



Parish of the Sacred Heart and Saint Margaret Mary, Aston
Parish of St. Joseph's Nechells

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Roman Catholic Archdiocese of Birmingham - Registered Charity No. 234216

EASTER 4

Vocations Sunday

3rd May 2020

Dear Parishioners,

Another week of lockdown and no sign of let up. Weather not so good. It can get on top of us especially if we are living in crowded conditions. It is important that we have a balanced structure to our lives and to organise our lives appropriately within the limits that are being imposed. St. Benedict gives us a clue. In his rule he talks of the various elements which we need in our lives. Opus Dei (the work of God, by which he means prayer and liturgy), study, physical work, recreation and sleep. For his monks the Opus Dei was the central focus of their lives, but for us it would be less time consuming. However one of the blessings which may come out of the coronavirus may be that we are able to revive and enhance family prayer with the help of on-line resources. We may also be able to find more time for meditation and spiritual reading.

This Sunday is Good Shepherd Sunday which is the World Day of Prayer for Vocations. Not only should we be praying for vocations to the priesthood and religious life which is really important, but also to stand back and see how God is working in our lives and to listen to his call to us. For he calls everyone in some way but often we close our ears.

We hear the Psalm 22 (23) in which God leads us a shepherd to green pastures and gentle streams of water. God calls to something which is good. In the Gospel we hear Jesus saying that he is the Good Shepherd and that he is the gate to the sheepfold. The sheepfold is where we are safe from aggressors, but we cannot live our whole lives there, the Good Shepherd leads us out to the place which he knows is good for us. We need to get to know his voice and to be able to pick it out from the cacophony of other voices. We learn to recognise his voice through becoming familiar with the scriptures and with the catechism of the Catholic Church and through prayer. How wonderful it is to hear that voice which is the voice of pure love, spoken from the Cross.

Last Wednesday was the feast of St. Catherine of Sienna, co-patron saint of Europe. She lived in very difficult times in the 14th century. One of the stories about her that I love is that when she was living her life of seclusion during her teenage years, the priests forbade her to receive Communion. I expect they were embarrassed because she would go into such ecstasies. Remember in those days lay people would not make their Communion very often, so it was a bit unusual for someone who was not a religious to make their Communion every day. She describes what happened. When it came to the fraction, as the priest broke the host a tiny fragment would fly off right to the back of the Church and land on Catherine's tongue. It is rather a lovely description of her making her spiritual Communion. These days all of us, other than the priests, are having to make our spiritual Communion. Perhaps you can imagine a tiny fragment of the host flying through cyber space, coming out of the computer screen and landing on your tongue!

Theology of the body.

There is an interesting on-line conference coming up 8th -10th May. It is on the teaching of St. John Paul II about the Catholic understanding the sexual relationship between men and women. You can register free at the link below. Of course, since the conference is in USA the timings will be awkward for us, but if you are an owl you will be OK!

https://www.tobvirtualconference.com/?fbclid=IwAR1PC8KM40hHBNOK4wXR3_ko00OwFRxCpeJM7QnXAbze4ePB1dtFmP0tRXY

I hope I shall be able to attend some of it and I would be interested to hear from any of you doing the same.

This coming Monday is the Feast of the English Martyrs.
My prayers for you all especially as I celebrate the Mass.
God bless
Fr Stephen

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.

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)

USEFUL WEBSITES <https://www.mcnmedia.tv>

<https://www.wordonfire.org>

<https://www.stchadscathedral.org.uk/>

<https://www.birminghamdiocese.org.uk/>

<https://www.ewtn.com/radio/shows/called-to-communion>

<https://www.catholic.com/>

<https://www.walsingham.org.uk/>

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.twoinoneflesh.org.uk) (www.twoinoneflesh.org.uk)

Fourth Sunday of Easter (Acts 2:14, 36-41 1 Peter 2:20-25 John 10:1-10)

Feeding your sheep

John 10:10 describes us as 'sheep'. God watches over and feeds us with his Word, and in the Eucharist. With God's help we have created a few more sheep, so we pray for His help, read books, use the internet to protect our children from the harm done by the 'media' and many of today 'addictions'. That's being good shepherds.