



## Parish of the Sacred Heart and Saint Margaret Mary, Aston

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Roman Catholic Archdiocese of Birmingham - Registered Charity No. 234216

### LENT 5

29<sup>th</sup> March 2020

Dear Parishioners,

What strange times these are! At least the sunshine has kept us happy this last week, but it looks as if even that will have gone this week. I hope you have been coping all right. My thoughts and prayers have been very much with you especially those with families living in cramped conditions where boredom and tensions can easily build up, and those isolated on their own. It is really important to create good family disciplines as St. Benedict teaches us in his rule for monks. We need times each day for the following, carefully balanced to our circumstances. Sleep, Study, Prayer, Physical work and Recreation.

Here is a reflection on this Sunday's Gospel, the Resurrection of Lazarus:

This Sunday's Gospel brings us up to face death. This something our modern materialistic age tries to avoid, even Catholics try to avoid it. Perhaps God is trying to say something to us through the corona virus!

When Jesus hears that his friend Lazarus is sick, he delays going to see him. He is waiting for his disciples to be ready to journey to face the reality of death. At last Thomas says "Let us go and die with him," and they set out to Bethany. But Lazarus is already dead and buried. Martha & Mary are really angry with Jesus for delaying, but Martha is more open "I know that, even now, God will grant whatever you ask him", while Mary remains seething in her anger "seated", not even able to move. Jesus is distressed at their lack of belief and says with a sigh that came straight from the heart "Where have you put him?" They go to the tomb. It is a cave with a stone to close the opening, cold, dark, dank with the smell of death. The Jews had just been raising stones to throw Jesus before he retreated to the other side of the Jordan where John had been baptising, a place we were told earlier was called Bethany. How strange? Are there two Bethanys, or is there just one and Jesus has been there with Lazarus and his sisters all along? Jesus said "Raise the stone". They raised the stone. Jesus raised his eyes and prays to his Heavenly Father "so that they may believe it was you who sent me." Then he says "Lazarus, here! Come out!"

Jesus is angry with us being so distressed because we don't have a living relationship with God. We see the world in closed materialistic or philosophical terms. If we believe that Jesus is the one sent by God, then we start to live in a different way, no longer perturbed by the difficulties and darkness that surrounds us.

We are preparing for the death and resurrection of Jesus and his founding of the Church with the sacraments to strengthen us. Although temporarily cut off from attending Mass, (absence makes the heart grow fonder) we have no reason to doubt that Jesus is the one sent by God and to fully engage with the activity of believing, of being intentional disciples.

I hope you were able to consecrate yourselves to Mary last Wednesday. She will bring you to her Son and help you believe. Please re-dedicated our country as the Dowry of Mary. See below.

May God bless you all

Fr. Stephen

**HOLY WEEK** starts next Sunday with Palm Sunday. It will be very strange to celebrate this week on our own in our homes. Plan it out carefully so that you know what you are going to do, using the Liturgy of the Church (go to the Universalis site) and video resources on line especially EWTN.

**EWTN** is broadcasting what it calls EWTN essentials which is a continuous devotional broadcast with the Mass every 2 hours. Get it on the free EWTN app.

**Please Pray for the sick;** Mary Levell, Peter McKernan, William Parish, Julie Gallagher, Anne Robinson, Maura Greene, Jimmy Armstrong, Pat Davis, Bernadette Harnett, Lisa Brean, Michael O'Connor, Andy Walsh, Michael Brennan, Alex McClure.

#### **THE ANGELUS AND THE DOWRY OF MARY**

On 29 March, 2020, this Sunday, England will be rededicated as the 'Dowry of Mary.' This will happen in Westminster Cathedral, in Walsingham, in every Catholic Cathedral, in every parish and in as many homes as possible. The Angelus is a most suitable prayer to prepare us spiritually for the rededication, recalling, as it does, 'some essential moments in the History of Salvation, reminding us of Mary's 'yes' to the Angel Gabriel, which undid Eve's 'no' in the Garden of Eden.' We profess our faith in 'The Word, who was made flesh, and dwelt amongst us,' and in his Death and Resurrection, the eternal destiny to which each of us is called in Christ.

Act of Entrustment Prayer can be found at:

<https://static1.squarespace.com/static/5dd26c39e4888e54689c5a3f/t/5e1681de41d1895d960a582e/1578533343593/Act+of+Entrustment.pdf>

**CORONAVIRUS** For the Church's guidelines see the Conference of Bishops website <https://www.cbcew.org.uk> or go to [gov.uk/guidance/coronavirus-covid-19-information-for-the-public](https://www.gov.uk/guidance/coronavirus-covid-19-information-for-the-public)

**LENT** is the time to renew our wills to follow Jesus, and to grow in virtue and holiness especially through works of penance in which we unite ourselves with our Lord's passion.

**40 DAYS FOR LIFE** started on Ash Wednesday and should up to Palm Sunday but has now had to be cancelled, but please continue to pray for all unborn babies and their mothers, especially any who are tempted to abort their babies, or have done so.

**APPOINTMENT OF NEW AUXILLIARY BISHOPS** The Holy Father has appointed Canon David Evans and Canon Stephen Wright as auxiliary Bishops of the Diocese. They will be ordained on Wednesday 10<sup>th</sup> June.

**BECOMING A CATHOLIC** If you wish to become a Catholic, or know someone who wishes to become a Catholic, or perhaps are a Catholic but have little perception of what that means, please contact Fr. Stephen by phone, email or in person.

**DAILY EXPOSITION** and the English Prayer Time are suspended during the Corona virus pandemic. To check on any further details phone Sr. Meena on 0795 7342742.

**MARRIAGE MATTERS** ([www.twainoneflesh.org.uk](http://www.twainoneflesh.org.uk)) Fifth Sunday of Lent (Ezekiel 37:12-14 Romans 8:8-11 John 11:1-45) **The Lord will lead us back together** Ezekiel's words apply to us when we are going through tough times in our relationship, when intimacy, physical or otherwise, seems impossible. At such times, Jesus weeps for us as He did for Lazarus. He will bring us back together if we ask Him and are willing to be vulnerable enough to explore together the changes we need to make.