HOMILY FOR THIRD SUNDAY OF EASTER

Nearly twenty years into priesthood, I am still capable of losing my place and getting distracted, even when saying Mass alone in an empty Church. I’d like to say that its because I get wrapped up, even lost, in what I am doing, caught perhaps by a phrase in the scriptures, or the words used and thoughts expressed in the prayer. And at times this can be the case, but it is also true that my distractions can be of a more worldly and mundane nature. I can find myself thinking about what needs to be done, emails to be answered, telephone calls to make, and now in particular the streaming we don’t have.

Much like the two disciples mentioned in today’s Gospel it’s easy to become pre-occupied, to ignore or be oblivious to what is right in front of us. On one level it is difficult to comprehend just how switched off we can be. It is incredible, for example, to think that the disciples in today’s gospel could fail to recognise Christ; it was, after all, his death that had thrown them into despondency, and reports about his rising again, that had heightened their anxiety. However, as surprising as it may be, it is just as possible for us to switch off. It’s possible at home and at work to get stuck in routines where people and things are taken for granted. Admittedly, now more than ever, we may be acutely aware of what we cannot do, conscious of our not being able to be at Mass, but when you think about it, how often do we ‘get’ Mass, as some kind of obligation to be got through, rather than consciously participating in a celebration where Christ is present in Scripture, in the Eucharist, and in the those who gather in his name?

Some will say that what needs to change is our way of doing things – that it needs to be more exciting, more stimulating, less boring – but that, I am afraid, is not the message of today’s Gospel or the challenge set before us by Christ. Yes, the disciples were self-absorbed and pre-occupied, but even when Christ upbraided them for being foolish and explained the scriptures to them, even when he caused their hearts to burn within them, even then they failed to recognise him. The problem you see was in the disciples not in the message or the messenger; it was no mean accomplishment to explain the scriptures or to make their hearts burn yet still, even when they pressed Christ to stay on, they had some way to go before seeing Christ for who he really was.

Ultimately, it is in the breaking of bread, in the Eucharist itself, that this deadlock is broken and the disciples recognised who it was that had walked with them. It is in the Eucharist that the whole situation is transformed; that their burdens are lifted and their sorrow turned into joy, a joy that causes them to turn on their heels…refreshed and renewed…and return to the Apostles and the community in Jerusalem.

In the Eucharist, in this breaking of bread, you and I encounter the risen Lord. It is for this reason that our not being able to gather for Mass is so painful. The Eucharist is the bedrock of our Christian lives – here we are nourished, here we grow, here we are empowered – given the ability to be what we are called to be – witnesses to Christ and his resurrection - and maybe this fasting from the Eucharist, from the Mass, that has been thrust upon us, is an opportunity to understand what we risk taking for granted; an opportunity to ask ourselves what does the Eucharist mean to me, what impact does Mass have in my life; is it, as it was for the disciples on the road to Emmaus, that place where, daily concerns to one side, I open my heart to the Christ who walks with me, that I may be a witness to others?

In the gospel we have just listened to Christ walked with two of his disciples. He spoke with them, he admonished them and yet still they didn’t recognise him. It isn’t enough to say I have walked a road with him and I have listened to his words, because we can do that and not really know him. Knowing him means more than burning hearts, it means feasting with him in the Eucharist and that done going out to tell the good news. The gospel reaches a climax when Christ, having been recognised by them, disappears from their sight, refusing, if you like, to be possessed and tied down. It ends with the reminder that the two disciples went away to tell their story of what had happened on the road. The Gospel, the resurrection, Christ, is not a ‘private’ property to bandage ‘my’ wounds and ‘my’ sadnesses, rather, as much as it will do these things, it is here to liberate and set free a world in need of healing.

Fr Michael
PLEASE PRAY
Together with Churches Together in St Albans, this week we pray for the pastor and members of the Kings Community Church.

For the Sick in our Parish

For those who have died recently: Mary Malik, Edward Turner, Mary Harper, Elaine Gatta, Carmel Johnson, Margaret Markham, Susan Lewis, Anthony Moran and Tony Harding

For all those whose anniversaries occur at this time: Elizabeth Delaney, Roger Hagger, Betty Allen and Mary Gallagher.

May their souls and the souls of all the faithful departed through the mercy of God rest in peace

Offertory
Several people who usually contribute to the offertory either in cash or by using the offertory promise envelopes have contacted the presbytery asking how they might continue their weekly giving. We do not know how long the current situation will continue for and I am conscious that with the uncertainty the current situation creates, many will be concerned about their jobs and livelihoods. If you are able to – and I genuinely mean ‘if’ - and you wish to continue with your regular pattern of giving you may like to consider giving by standing order. This seems the most sensible way forward as it avoids the weekly handling of both envelopes and cash. If so, please email the parish office at stalbans@rcdow.org.uk and ask for details of how you might give by standing order.

On Sunday 3 May the FOURTH SUNDAY OF EASTER Masses will be offered for Malcolm Condon (Ints) and for the People of the Parish. The Masses for Ernest and Mina Ganfroid (RIP) will be said on Monday 4 May, for John Ryan (RIP) and Eric Hopkins (RIP) on Tuesday 5 May and for Lorenzo Lomonaco on Thursday 7 May. The Mass scheduled for Sr Anita (Ints) will be said as soon as possible.

### MASS INTENTIONS & READINGS

**SUNDAY 26 April - THIRD SUNDAY OF EASTER**

Reading 1, Acts 2:14, 22-33
Responsorial Psalm, 15
Reading 2, 1 Peter 1:17-21

Masses will be offered for Elizabeth Delaney (Anniv) and the people of the parish.

**Monday 27 April** - Easter feria
Reading 1, Acts 6:8-15
Responsorial Psalm, 118
Gospel, John 6:22-29

Masses will be offered for Kathleen & Ronan Fitzpatrick (RIP) and Bridie Galvin (RIP)

**Tuesday 28 April** - Easter feria
Reading 1, Acts 7:51--8:1
Responsorial Psalm, 30
Gospel, John 6:30-35

Masses will be offered for Bernard Eason (RIP) and Roger Hagger (Anniv)

**Wednesday 29 April** - ST CATHERINE OF SIENA
Reading 1, 1 John 1:5-22
Responsorial Psalm, 102
Gospel, Matthew 11:25-30

Masses will be offered for Mary Beeby (RIP) and Roy McGooghan (RIP)

**Thursday 30 April** - Easter feria /St Pius V
Reading 1, Acts 8:26-40
Responsorial Psalm, 65
Gospel, John 6:44-51

Masses will be offered for Betty Allen (Anniv) and the intentions of Ellen McCarthy.

**Friday 1 May** - St Joseph the Worker
Reading 1, Acts 9: 1-20
Responsorial Psalm, 116
Gospel, John 6: 52-59,
Proper of Saints, Matthew 13: 54-58
Masses will be offered for Reic Hopkins (RIP) and Mary Gallagher (Anniv)

**Saturday 2 May** - St Athanasius
First Reading, Acts 9: 31-42
Responsorial Psalm, 115
Gospel, John 6: 60-69
Masses will be offered for Celia Dunne (RIP) and the intentions of the Moore Family.

**SUNDAY 2 APRIL 2021**

Reading 1, Acts 1:16-21
Responsorial Psalm, 11

Masses will be offered for Richard Sumner (Anniv) and the people of the parish.

**Monday 3 April** - Easter feria
Reading 1, Acts 6:1-7
Responsorial Psalm, 64
Gospel, John 6:54-60

Masses will be offered for John Ryan (RIP) and Eric Hopkins (RIP)

**Tuesday 4 April** - St Francis de Sales
Reading 1, Acts 20:21-24
Responsorial Psalm, 111
Gospel, John 6:51-54

Masses will be offered for Margaret Camfill and the people of the parish.

**Wednesday 5 April** - St Thomas Aquinas
Reading 1, Acts 20:25-31
Responsorial Psalm, 112
Gospel, John 6:55-63

Masses will be offered for Anthony de Zayas and the people of the parish.

**Thursday 6 April** - St John Vianney
Reading 1, Acts 20:32
Responsorial Psalm, 113
Gospel, John 6:64-71

Masses will be offered for John Ryan (Anniv) and the people of the parish.

**Friday 7 April** - St Mark the Evangelist
Reading 1, Acts 20:33-1
Responsorial Psalm, 114
Gospel, John 6:72-80

Masses will be offered for John Ryan (Anniv) and the people of the parish.

**Saturday 8 April** - St Joseph
First Reading, Acts 20:32-1
Responsorial Psalm, 115
Gospel, John 6:81-89

Masses will be offered for John Ryan (Anniv) and the people of the parish.

**Sunday 9 April** - First Sunday of Easter
Reading 1, Acts 20:32-3
Responsorial Psalm, 116
Gospel, John 20:19-31

Masses will be offered for John Ryan (Anniv) and the people of the parish.
Parish Update We have begun to send out a Parish Update by email. If you have not been in receipt of these and would like to receive them please email stalbans@rcdow.org.uk requesting the Parish Update. Also, please visit the Parish Website to keep in touch and see what resources there are to help you. The website now includes a reflection on the Sunday Gospel written by Fr Michael or Fr Julian. Also, you will find the Diocese of Westminster website and Vatican Website useful at this time.

Safeguarding & DBS Checks Even though many aspects of parish life have had to be put on hold there are still things we can be doing to prepare for when things are up and running again. If you are a volunteer and work with children or vulnerable adults, you will need to have an up to date DBS in place. If you do not have a DBS or do not have an up to date one, issued within the last three years, why not use this period to complete the necessary paperwork. Much can be done on-line. Please contact Mary Harber at stalbanssg3@safeguardrcdow.org.uk / 07976 277059

Virtual Prayer Group We begun a virtual prayer group which met each evening in Holy Week at 7.30 pm and we will continue to meet on Sunday and Wednesday evenings, also at 7.30 pm. If you would like to take part, please contact Brendan Roche at bkroche@me.com

Parish Assembly & MSC Mass Please note that in view of the Coronavirus pandemic both the Parish Assembly and the Celebration of the MSCs’ time in St Albans will be postponed until 2021.

Good Counsel Network Monday 27 April marks the 52nd anniversary of legal abortions. Since then over 9 million babies have been aborted in the United Kingdom. The Good Counsel Network are holding National Day of Prayer and Fasting for Life, praying for the ending of abortion in this Country. Visit https://www.facebook.com/events/3035268766567721/ Live streaming of mass can be found through https://www.churchservices.tv (click on ‘churches’ under menu). The Cardinal has written to us to say that every Thursday evening at 7pm, one of the bishops of England & Wales, will celebrate Mass in his cathedral, live streamed, for all those frontline workers in the NHS and care homes, for the sick and their families. This will begin next Thursday with Mass in our Cathedral. The dates, locations and live-streaming information (link in name of the cathedral) for the next five Masses have also been announced. They are as follows: 30 April: Bishop Richard Moth, Arundel Cathedral, 7 May: Bishop Marcus Stock, Leeds Cathedral, 14 May: Bishop Robert Byrne CO, Newcastle Cathedral, 21 May: Bishop Mark Davies, Shrewsbury Cathedral, 28 May: Bishop Terence Draine, Middlesbrough Cathedral

Remember to keep your distance from others and to observe proper hygiene…

- Catch it - sneeze into a tissue.
- Bin it – bin the tissue.
- Kill it – wash your hands with soap and water.
- Do not touch your face unless you’ve washed your hands.

Please note that the Confirmation set for May 30th has been postponed.

The Marriage Preparation Course scheduled for April is now cancelled. If you are hoping to get married, please contact Fr Michael. Please note that a minimum of six months’ notice is required.

Year of The Word: The Saturday morning sessions reflecting on Matthew’s Gospel will be rescheduled in due course.

Walsingham on-line Retreat An on-line retreat given by Mgr John Armitage will begin on 19 April and run through to the 26 April. Conferences will be 10 am and 4pm each day and will be available on the walsingham.org.uk website.

Love and FEED our Neighbour The Vineyard in St Albans greatly help more than 80 individuals/families a week who depend on their foodbank to feed their families. Their FEED project needs your support more than ever in these difficult times, particularly as many vulnerable children will not have access to free school meals at present. Please consider making a money donation to FEED through www.bankuet.co.uk/feedstalbans or, if you can go shopping, please buy something extra and leave in the foodbank available at most supermarkets – tinned goods are particularly welcome.

The Tablet We are aware that some parishioners would often buy the Tablet from the back of church, but whilst the lockdown is in effect, we have stopped supplying these papers. You can choose to subscribe to the Tablet, where they have quarterly, six monthly, or annual subscription options on offer. Go to https://www.thetablet.co.uk/subscribe or email Ian Farrar, the Tablet’s marketing Manager for more information ifarrar@thetablet.co.uk

Knit and Natter All knit and natter meetings are cancelled until further notice. Ladies do continue to knit at home - think what can be achieved in 12 weeks. Numerous blankets for the elderly, beanie hats for babies, twiddle jumpers for those with dementia and wonderful stripy jumpers for the orphans in South Africa. If you need more wool contact Helen (07860 830340) and I can arrange for some to be delivered to you. Keep safe and well.
New year, new prayer life? Why not consider joining a small group to pray and share your thoughts and experiences in strict confidence. A friendly group meets on alternate Tuesday evenings at 8pm in the café area of the Hall. These meetings are currently suspended.

Saint Catherine of Siena’s Feast Day 29th April. St Catherine of Siena was born during the outbreak of the plague in Siena, Italy on 25 March 1347. She was the 25th child although half of her siblings did not survive childhood. Age 16, St Catherine disappointed her mother by cutting off her hair and fasting as a protest against being encouraged to marry. Her father ordered her to be left in peace, and she was given her own room for prayer and meditation. She entered the Dominican Third Order at 18 and spent the next three years in seclusion, prayer, and austerity. Aged 21, she described an experience as her "mystical marriage to Christ". In her vision, she was told to re-enter public life. She immediately went out into the world – often visiting the poor and sick. An active public apostolate grew out of her contemplative life. Her letters, mostly for spiritual instruction and encouragement of her followers, began to take note of public affairs. Opposition and slander resulted from her mixing fearlessly with the world and speaking with the candour and authority of one completely committed to Christ. In 1378, the Great Schism began, splitting the allegiance of Christendom between two, then three, popes and putting even saints on opposing sides. Catherine spent the last two years of her life in Rome, in prayer and pleading on behalf of the cause of Pope Urban VI and the unity of the Church. St Catherine was instrumental in persuading Pope Gregory XI in Avignon to return to Rome. She also established a monastery for women in 1377 outside of Siena. She is credited with composing over 400 letters and prayers, her Dialogue – works so influential that St Catherine would later be declared a Doctor of the Church in 1970. By early 1380, the 33-year-old mystic became ill, possibly because of her habit of extreme fasting. She died on April 29, following a stroke just a week prior. St Catherine ranks high among the mystics and spiritual writers of the Church. In 1939, she and Francis of Assisi were declared co-patrons of Italy. She is also Patron Saint of Europe, and fire prevention.

Saint Joseph the Worker Feast Day 1 May. To foster deep devotion to St Joseph among Catholics, and in response to the “May Day” celebrations for workers sponsored by Communists, Pope Pius XII instituted the feast of St Joseph the Worker in 1955. This feast extends the long relationship between St Joseph and the cause of workers in both Catholic faith and devotion. By work, humankind both fulfils the command found in Genesis to care for the earth (Gn 2:15) and to be productive in their labours. St Joseph, the carpenter and foster father of Jesus, is but one example of the holiness of human labour. To capture the devotion to Saint Joseph within the Catholic liturgy, in 1870, Pope Pius IX declared Saint Joseph the patron of the universal Church. This silent saint, who was given the noble task of caring and watching over the Virgin Mary and Jesus, now cares for and watches over the Church and models for all the dignity of human work.

Saint Pius V Feast Day 30 April. During his papacy (1566-1572), Pius V was faced with the almost overwhelming responsibility of getting a scattered Church back on its feet. The Church had been shaken by corruption, the Reformation, the constant threat of Turkish invasion, and by the bloody bickering of the young nation-states. In 1545, a previous pope convened the Council of Trent in an attempt to deal with all these pressing problems. Off and on over 18 years, the Fathers of the Church discussed, condemned, affirmed, and decided upon a course of action. The Council closed in 1563. Pius V was elected in 1566 and charged with the task of implementing the sweeping reforms called for by the Council. He ordered the founding of seminaries for the proper training of priests. He published a new missal, a new breviary, a new catechism, and established the Confraternity of Christian Doctrine classes for the young. Pius zealously enforced legislation against abuses in the Church. He served the sick and the poor by building hospitals, he gave money customarily used for the papal banquets to poor Roman converts. His decision to keep wearing his Dominican habit led to the custom – to this day – of the pope wearing a white cassock. Pius V died on 1 May 1572 of what is believed to be cancer.

A Prayer for Spiritual Communion

Dear Guardian Angel,
go for me to the church,
there kneel down at Mass for me.
At the Offertory, take me to God,
and offer Him my service:
What I am, what I have, offer as my gift.
At the Consecration, with your seraphic strength,
adorne my Saviour truly present,
pray for those who have loved me,
for those who have offended me,
and for those now deceased,
that the blood of Jesus may purify them all.
During Holy Communion,
bring to me the Body and Blood of Jesus
uniting Him with me in spirit,
so that my heart may become His dwelling place.
Plead with Him,
that through His sacrifice
all people throughout the world may be saved.
When the Mass ends,
bring home to me and to every home,
the Lord’s blessing.
Amen.