



THE CONFRATERNITY OF THE BLESSED SACRAMENT

March—April 2021

Bishop Roger writes:



My experience over the last year has been that one day seems to have been like any other with the same limitations and the same routines. Being now retired, I have not had to face the challenges which have beset priests and parishes, although I have wondered often whether I would have had the necessary capability and energy to do what so many of my brethren have so clearly been doing to maintain the life and worship of their people, ensuring that the sacraments are celebrated and the Gospel proclaimed “in season and out of season”, as St Paul encouraged his companion and co-worker Timothy. Now we find ourselves in the first weeks of Lent, preparing as best we can for the Lord’s Passover, the great celebration of the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. But, if we are honest, it all seems such an effort as we battle with the challenges of our lives, particularly in lockdown again!

A priest colleague reminded me on the morning I set about writing these few words of the Scripture reading given to us at Evening Prayer the previous day. It is St Paul again, writing this time of the Colossians: “We ask God to fill you with the knowledge of his will, with all the wisdom and understanding that his Spirit gives” (Col 1:9). But how we struggle so very often to understand God’s purpose, particularly if we find ourselves struggling with something that casts us down! St Paul’s prayer for us in this situation of uncertainty and bewilderment (often tinged with not a little rage) is this: “May you be made strong with all the strength which comes from his glorious might, so that you may be able to endure everything with patience” (Col 1:11).



Time and again I have returned to words of Julian of Norwich who had much to endure in life; and her patience and confidence can help us as, with her, we contemplate the love of God revealed in the cross on which she gazed during seemingly mortal illness: “God did not say, ‘You shall not be tempest-tossed, you shall not be work-weary. You shall not be discomforted.’ But he said, ‘You shall not be overcome.’ God wants us to heed these words so that we shall always be strong

in trust, both in sorrow and in joy.”

As we come to gaze on the Lord Jesus, crucified and risen, may we bless and praise him for feeding us still with the Bread of Life even though we find ourselves in the wilderness. May we rejoice, too, that he has gained the victory over sin and death!

The Secretary-General Writes:

One of the most difficult decisions that I had to face at the start of the third lockdown was whether or not to keep my church buildings open for worship and private prayer. During the first lockdown churches were closed nationally and clergy weren't permitted even to record or livestream Mass from their buildings. I was fortunate here in Edenham to be able to use the Stable Chapel as it is physically part of the Regional House and not the Parish Church. Thus, I avoided having to set up a temporary altar in my living room or kitchen as so many daringly did.

To close churches on a national scale was something few could ever have imagined. Our church buildings have remained open through some of the darkest and most difficult periods of our nation's history. The Church doesn't up-stumps in the wake of a crisis; it maintains its vigil of prayer and offers whatever pastoral help it can. I was heartened that Church leaders and politicians campaigned for churches to remain open during the second lockdown. It seemed almost indefensible that garden centres could stay open for business while churches had to close. Our churches had all the necessary risk assessments and safeguards in place with the added benefit that many of them are lofty and unintentionally draughty buildings. The average through-flow of people in a church each week could hardly be compared to that of a shop or supermarket.

The question that many seem to be asking now is 'Do churches *need* to be open? Do people really need to go to church, especially when there's a potential risk?' The answer I would give is 'Yes'. That's *not* to say that those who are clinically vulnerable or at risk should feel duty bound to attend, nor am I suggesting that people aren't acting sensibly if they make a personal choice to absent themselves. But what I *do* believe is that churches should remain open for prayer and worship, and that the clergy should be available wherever and however possible. The availability of the Church should correspond to the need for God and, when the need for God is greatest, we cannot simply bolt the doors and retreat to the comfort of the sofa and internet. Since the pandemic first began, I have provided hundreds of pre-recorded and livestreamed services via Facebook and YouTube. However, I have become acutely aware that I could easily spend all my time carefully crafting and curating online worship without ever stepping foot outside the vicarage or having any meaningful interaction with another soul. As it is, our online services are, on occasion, a little rough and ready, but I'm determined to keep them that way for that very reason.

In chapter three of St Mark's Gospel Jesus was challenged by a group of lawyers as to whether it was appropriate or not to heal a man with a withered hand on the Sabbath. The lawyers accepted that it was at least permissible to act in order to save life on the Sabbath, but to perform a non-urgent healing seemed legally unjustifiable. Jesus responded by reminding those present that the Sabbath was instituted by God for the benefit of man. The good of humanity needed to be provided for week-in, week-out. It couldn't be put off for another time or restricted to a three-week block in the summer. In the end, Jesus asked the man to stretch out his hand and he found it to be miraculously healed. Having a withered hand may not appear to have been a life-or-death situation, but in some sense *all* of Jesus' miracles, great and small, reveal something of the redemptive power of the Kingdom of God. *All* of his actions are life-giving and life-saving because they awaken us to the generous provision that God has made in sending him to die and to rise again so that we might inherit eternal life.

In this third period of lockdown there are some who have argued that we risk doing more harm than good in being open for worship and private prayer. I have a great deal of sympathy for this stance and yet, wherever the Lord is praised, the Word of God preached and the Sacraments celebrated, there will *always* be an inherent good; there will always be life-giving, life-saving grace at work. The primary task of the Church is to save souls and through the atoning sacrifice of Christ made present on the altar, I believe we are doing just that.

Whatever your perspective or individual circumstances, I do hope that those who maintain the Anglican faith in the catholic tradition can continue to provide for you in some way. Many of our buildings remain open for Mass and for private prayer. The provision of online services and opportunities for teaching and devotion is now far beyond what any of us could have imagined just a year ago. But, wherever possible, may I encourage you as members of our Confraternity to make frequent visits to the Blessed Sacrament or to maintain the discipline of a regular Spiritual Communion if visiting a church is not possible? Now, perhaps more than ever, we are reminded of the precious gift of Christ in his sacramental presence and the need to pray for others. There can be no better way to maintain the vigil of prayer which is the particular calling of the Church - the whole Church - during times of crisis and need.

May God continue to bless and uphold you during these difficult days and may he strengthen us until we are free once more to gather at his altar as the one flock around the one Shepherd.

Father Edward Martin.

INTERCESSIONS

MARCH

- 1 St David – Credo Cymru
- 2 The Love of Jesus, Wantage
- 3 S Francis, Derby
- 4 S Laurence, Long Eaton
- 5 The Holy Cross, Nottingham
- 6 S Martin, Salisbury
- 7 **Lent 3 – He was speaking of the sanctuary that was his body**
- 8 S Michael, Croydon
- 9 S Agnes, Kennington
- 10 Corpus et Sanguis Christi, Plumstead
- 11 S Peter, Streatham
- 12 The Sacred Heart, Bude
- 13 S Mary Star of the Sea, Penzance
- 14 **Lent 4 (Laetare Sunday) – God so loved the world**
- 15 Holy Trinity and S Cadoc, Llandaff
- 16 The Good Shepherd, Guilford
- 17 St Patrick – For Missionaries
- 18 Corpus Christi, Portsmouth
- 19 St Joseph – Fathers & adoptive parents
- 20 The Stigmata, Bournemouth
- 21 **Lent 5 – I shall draw all people to myself**
- 22 S Michel due Valle, Guernsey
- 23 Blessed Mary McKillop & S Benedict, Melbourne
- 24 S Thomas Aquinas, Calgary
- 25 The Annunciation – Priest Chaplains of Mary the Mother of the Church
- 26 S Margaret, Montreal
- 27 S Michael & All Angels, Winnipeg
- 28 **Palm Sunday – Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord**
- 29 Monday in Holy Wk – Confessors & Spiritual Directors
- 30 Tuesday in Holy Wk – The grace to make a good confession
- 31 Wednesday in Holy Wk – Those observing the Triduum via the Internet

APRIL

- 1 Maundy Thursday – Priests of the Society
- 2 Good Friday – The Society of the Holy Cross (SSC)
- 3 Holy Saturday – Guild of the Servers of the Sanctuary (GSS)
- 4 **Easter Day – Surrexit Alleluia!**
- 5 The Annunciation, Brighton
- 6 S Saviour and S Peter, Eastbourne
- 7 The Transfiguration, Haywards Heath
- 8 The Precious Blood, Horsham
- 9 S Anne, Hove
- 10 Ss Mary and Nicolas, Lancing College
- 11 **Easter 2 / Divine Mercy Sunday – My Lord and my God**
- 12 Our Lady of Littlehampton, Littlehampton
- 13 Anima Christi, St Leonards on Sea
- 14 S Cuthman, Storrington Deanery
- 15 S Gabriel, Worthing
- 16 Our Lady & Corpus Christi, Cambridge
- 17 Those without a local Ward (the Superior General's list)
- 18 **Easter 3 – He opened their minds to the Scriptures**
- 19 S Edmund, King & Martyr, Downham Market
- 20 S Mary, Great Yarmouth
- 21 Our Lady, Walsingham
- 22 Ss Peter and Paul, Uppingham
- 23 St George – Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II
- 24 Our Lady, at Saint Mary Steps, Exeter
- 25 **Easter 4 – I am the Good Shepherd**
- 26 S Peter Plymouth
- 27 S Margaret-Mary Alacoque, Cheltenham
- 28 The Little Flower, Longton
- 29 St Catherine of Sienna – CBS Members in Europe
- 30 Our Lady and S Andrew, Newcastle under Lyme

INTERCESSIONS

MAY

- 1 St Joseph the Worker – Ecclesiastical craftsmen
- 2 **Easter 5 – I am the vine, you are the branches**
- 3 Ss Philip and James – The Society Bishops
- 4 S Brigid, Sweden
- 5 Our Lady, Letchworth
- 6 Christ in Glory, Aldwick
- 7 Ss Mary and Dominic, Friar Park
- 8 The Holy Grail, Wolverhampton
- 9 **Easter 6 – The Lord has set his people free**
- 10 The Sacred Heart, Lincoln
- 11 S Magnus, City of London
- 12 The Sacred Heart with S Andrew, East Finchley
- 13 The Ascension of the Lord – God goes up with shouts of joy!
- 14 S Matthias – Parishes in interregnum
- 15 Adoremus, Hanworth
- 16 **Easter 7 – That they may all be one**
- 17 Alexander Mackonochie, Holborn
- 18 Corpus Christi, Kenton
- 19 Our Lady and S George, Winchmore Hill
- 20 S Giles, Reading
- 21 The Love of Jesus, Wantage
- 22 S Francis, Derby
- 23 **Pentecost – The Spirit will lead you to the truth**
- 24 S Laurence, Long Eaton
- 25 The Holy Cross, Nottingham
- 26 S Martin, Salisbury
- 27 S Michael, Croydon
- 28 S Agnes, Kennington
- 29 Corpus et Sanguis Christi, Plumstead
- 30 **Trinity Sunday – I am with you always**
- 31 Visitation of the BVM – Shrine of Our Lady of Walsingham

R.I.P.

We commend to God the souls of all Departed Associates of the Confraternity, especially the following who have died recently:

Priest-Associates

Lay Associates

William Payne
Peter Edwards
Sylvia Broadbridge
Edward Handley

Would you like to contribute to the Quarterly, passing on your news to others, & sharing events?

**Then please forward any contributions to edward.martin@lincoln.anglican.org
Material for the next edition must be received by 1st May 2021
Registered Charity No 1082897**

Blessed be Jesus in the most holy Sacrament of the altar

When I first contracted arthritis, and before I had been ‘matched’ with the right medication to treat my form of it, I found that I needed substantial amounts of extra rest. This was particularly the case at weekends, after what seemed like an interminable working week in the office with lots of aches and pains from inflamed joints. You would be right to wonder what any of this has to do with the Blessed Sacrament.



Well, one of the by-products of my exhaustion was that I would often attend the Said Mass on a Sunday evening, having slept the entire morning. While it was a wrench to miss out on the elaborate music and ritual of the Sunday morning Solemn Mass, the evening Mass brought with it what was – at the time – an unexpected spiritual benefit.

The Said Mass could have concluded relatively quickly as there was no homily and there were no intercessions. However, for those who wished to stay on - which almost invariably turned out to be all of the handful of worshippers present – Exposition and Benediction followed on immediately afterwards. There was certainly nothing fancy about it – no servers, no choir, just simple organ accompaniment, and no hymns beyond the wonderful words bequeathed to us by St Thomas Aquinas, whose feast day we have just celebrated (28 January).

I have already given away one of the wonders I discovered then – the prayerful hymns of St Thomas Aquinas incorporated into the liturgy for Benediction. I flinch slightly to recall my attempts to sing those deeply moving words but let us dwell on the words as they have been handed on to us in English rather than on my musical shortcomings!

What thoughts those words conjure up in us – “a saving victim”, “our true native land”, and “types and shadows have their ending, for the newer rite is here”. They speak not only of the profundity of what we are offered at

Benediction but also of the wider eschatological vision to which we aspire.

Before you begin to think that this all sounds a bit pre-Vatican II (well, it was a little bit!), there were intercessions offered during Exposition in a more contemporary style and in latter-day liturgical language. They would often pick up the season of the Church's year or meditate on the Gospel reading of the day, interspersed with periods of silence. For me, in my particular need, it seemed such a peaceful and restorative way to spend part of a Sunday evening.

In recent months I have often found myself wondering (the lockdown's been like that, hasn't it!) whether the force of our great liturgies ultimately lies in their words or in their actions. I imagine that you're probably shouting at this article in an exasperated fashion "It's both, of course!" and you would be right to say that.

The lasting power of our liturgies exists in their alignment of memorable phrases with bold and meaningful actions - holy actions. Benediction is no different in that regard.

The set texts used may not be as fulsome as those for Mass or for the daily offices, but they do have a startling character to them. The Divine Praises are our Faith's version of its greatest hits. They are often said in an almost defiant fashion and they speak so clearly of all that we hold so dear. It is the essence of worship. There can be no doubt as to what we mean when we repeat the invocations. There can be no trace of self-indulgence or narcissism. Man is at his best when worshipping – pride and arrogance fall away.

The striking symbolism of the sacramental devotion intrinsic to Benediction was popularised in modern culture by the 1980s film *The Mission*. There can be few, if any, images which capture so well the apparent contradiction of strength amidst weakness – “a saving victim” indeed. Or, as Graham Greene's *The Power and The Glory* has it, in another moment of apparent helplessness as the flawed hero of the novel faces the firing squad, “Hail Christ the King!”

We may have had the opportunity to be in the presence of the Blessed Sacrament at St Peter's in Rome or in Lourdes or in Walsingham or perhaps it was as part of a smaller gathering in our parish church. It

doesn't really matter which it is. What matters is to be close to God and to be able to acclaim "Blessed be Jesus Christ, true God and true Man."

The pandemic has left many of us struggling to find the right words. And then I happened to stumble across the inspiring sight on social media – alas, that is too rarely the start to a sentence! – of some of the priests of our integrity at the height of the pandemic blessing their parishes from their church towers with the Blessed Sacrament.

Instinctively I found myself proclaiming "Blessed be Jesus in the most holy Sacrament of the altar!" Amen.

*Tom Middleton is the Director of Forward in Faith
and Treasurer of the Society of Mary*

2021 COUNCIL-GENERAL

TUESDAY 5TH OCTOBER 2021

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