



# THE MESSENGER

The weekly review of the Parish of

*St Michael and All Angels*

Watford

**EASTER 4**

**Sunday 3 May 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.

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## **For your prayers this week:**

Staff and residents at River Court, St Anthony’s, The Chase, Amberside, Tremona, and other care homes

Families and friends of care home residents and staff

NHS workers in hospital and community

People volunteering with the NHS and community organisations

People suffering with coronavirus and other illnesses

People whose other treatments have been deferred or postponed

Care workers giving support in people’s homes

Delivery drivers and essential infrastructure workers

Supermarket and local food shop workers

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

**The Departed:**

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**Collect**

Almighty God, whose Son Jesus Christ is the resurrection and the life: raise us, who trust in him, from the death of sin to the life of righteousness, that we may seek those things which are above, where he reigns with you in the unity of the Holy Spirit, one God, now and for ever.

**FIRST READING Acts 2.42–47**

A reading from the Acts of the Apostles.

Many were baptized and were added to the community.

42 They devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and fellowship, to the breaking of bread and the prayers.

43 Awe came upon everyone, because many wonders and signs were being done by the apostles.

44 All who believed were together and had all things in common;

45 they would sell their possessions and goods and distribute the proceeds to all, as any had need.

46 Day by day, as they spent much time together in the temple, they broke bread at home and ate their food with glad and generous hearts,

47 praising God and having the goodwill of all the people. And day by day the Lord added to their number those who were being saved.

**SECOND READING I Peter 2.19–25**

A reading from the first letter of Peter. Brothers and sisters:

19 It is a credit to you if, being aware of God, you endure pain while suffering unjustly.

20 If you endure when you are beaten for doing wrong, what credit is that? But if you endure when you do right and suffer for it, you have God's approval.

21 For to this you have been called, because Christ also suffered for you, leaving you an example, so that you should follow in his steps.

22 'He committed no sin, and no deceit was found in his mouth.'

23 When he was abused, he did not return abuse; when he suffered, he did not threaten; but he entrusted himself to the one who judges justly.

- 24 He himself bore our sins in his body on the cross, so that, free from sins, we might live for righteousness; by his wounds you have been healed.
- 25 For you were going astray like sheep, but now you have returned to the shepherd and guardian of your souls.

## **GOSPEL John 10.1–10**

Hear the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ according to John.

Jesus said to the Pharisees:

- 1 'Very truly, I tell you, anyone who does not enter the sheepfold by the gate but climbs in by another way is a thief and a bandit.
- 2 The one who enters by the gate is the shepherd of the sheep.
- 3 The gatekeeper opens the gate for him, and the sheep hear his voice. He calls his own sheep by name and leads them out.
- 4 When he has brought out all his own, he goes ahead of them, and the sheep follow him because they know his voice.
- 5 They will not follow a stranger, but they will run from him because they do not know the voice of strangers.'
- 6 Jesus used this figure of speech with them, but they did not understand what he was saying to them.
- 7 So again Jesus said to them, 'Very truly, I tell you, I am the gate for the sheep.
- 8 All who came before me are thieves and bandits; but the sheep did not listen to them.
- 9 I am the gate. Whoever enters by me will be saved, and will come in and go out and find pasture.
- 10 The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy. I came that they may have life, and have it abundantly.'

## Homily

Dear friends, someone asked me if the coronavirus is an act of God, perhaps to punish us for our sins. My answer was absolutely no. As a microbiologist, I can say with confidence that the coronavirus is a completely natural phenomenon, totally explainable as something that can happen in nature without human help. As a theologian, I can say with confidence that God doesn't send plagues to kill populations as a punishment for some kind of collective sins. That isn't the God I believe in. There is, though, a human tendency to find a scapegoat – someone to blame. Christians don't need to find someone to blame, they just need to find someone to love.

Stay safe,

Love and prayers

Fr Geoff

## **NOTICES**

**KNITTERS:** The group that Dame Helen Hyde took to Rwanda in February was a great success. Our blankets were really appreciated. I saw some of the photos very briefly at choir just before the virus took hold and Carolyn would be happy to come and talk to us, at some point. I wondered if a Wednesday coffee morning slot would be appropriate after the church re-opens? It would be good if we could continue. Casting on 40 stitches and working blanket length strips would be good and less stitching up to be done. Other items are needed so please let me know if you can help. Many thanks again. Vicki (01923 229408).

**WE ARE ASKED** to put a lighted candle in our window at 7.00pm on Sundays as part of the National Call to Prayer