



THE MESSENGER

The weekly review of the Parish of

St Michael and All Angels

Watford

PALM SUNDAY

5 April 2020

“The Church building is closed, but the Church family continues”

As you are now all aware, the Archbishops of Canterbury and York have announced the suspension of public worship in all Churches. The Government has also announced that all Places of Worship must close.

This means that there will be no more public worship at St Michael’s until further notice.

There is a message from Fr Geoff on the back page.

For your prayers this week:

NHS staff and patients

Care Home staff and residents

People being treated for COVID-19

Anxious families of those suffering

Everyone trying to cope with the lockdown

Police and other emergency services

People with mental health issues coping with lockdown

People with learning difficulties coping with lockdown

People who have been bereaved

The Ill and the Housebound: Especially Christopher Bilson, Janet Chandler, Marion Craddock-Jones, Audrey Dixon, Cynthia Dixon, Claire Dunning, Fr Robert Featherstone, Jemima Hill, Peter Hinchey, Mary Kearns, Keith Levinson, Loretta Lynch, Craig McKay, Lisa Mills, Sylvia Obeng, Dorcas Ochola, Brian Rees, Michelle Rodford, Christina Simon, Adelaide Tonkin, Peter White; and all who care for them.

The Departed: The souls of all who have died with Covid-19.

COLLECT

Almighty and everlasting God,
who in your tender love towards the human race
sent your Son our Saviour Jesus Christ
to take upon him our flesh and to suffer death upon the cross:
grant that we may follow the example of his patience and humility,
and also be made partakers of his resurrection;
through Jesus Christ your Son our Lord, who is alive and reigns with you, in the
unity of the Holy Spirit, one God, now and for ever. **Amen.**

FIRST READING Isaiah 50.4–9a

A reading from the book of the prophet Isaiah.

The servant of the LORD said:

- 4 The Lord GOD has given me the tongue of a teacher, that I may know how to
sustain the weary with a word. Morning by morning he wakens – wakens my ear to
listen as those who are taught.
- 5 The Lord GOD has opened my ear, and I was not rebellious, I did not turn
backwards.
- 6 I gave my back to those who struck me, and my cheeks to those who pulled out
the beard; I did not hide my face from insult and spitting.
- 7 The Lord GOD helps me; therefore I have not been disgraced; therefore I have
set my face like flint, and I know that I shall not be put to shame;
- 8 he who vindicates me is near. Who will contend with me? Let us stand up
together. Who are my adversaries? Let them confront me.
- 9 It is the Lord GOD who helps me; who will declare me guilty?

SECOND READING Philippians 2.5–11

A reading from the letter of Paul to the Philippians.

- 5 Let the same mind be in you that was in Christ Jesus,
6 who, though he was in the form of God, did not regard equality with God as
something to be exploited,
7 but emptied himself, taking the form of a slave, being born in human likeness. And
being found in human form,
8 he humbled himself and became obedient to the point of death – even death on a
cross.
- 9 Therefore God also highly exalted him and gave him the name that is above every
name,
10 so that at the name of Jesus every knee should bend, in heaven and on earth and
under the earth,
11 and every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the
Father.

PASSION GOSPEL Matthew 27.11–54

Hear the passion of our Lord Jesus Christ according to Matthew.

- 11 Now Jesus stood before the governor; and the governor asked him, 'Are you the King of the Jews?' Jesus said, 'You say so.'
- 12 But when he was accused by the chief priests and elders, he did not answer.
- 13 Then Pilate said to him, 'Do you not hear how many accusations they make against you?'
- 14 But he gave him no answer, not even to a single charge, so that the governor was greatly amazed.
- 15 Now at the festival the governor was accustomed to release a prisoner for the crowd, anyone whom they wanted.
- 16 At that time they had a notorious prisoner, called Jesus Barabbas.
- 17 So after they had gathered, Pilate said to them, 'Whom do you want me to release for you, Barabbas or Jesus who is called the Messiah?'
- 18 For he realized that it was out of jealousy that they had handed him over.
- 19 While he was sitting on the judgement seat, his wife sent word to him, 'Have nothing to do with that innocent man, for today I have suffered a great deal because of a dream about him.'
- 20 Now the chief priests and the elders persuaded the crowds to ask for Barabbas and to have Jesus killed.
- 21 The governor again said to them, 'Which of the two do you want me to release for you?' And they said, 'Barabbas.'
- 22 Pilate said to them, 'Then what should I do with Jesus who is called the Messiah?' All of them said, 'Let him be crucified!'
- 23 Then he asked, 'Why, what evil has he done?' But they shouted all the more, 'Let him be crucified!'
- 24 So when Pilate saw that he could do nothing, but rather that a riot was beginning, he took some water and washed his hands before the crowd, saying, 'I am innocent of this man's blood; see to it yourselves.'
- 25 Then the people as a whole answered, 'His blood be on us and on our children!'
- 26 So he released Barabbas for them; and after flogging Jesus, he handed him over to be crucified.
- 27 Then the soldiers of the governor took Jesus into the governor's headquarters, and they gathered the whole cohort around him.
- 28 They stripped him and put a scarlet robe on him,
- 29 and after twisting some thorns into a crown, they put it on his head. They put a reed in his right hand and knelt before him and mocked him, saying, 'Hail, King of the Jews!'
- 30 They spat on him, and took the reed and struck him on the head.
- 31 After mocking him, they stripped him of the robe and put his own clothes on him. Then they led him away to crucify him.
- 32 As they went out, they came upon a man from Cyrene named Simon; they compelled this man to carry his cross.
- 33 And when they came to a place called Golgotha (which means Place of a Skull),
- 34 they offered him wine to drink, mixed with gall; but when he tasted it, he would not drink it.
- 35 And when they had crucified him, they divided his clothes among themselves by casting lots;

36 then they sat down there and kept watch over him.
37 Over his head they put the charge against him, which read, 'This is Jesus, the King of
the Jews.'
38 Then two bandits were crucified with him, one on his right and one on his left.
39 Those who passed by derided him, shaking their heads and saying,
40 'You who would destroy the temple and build it in three days, save yourself! If you are
the Son of God, come down from the cross.'
41 In the same way the chief priests also, along with the scribes and elders, were mocking
him, saying,
42 'He saved others; he cannot save himself. He is the King of Israel; let him come down
from the cross now, and we will believe in him.
43 He trusts in God; let God deliver him now, if he wants to; for he said, "I am God's
Son."
44 The bandits who were crucified with him also taunted him in the same way.
45 From noon on, darkness came over the whole land until three in the afternoon.
46 And about three o'clock Jesus cried with a loud voice, 'Eli, Eli, lema sabachthani?' that
is, 'My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?'
47 When some of the bystanders heard it, they said, 'This man is calling for Elijah.'
48 At once one of them ran and got a sponge, filled it with sour wine, put it on a stick, and
gave it to him to drink.
49 But the others said, 'Wait, let us see whether Elijah will come to save him.'
50 Then Jesus cried again with a loud voice and breathed his last.
51 At that moment the curtain of the temple was torn in two, from top to bottom. The
earth shook, and the rocks were split.
52 The tombs also were opened, and many bodies of the saints who had fallen asleep were
raised.
53 After his resurrection they came out of the tombs and entered the holy city and
appeared to many.
54 Now when the centurion and those with him, who were keeping watch over Jesus,
saw the earthquake and what took place, they were terrified and said, 'Truly this man
was God's Son!'

HOMILY

Dear Friends,

Today is Palm Sunday, and a Palm Sunday different from any we've known. To my knowledge, the last time all the Churches in England were closed (Scotland and Wales were separate at that time), was during the reign of King John – a time called an Interdict. We are entering Holy Week, that strange week when everything went topsy-turvy within a week. The joyful entrance to Jerusalem, the Crucifixion, the Resurrection, all happened in a week. Our situation has mixes of all these. I think clapping for the NHS workers is a bit like Palm Sunday. Hearing the news of infections and deaths is a bit like Good Friday. We are waiting for the Resurrection, but it is surely coming!

Stay safe

Love and prayers

Fr Geoff