

**CLERGY**

Fr. Anthony Oleh, MSP — Parish Priest  
Fr. Ebuka Umekachikelu, MSP — Assistant Priest  
Rev. Robert Beresford — Deacon

St. Agatha's Catholic Church  
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[www.stagathaschurch.org.uk](http://www.stagathaschurch.org.uk)  
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The parish office should be your first port of call for any enquiries, including appointments, and arrangements for all sacraments (e.g. baptisms, weddings, funerals). Please email Karin Rattray, the Parish Secretary, at [kingston@rcaos.org.uk](mailto:kingston@rcaos.org.uk) or call on **020 8546 4633**. The office is open from **10am to 3pm Monday, Tuesday, Thursday and Friday (closed Wednesdays)**. Could you please limit telephone calls outside these hours to emergencies only.

**FEAST DAYS, MEMORIALS AND MASSES  
SUNDAY 15<sup>TH</sup> MARCH 2020.  
3<sup>RD</sup> SUNDAY OF LENT (A)**

**Saturday 14<sup>th</sup>**

9.30am Fanny Margaret Cook RIP

6.30pm Sheila McCormick RIP

**Sunday 15<sup>th</sup> 3<sup>rd</sup> Sunday of Lent**

9.00am People of the Parish

10.30am Wellbeing of Keith Fraser

6.30pm Wellbeing of Philip Cockle

**Monday 16<sup>th</sup>**

9.30am Patricia Cotmore RIP

Mary Dae Devine RIP

**Tuesday 17<sup>th</sup> St Patrick, Bishop, Patron of Ireland, Feast**

9.30am Holy souls

**Wednesday 18<sup>th</sup>**

9.30am Wellbeing of Keith Fraser

**Thursday 19<sup>th</sup> St Joseph, Spouse of the Blessed Virgin Mary,  
Patron of the Universal Church, Solemnity**

9.30am Rev. Fr. Casper Lutz RIP

**Friday 20<sup>th</sup>**

9.30am Thanksgiving for safe birth of Baby Rafferty & Family

**Saturday 21<sup>st</sup>**

9.30am Thomas Gerard Luson RIP

6.30pm Marco Vincenzo & Gino Straccialano RIP

John Davis RIP

Exposition: Monday to Saturday 8.30 – 9.20am.

Morning Prayer: Monday to Saturday 9am.

Confessions: Saturday 10-10.30am, 6-6.15pm & at call.

Baptisms: By previous arrangement – Sunday at 12.30pm.

Marriages: Six months' notice required – Diocesan rule.

**ON THE FIRST SATURDAY OF EACH MONTH (4<sup>th</sup> April 2020) WE WILL  
HAVE ONE HOUR OF EXPOSITION OF THE BLESSED SACRAMENT  
BETWEEN 10AM & 11AM.**

**PLEASE PRAY FOR THE SICK AND HOUSEBOUND**

Please pray for the sick and housebound of our Parish: Christina Ward, Clare Horgan, John Sewter, Keith Fraser, Trish Taylor, Ryan Morrison, Philip Cockle and Melba De Silva. *Please let the Parish Office know in writing if either you or your relatives want to be mentioned on our sick list.*

**ANNIVERSARIES**

*Alphonse Schembri, Gerry Byrne, Herbert Lewis, Thomas Francis Mulcahy, Mary Pickard, Rita Da Silva, Aaron Bennett, Mary Chisholm, Virginio Anghileri, Anne Lally, Frederic Leo Strawson, John McSorley, Robert Thomas Amon Kotei, Patricia Scott, Maria Winifred Taylor, Alfred Shoppee, Charles Kaufman, Mary Letitia Lally, William Kitchen, Joseph William Kilkenny, Valentine Percival Hafner, Patrick Cremin, Bernadette Teresa Clarke, Edith Conlon, Stantey Cook, Peggy McManus, Norman Owen, Bridget (Bridie) Crehan, Mary McGhee, Ann Rosemary Parker, Corina Gomes.*

**+++ May they rest in Peace +++**

**LET US REMEMBER ALL WHO HAVE DIED RECENTLY**

Let us remember those who have died, those whose anniversaries occur about this time and their families, with love and affection during this time of grief. May the Lord grant eternal rest to all who have died.

**Archdiocese of Southwark**



**Coronavirus Update**

**The Catholic Bishops' Conference of England and Wales has updated its advice to Dioceses and Parishes regarding the necessary measures to be taken to combat the spread of the Coronavirus. A Decree relating to these has been issued by the Archbishop. This Decree is mandatory within the Archdiocese.**

**ARCHDIOCESE DECREE ON CORONA VIRUS**

- The sign of peace is suspended at Masses.
- No reception of Holy Communion from the chalice at Masses.
- Those who choose to receive Holy Communion on the tongue should consider receiving on the hand instead as an act of loving charity to the community.
- Holy water stoups have been emptied and sanitisers are provided. Please use this to sanitise your hands when entering and leaving the church.
- Please do not to use the shared hymn books or Mass books during Mass, hymn sheets will be provided. The sheets will be for single use only and we ask that you take them home after Mass and do not leave them in church.
- Ensure that you maintain good hygiene (we should be doing this already), especially at mass and parish gatherings. The best way of protecting us from the spread is for everyone to use universal good hygiene, which will effectively disrupt the spread of the virus.
- **▪ Catch it - sneeze into a tissue ▪ Bin it – bin the tissue ▪ Kill it – wash your hands with soap and water or alcohol hand gel. Do not touch your face unless you've washed your hands**
- Ensure good regular cleaning of surfaces lots of people touch regularly, including such things as door handles.
- If you consider yourself vulnerable (for example, elderly, weakened immune systems and long-term conditions like cancer, diabetes and heart disease), please refrain from large parish gatherings and stay at home. You may request for communion to be brought to you by the priest.
- If you think you have cold or flu symptoms, you are encouraged to refrain from attending Liturgy and public events (it may be ordinary cold but equally, it is essential to ensure a precautionary approach).
- Tea and coffee will not be offered after Mass on Sundays.
- Collection bags will not be passed along the pews, please make your way to the collectors to make your offerings.

**PLEASE TAKE THIS HOME WITH YOU, DO NOT  
RETURN TO THE TRAYS. THANK YOU.**

**The Most Reverend Peter Smith RIP**  
**Emeritus Archbishop of Southwark**



**+++ May he rest in peace +++**

It is with great sadness that I write to inform you that Archbishop Peter Smith, our beloved Archbishop Emeritus, died peacefully on Friday 6 March 2020, at the Royal Marsden Hospital, Chelsea.

Archbishop Peter had received the sacraments and prayers of the Church, and his former secretary, Fr Philip Glandfield, was with him when he died. I was able to visit him earlier that evening, together with the Vicar General, Mgr Matthew Dickens, and the Hospital Chaplain, Fr Joseph McCullough. Mr John Toryusen, the Director of the Archdiocese of Southwark Youth Service, accompanied Archbishop Peter during his illness and his time in hospital. Archbishop Peter was visited in hospital by family and friends, and by Cardinal Vincent Nichols, the Archbishop of Westminster.

Archbishop Peter's illness progressed very quickly following his diagnosis of cancer just a few weeks ago. He was a much loved brother, uncle, and friend; a priest of the Archdiocese of Southwark, Rector of St John's Seminary, Wonersh, Bishop of East Anglia, Archbishop of Cardiff and Archbishop of Southwark until his retirement in July 2019. While Archbishop of Southwark, he also served from 2014-2015 as Apostolic Administrator of the Diocese of Arundel and Brighton. So many good wishes have been passed to him in the past few weeks, and prayers and Masses offered. Thank you for all of these.

Our gift to Archbishop Peter now is to pray for the repose of his soul, and to remember prayerfully his family, friends and loved ones at their time of loss.

In a ministry that spanned almost fifty years, Archbishop Peter made an outstanding contribution to the Catholic Church across three dioceses, and nationally through his service on the Catholic Bishops' Conference of England and Wales. Most importantly, he was a disciple who witnessed to Christ with straightforward, splendid faith and radiant joy. Together with the other dioceses in which Archbishop Peter served, we mourn him with enormous affection and deep gratitude for all he gave so willingly and selflessly to so many people.

We are grateful for the care Archbishop Peter received from the staff at the Royal Marsden Hospital.

We now entrust our friend and brother to the Lord whom he served with such faithfulness, generosity and gentleness. May Archbishop Peter rest in peace and rise in glory.

More information about the funeral arrangements for Archbishop Peter will be forthcoming, along with more comprehensive appreciations of Archbishop Peter's life of service.

May the saints and angels welcome him to paradise.

Yours devotedly in Christ

+ John

Most Rev John Wilson  
Archbishop of Southwark

**THIRD SUNDAY OF LENT, CYCLE A**  
**SUNDAY, MARCH 15<sup>TH</sup>, 2020**

**Gospel Reading**

*John 4:5-42 Jesus reveals himself to the Samaritan woman at the well. (shorter form: John 4:5-15,19b-26,39a,40-42)*

**Reflection**

On this Sunday and the next two Sundays, we break from reading the Gospel of Matthew to read from John's Gospel. The Gospel of John is the only Gospel not assigned to a particular liturgical year. Instead, readings from John's Gospel are interspersed throughout our three-year liturgical cycle.

In today's Gospel, the dialogue between Jesus and a woman from Samaria is among the most lengthy and most theological found in Scripture. The most startling aspect of the conversation is that it happens at all. Jesus, an observant Jew of that time, was expected to avoid conversation with women in public. The animosity between the Jews and the Samaritans should have prevented the conversation as well. The woman herself alludes to the break from tradition: "How can you, a Jew, ask me, a Samaritan woman, for a drink?" Yet Jesus not only converses with the woman, he also asks to share her drinking vessel, an action that makes him unclean according to Jewish law.

The initial conversation between Jesus and the woman is better understood if we consider the importance of water, especially in the climate of Israel. At first, the woman understands Jesus' promise of "living water" in a literal sense: "Sir, give me this water, so that I may not be thirsty or have to keep coming here to draw water." With no running water, the daily trip to the well by the women of the community was of paramount importance. The women of the town would have travelled to the well in the early morning, but this woman came to the well at noon, the hottest time of the day. The timing of her visit is a clear sign that she is an outcast within the Samaritan community. We learn in her conversation with Jesus that she is an outcast because of her "many husbands."

Behind the conversation lies the animosity and rivalry between the Jews and the Samaritans. Samaritans shared Jewish ancestry, but Samaritans had intermarried with foreigners when they lived under the rule of the Assyrians. Samaritan religion included worship of Yahweh, but was also influenced by the worship of other gods. When the Jews refused Samaritan help in the building of the Temple at Jerusalem, the Samaritans eventually built a temple for themselves at Mt. Gerizim (the same mountain mentioned by the woman at the well). Like the Jews, the Samaritans believed that a Messiah would come.

The high point of the conversation is when Jesus reveals himself to her as the Messiah. His answer to the Samaritan woman's questions about worship is meant to predict a time when worshiping in truth and spirit will become the way to worship.

After the conversation, the Samaritan woman becomes a disciple. Even though she is an outcast and not a Jew, she returns to her town to lead others to Jesus and to wonder whether she has found the Messiah. The Samaritan townspeople return with her to meet Jesus for themselves, and many are said to come to believe in him.

The significance of the encounter between Jesus and the Samaritan woman has many levels. The first is personal: The woman is herself converted to belief in Jesus as Messiah because he knows her sin but speaks with her just the same. The second is social: Having come to know Jesus as the Messiah, the Samaritan woman becomes an evangelist to her own people.

The third level of the story is educational: Jesus uses his encounter with the Samaritan woman to teach his disciples that God's mercy is without limit. The disciples return from their shopping quite confused to find Jesus talking with a Samaritan, and a woman at that! But the conversion of the Samaritan townspeople is a foretaste of the kind of open community that will be created among those who believe that Jesus is the Messiah.

### Thanksgiving / Send forth Mass

Thank you to everyone who joined us for Fr. Pius' thanksgiving/send forth Mass. A huge thank you also to everyone who gave so generously to the Thanksgiving Collection, to thank him for his ministry at St. Agatha. A total of £326 was raised.

### Lately Dead

Please pray for the repose of the soul of Robert 'Bob' Joseph Cunningham, who died on 27<sup>th</sup> February 2020, aged 89 Years. His requiem will take place at St Agatha's on Monday 16<sup>th</sup> March 2020 at 12pm followed by burial at Surbiton Cemetery at 1.30pm. Bob was an active member of our parish, and also part of our collections and counting team, until he moved to Bourne House a few years ago 'Eternal rest grant to him, O Lord, and let perpetual light shine upon him. May he rest in peace. Amen.'

### Church Banners

Two parishioners of St Agatha's have kindly sponsored the purchase of new Lent and Easter Banners for the church; our thanks to them, we truly appreciate the donation. If anyone would be interested in sponsoring the purchase of Ordinary Seasonal Banners, please contact the Parish Office to discuss further.

### St Patrick's Night Dinner

Apologies but our annual St Patrick's Night Dinner has been cancelled.



### First Holy Communion

FHC Classes continue with children's Session 8 on Sunday 29<sup>th</sup> March 2020. The following session 9 will be on Sunday 26<sup>th</sup> April 2020, after the Easter break.



### St Agatha's Confirmation 2020

The next candidate session will be on Thursday 19<sup>th</sup> March 2020. The last session, the Family Meeting: Final Preparation for Candidates & Parents will be on Thursday 26<sup>th</sup> March 2020.

The Sacrament of Confirmation will take place on Sunday 29<sup>th</sup> March 2020. Please note that British Summer Time starts this day.



*A full programme of all the FHC and Confirmation sessions can be found on the parish website.*

### Parish Men's Group

The next meeting of the Men's Group will be on **Thursday 19th March** at the Wych Elm from 8.00pm. Everyone is welcome, please come along and bring your friends.



### Important Upcoming Dates:

Sun 15<sup>th</sup> March FHC Session 7  
Sun 15<sup>th</sup> March Stations of the Cross  
Wed 18<sup>th</sup> March Stations of the Cross  
Thurs 19<sup>th</sup> March Parish Men's Group  
Thurs 19<sup>th</sup> March Confirmation Session 8  
Fri 20<sup>th</sup> March Stations of the Cross  
Fri 20<sup>th</sup> March St Agatha's Church Youth Club  
Sun 22<sup>nd</sup> March Stations of the Cross

### Offerings

<b>First collection</b>	Gift Aid	£ 433.00	Loose	£ 552.12
<b>Retiring Collection</b>	Gift Aid	£ 192.00	Loose	£ 80.95

**TOTAL £1260.07**

Thank you for your generosity to your parish.  
Last Sunday the retiring collection was for CAFOD.



**Let's eat simply so others can simply eat!**

**Have a simple meal and give to save lives.**

*Thank you to everyone who joined us for the last CAFOD Soup Lunch, we raised £28.50, apologies but the next Lenten Soup lunch is currently postponed.*

### The Rededication of England as the Dowry of Mary

The Archbishop invited all Catholics to begin a personal 33-day consecration to Jesus through Mary, from Friday 21<sup>st</sup> February 2020 all. This included an invitation to go to the Sacrament of Confession during Lent. A copy of the Novena pamphlet is available at the back of the church for your use in the church.

### Diocesan Directory 2020

Copies of the Diocesan Directory for 2020 are now available from the Parish Office. They cost £3.00 each.

### British Summer Time

Please remember that the clocks go forward one hour in the early hours of **Sunday 29<sup>th</sup>**

**March**; Sunday Mass will feel one hour earlier than usual!



Change your **CLOCKS** and your



**SMOKE DETECTOR BATTERIES!**

'O Lord make this Lenten season different from the other ones. Let me find you again. Amen.

~ Henri Nouwen

**THIRD SUNDAY OF LENT, CYCLE A**  
**SUNDAY, MARCH 15<sup>TH</sup>, 2020**

**Gospel Reading**

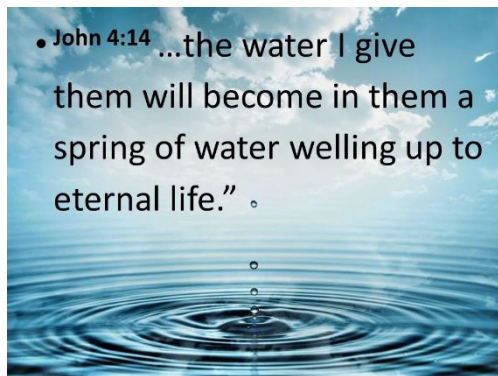
*John 4:5-42 Jesus reveals himself to the Samaritan woman at the well. (shorter form: John 4:5-15, 19b-26, 39a, 40-42)*

**Family Reflection**

Lent is a season for repentance. It is a season during which we are called to reflect upon and to live deeply the promises of Baptism. The well and the conversation about water immediately recall for us the Sacrament of Baptism. As the Samaritan woman was converted and sent on a mission because of the conversation about water, we too are converted and sent by our Baptism to preach the good news of Jesus to others.

Take this opportunity to reflect upon the importance of Baptism with your family. If you have photos or other mementos of your family's Baptisms, bring them out and take some time to recall the day of Baptism and its importance to you and your family. Create a prayer table that includes these mementos and a bowl of holy water. After you have spent some time talking about Baptism, invite everyone to listen carefully and prayerfully to today's Gospel. Read John 4:5-42 together. Ask how Jesus' meeting with the woman at the well is like Baptism. (Jesus knows the woman's sin and forgives her. The woman comes to know Jesus as the Messiah. The woman invites others to meet Jesus.) Pray a prayer of blessing for each member of the family that God will help each one live the promises of his or her Baptism. Pray together the Lord's Prayer.

Sunday Connection, Loyola Press



“We can't, from only our own resources, produce the fruit that will last, unless we allow the living word of God to nurture our faith and trust in God who loves each one of us unconditionally and with a steadfast love” ~ The Most Reverend Peter Smith RIP  
Emeritus Archbishop of Southwark

**“The God Who Speaks” – Year of the Word 2020**

To mark the special Year of the Word Archbishop John Wilson is inviting all Parishes in the diocese to join him for a special diocesan gathering in Aylesford on Saturday 27<sup>th</sup> June. Please see leaflets and noticeboard for more details. If you would like to attend, please contact the Parish Secretary.

**Baptism Preparation Class**

Our next Baptism preparation class is on **Sunday 5<sup>th</sup> April 2020**. Please contact the parish secretary to book your place. If you are considering your child's baptism in the next few months, please complete an application form and join us for this class. *Parents need to attend a Baptism preparation class before arranging a date for a baptism.* Godparents are also encouraged and welcome to attend the class. The Baptism preparation class is for the adults only; it is our experience that parents get more out of the sessions if they are not easily distracted.



**Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults Course**

The Programme for Rite of Christian Initiation for Adults (RCIA) course is intended for adults who wish to receive any of the sacraments of Baptism, Holy Eucharist and Confirmation and for Christians baptised in another denomination who would like to become Catholic. If you fall into either of these categories please speak with Fr. Anthony. The course is expected to start in October 2020.

**Missio Red Boxes**

**Volunteer required for this parish**

We are seeking a parish representative or 'secretary' for this worthy Catholic charity. You will not be alone! All volunteers have the full support of the Missio team who will support you at every stage and answer all queries. Missio also runs a day-long training course for local secretaries when they take over, which is a useful opportunity to ask questions direct and to meet others who are doing the same thing in their own parishes. By supporting Missio, you play a vital part in creating a vibrant Catholic Church for the future. If you are interested, please contact Karin in the parish office to discuss further.



**Please see the Parish noticeboard for more details of the following:**

- A Day with Mary
- Volunteer Roles at Southwark Archdiocese
- London SW Catholic Social Group
- Pilgrimage to Knock Shrine
- The Mustard Seed
- Worldwide Marriage Encounter Weekend
- Morning Lenten Services at St Thomas Aquinas

**WISHING YOU A BLESSED AND PEACEFUL WEEKEND!**

ROMAN CATHOLIC ARCHDIOCESE OF SOUTHWARK

A Charitable Incorporated Organisation – Registered Incorporated Charity Number 1173050

## LENT AND EASTER 2020 AT ST AGATHA'S

The Bishops of England and Wales have dedicated this year for all our parishes to focus on the Word of God and encourage people to read passages of the scriptures more frequently so that it is a greater guide and strength in their daily life. Perhaps we could all make this part of our Lenten resolution to read and reflect on a few sentences of the Gospel or one of the Epistles at times during the week. 'Reading Matthew in Lent' is a series of simple podcasts for the Lenten season offering a daily reading from St Matthew's Gospel from Ash Wednesday to Easter Monday.

<https://www.cbcew.org.uk/home/events/reading-matthew/>

*The times and details of all Masses and services are listed in the Lent and Holy Week 2020 Programme that is available at the back of the church. Please note that, on Maundy Thursday, the Mass of the Lord's Supper is at 7.30pm, the Solemn Liturgy on Good Friday is at 3pm and the Easter Vigil on Holy Saturday is at 8pm. There are no morning masses these days, though there are children's celebrations at 12pm on both Thursday and Friday, and stations of the cross at 10am on Good Friday.*

### My Day by Day

This Lenten booklet is available at the back of the church. There is one copy for each family. This little book offers helpful readings and reflections for every day during Lent and is an excellent way to prepare for Easter. A donation of £1.00 is encouraged, please put money in the box marked Papers

### CTS Booklets for Lent

Our CTS stand in the church porch has some suitable spiritual reading for Lent; do have a look at what is on offer today. Payments should be put in the wall box marked 'Papers'.

### Stations of the Cross

Stations of the Cross will be held at 7.30pm on Wednesdays, Friday mornings after Mass and at 5.30pm on Sundays during Lent. This devotion provides an opportunity for us to walk the road to Calvary with Our Blessed Lord.



### Lenten Reconciliation

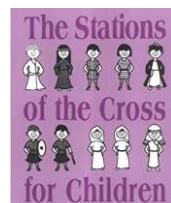
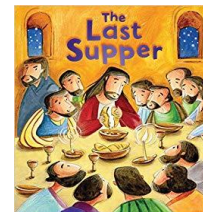
A Lenten Reconciliation service will be held on Thursday 2<sup>nd</sup> April at 7.30pm here in the Parish of St Agatha for everyone. It is an opportunity for those who would like to go to confession before the Easter Triduum, which begins on Maundy Thursday. The Sacrament of Reconciliation is one of the healing sacraments and a powerful help on our Journey of Faith.



### Maundy Thursday and Good Friday

#### Children's Celebrations

All children are welcome to join us at 12pm on Maundy Thursday and Good Friday as we observe both days with child-friendly services. During these hands-on services, children of all ages will walk together through the Last Supper and the Stations of the Cross, learning as they go. On Good Friday we will



need children from year 5 and above, for readings, and actors from year 3 and above to take part in the performance; sign up forms will be available at the back of the church soon.

#### 'What can I do for Lent?'

'Prayer, Fasting and Almsgiving' is the Lenten tradition. We are required to fast by reducing food intake on Ash Wednesday and Good Friday, but giving up something (e.g. chocolate or alcohol) is also fasting. Extra prayer during Lent is very important.

Other suggestions also include:

- \*say some additional prayers each day
- \*visit the Blessed Sacrament
- \*go to weekday Mass if you can
- \*buy a booklet to guide your reflections.
- \*make the special effort involved in family prayer.
- \*choose one of the Gospels and read it during Lent.
- \*study the Sunday readings before coming to Mass
- \*come to the Stations of the Cross
- \*receive the Sacrament of Reconciliation
- \*Make a special effort to help someone who is poor, sick, old or lonely.
- \*Giving to those less fortunate than yourself.

### Friday Penance

'The Bishops [of England and Wales] wish to remind us that every Friday is set aside as a special day of penitence, as it is the day of the suffering and death of the Lord. They believe that it is important that all the faithful again be united in a common, identifiable act of Friday penance because they recognise that the virtue of penitence is best acquired as part of a common resolve and common witness. The law of the Church requires Catholics on Fridays to abstain from meat, or some other form of food, or to observe some other form of penance laid down by the Bishops' Conference (Canon 1251). The Bishops decided to re-establish the practice that this penance should be fulfilled simply by abstaining from meat and by uniting this to prayer. Those who cannot or choose not to eat meat as part of their normal diet should abstain from some other food of which they regularly partake'. The form of penance we chose to adopt each Friday is a matter of personal choice and does not have to take the same form every Friday. Failure to undertake this penance on a particular Friday would not constitute a sin.

### Church Flowers during Lent

One of the ways we have decided to observe Lent is by not having flowers in the church during this season of austerity and simple reflection.

We hope this absence of flowers during Lent will amplify the resurrection message of the Easter flowers when they arrive!

THIRD SUNDAY OF LENT, CYCLE A  
SUNDAY, MARCH 15<sup>TH</sup>, 2020

“LIVING WATER”

“Give me some of that water to drink so that I may never get thirsty and never have to come here again to draw water”.

(John 4:15)

Those of us who live in the Northern hemisphere, with regular flooding and torrential rain, might be surprised to know that on a worldwide scale there is a catastrophic shortage of water. Climate change, pollution, poor agriculture and the growth in population have all contributed to a situation where 1.1 billion people lack access to water and 2.7 billion experience water shortage at least once a month. Damaged eco-systems mean wells running dry with resulting catastrophic results for irrigation and drought. All this whilst the ice caps melt in the polar regions and a small rise in the level of the ocean causes catastrophic flooding in places like Bangladesh.

Water is not merely a physical necessity for life. It has a powerful symbolic and metaphorical significance also. The early 20th century psychologist Carl Jung explored the whole realm of archetypes and our collective unconscious in his work on analytical psychology. He discovered that images of deep water, oceans, seas and lakes are universal symbols of the deep and primitive origins in the heart and mind of radically different societies in very different ages. Poetry, too, recognises the symbolic potency of water. W.H. Auden writes of this and other images in his essay “In Memory of W. B. Yeats” “Poetry is the water that allows our souls to ripen and grow”.

Although the words might be different in the Bible, the symbolic meaning of water is the same. In the Book of Genesis, we read of powerful waters at the dawn of creation. (Genesis 1:1); and the devastating flood of Noah’s day are signs of purification and new life. (Genesis 6:17). The scene of the descent of Jesus into the waters of the Jordan to be baptised is surrounded by symbol as a reminder that the time has come when God’s promise is to be fulfilled in a unique and personal way. “This is my Son, the Beloved, my favour rests on Him”. (Matthew 3:17. Mark 1:11. Luke 3:22) In the gospel passage assigned to the Third Sunday of Lent we hear the conversation between Jesus and the Woman at the well of Samaria. That conversation touches every level of the human condition – and the redeeming offered by Christ. No wonder the Church presents it as part of the ‘Scrutinies’ for those adults seeking Baptism at the Easter Vigil. All of us, like the woman at the well, are invited by Jesus to travel again the journey of our lives.

The time and place of the encounter were not promising. “It was the sixth hour” – Midday – the hottest time of the day. It was near Sychar, in Samaria, a place where no self-respecting Jew was to be found. Samaria was a place of compromise, where a Jewish remnant had intermarried with their Assyrian conquerors following the invasions of 720 B.C. In doing so, they had foregone the right to call themselves Jews – at least according to those who remained faithful to the worship of God in the Temple on the mount of Jerusalem. The Samaritans had their own sacred mount also, mount Gerizim, which was later destroyed in the days of the Maccabees (129 B.C).

The opening of the conversation was unpromising also. “I am a Samaritan” she said. “You are a Jew. “How is it that you ask for a drink from me?” The social, cultural and religious barriers are all contained in that statement. She would have known it was unacceptable for a single, male Jewish man to engage in conversation with a woman alone. She would also be well aware of the low esteem in which Samaritans were held by practicing Jews. All contained in her incredulous question.

As in all human encounters with God, the start is superficial: “Give me some of that water so that I do not have to come to this place any more”. But Jesus, the reader of minds and hearts, leads her to a deeper encounter so that she may learn the truth about herself, her life, her faith and her fulfilment.

The living water is the thirst for God. She would have known the words of the prophet Isaiah “They shall not hunger or thirst”. (Isaiah 49:10) as well as the words of the Psalm “With you is the fountain of life” (Ps.36:9). Recognising the truth about herself and about her people “You are right to say you have no husband for, although you have had five, the one you have now is not your husband”; the woman is seen immediately as the representative of her people who have broken the bridal relationship of the covenant. They have married the foreign invader and compromised their religion. The time for healing and reconciliation has come. “The time will come when you will worship the Father neither on this mountain nor in Jerusalem”. And then: “...those who worship Him must worship in spirit and in truth”.

The true worship of God takes place in the Temple of Christ’s body. It is his sacrifice which reconciles broken humanity to God and to itself. Worship in spirit and in truth is not something that lies outside ourselves, but within, when the life of each person is conformed to the life and love of Jesus himself. To know ourselves as God knows us and to know that we are received, accepted, forgiven and loved is the height and depth of self-knowledge and communion with God and each other.

Most Rev George Stack, Archbishop of Cardiff.

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**St Agatha’s Church Easter Spring Clean**

In previous years, when asked, we have been blessed with a great turnout of parishioners to help clear, tidy up and plant in the church grounds. This year we are having a day dedicated to ‘Spring Cleaning and Tidying up our Church and Grounds’ and we again call on our kind volunteers to help prepare our beautiful church inside and outside for Easter. If you can spare a couple of hours on **Saturday 28<sup>th</sup> March 2020**, please come along and join us in the Cloister after the morning Mass. There are a variety of indoor and outdoor tasks that need to be taken care of and we hope that both male and female parishioners will be willing to assist. Even if you can only spare an hour or two, it will be greatly appreciated! All teenagers will be especially welcome, together with those aged 11 – 13 (accompanied by an adult please) but for safety purposes, sadly, no smaller children. Volunteers who would like to help spruce up the gardens – please kindly bring gardening tools and gloves with you. Refreshments will be available and a soup lunch will be provided after. There will be a sheet in the church porch for volunteers to sign up so that we can have refreshments arranged according to numbers expected. Many thanks.