dad ask you, saying your prayers, doing your school work, keeping your rooms tidy and above all not fighting! For your faith class I want you to draw me a big scary picture of the horrible scary coronavirus monster and list words that describe him. Then draw a lovely picture of Jesus who scares him away and keeps us safe And list words that describe him. Then discuss with you parents the difference between your lists, one evil like we don't want to be one one good which is how we want to be. Please take a photo or scan your picture and then email to stgregorysua@btconnect.com with 'Kids Corner' in the subject. Please keep them to show us all at church. Thanks angels. Fr Alex

Music in our Worship - Chris Danes

Music plays an important part in our public worship. The current situation with not been able to attend our Sunday services breaks the rhythm of our weekly community gathering. The Internet is providing a tremendous resource for communication and evangelisation in these times. No more so than "soul" music to lift the "hearts and minds" to God. As we're well into Lent and Holy Week and Easter are rapidly approaching you might like to consider supplementing your prayer time with music. Here are a couple of suggestions..just copy the link (not the words) and paste into your browser and click return.

- Taste & See · Boyce & Stanley - <https://youtu.be/4lCo9GhLLGk>

- 2017 Medjugorje Youth Festival Adoration - <https://youtu.be/d-k2N6TVOEE>
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Virtual Community Café - Peter Hobbs

We are thinking of opening a virtual 'Community Café' for anyone seeking a bit of Christian fellowship during the lockdown to log into for a chat.

Technically this is pretty straight forward, but if it is to work, we need a rota of volunteers to act as hosts and provide an online welcome. We envisage volunteers working in pairs and committing to being online in the café for an hour or two a day.

Pairs do not have to be in the same location. You can either volunteer as a pair or sign up individually and we will pair you with someone.

No previous experience is necessary – all you need to volunteer is a computer, a stable internet connection and a desire to contribute. (Anyone with additional languages would be doubly welcome!) We will fit in with your commitments and provide you with all the training and support you need.

If you would like to know more or wish to volunteer, please contact Peter Hobbs on peter.hobbs@vondel.co.uk or 07887 700809.

Resources for Faith at home and Family Ministry

Pope's Holy Week Message + video

- Pope Francis has issued a video message this evening - before the start of Holy Week [link](#).

A Retreat for Holy Week

- Holy Week 2020 is being celebrated amid extraordinary circumstances. This 'Mini Retreat' is an attempt to ease the burden on those who are unable to watch streamed Masses and other liturgies [link](#).

Holy Week

- The Way of the Cross for Families at Home [link](#).

The God Who Speaks - Matthew's Gospel Reflection

- Weekly Meditations by Fr Dries Van den Akker S.J on the Paintings of St Matthews Gospel by Peter Clare [link](#). Palm Sunday: Sunday 5 April – Matthew 21:01-11 [link](#)

Monastic resources

- Monastic resources to help you handle isolation and social distancing with Father Christopher Jamison OSB [link](#).

Children's liturgy resources

- Ten Ten is offering all families and schools the opportunity to access free prayer resources for the home and also have a video for children's liturgy each week [link](#).
- A mum in Westminster Diocese creates a children's liturgy video on Saturday evenings for use on Sunday. For those that use Facebook there is a link to page so families in your parishes can create their own 'watch parties' and join together with other families [link](#). For those who do not have Facebook here is the link to the YouTube channel [link](#).
- CAFOD link to their children's liturgy resources [link](#).
- Catholic Mom has useful printable worksheets [link](#).

Exploring the faith together as a family

- Youcat [link](#) - great resource for all ages explaining the teachings of the Catholic Church and has an accompanying app via these links
 - <https://play.google.com/store/apps/details?id=com.youcat.daily&hl=en>
 - <https://itunes.apple.com/us/app/youcat-daily/id1447116947?mt=8>

St Vincent de Paul Society [link](#)

Vatican Website: [link](#)

Stratford-upon-avon Foodbank [link](#) - Donations

These can be left in the plastic box by the presbytery front door. Please note the Foodbank is reopening on Tuesday 31st March at at the Stratford Methodist Church [link](#).

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General Information

Newsletter signup: [link](#)

Parish Clergy: Fr Alex Austin OSB stgregorysua@btconnect.com

Parish Contact numbers: 01789 292439

Parish Office: Closed but email is being accessed remotely
stgregorysua@btconnect.com

Newsletter: Please send items to be included to stgregorysua@btconnect.com by Thursday evening.

Donations:

1. Post a cheque made payable to St Gregory's Parish
2. Setup a Standing Order or online banking to: St Gregory. Please call for sort code/account number.
3. New Gift Aid envelopes will be available as soon as the Church re-opens.

Gift Aid: To join the scheme, please contact Clive Hamilton on 01789 488047 or by e-mail stgregorysgiftaid@aol.co.uk. If you are already in the scheme, please contact him with any questions or any changes of address or tax status.

Parish website: <https://stgregorys-stratford.org/>

Parish Twitter: Follow us at [@StGregorytheGr3](https://twitter.com/StGregorytheGr3)

Parish Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/stgregorysua>

Instagram: Follow Fr Alex at [alexaustinosb](https://www.instagram.com/alexaustinosb) where he'll try and post a few inspiring pics!!

Warwick Deanery website: www.warwick-catholicdeanery.org.uk

Archdiocese website: www.birminghamdiocese.org.uk



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