



ST. JOSEPH'S HIGHGATE PARISH BULLETIN

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Fr. Pat (pfcp44@yahoo.com) Fr. George (gaskoloth@hotmail.com)

Masses: Sunday: (7pm Saturday) 8am, 10am, 12noon, 1.30 (Polish), 7pm.

Holydays: 6.30pm vigil, 9.30am, 11am, 6.30pm

Weekdays: 9.30am, 6.30pm. **Saturday:** 9.30am, 7pm. **Bank Holiday:** 9.30am

Sacrament of Reconciliation

Saturday 10-10.30am, 6.30 -6.45pm

Weekdays: immediately after Mass (on request)

3rd March 2019 – 8th Sunday in Ordinary Time CELEBRATING LENT

It might be a lot later than usual, but with its annual inevitability Lent is once again on the doorstep. In my (very) younger days Lent tended to be a very austere season. Not only were people expected to be making personal sacrifices – most commonly ‘giving up’ something, but the normal opportunities for having fun were greatly curtailed – there were to be no dances in the local parish hall, for instance. (At least that gave the Parish Priest a break from having to be there to make sure there was an appropriate amount of space between any couple who were dancing together!) It’s not surprising that many people have the same basic approach to Lent as they grew up with, but I think it’s fair to say that nowadays most of us approach it with a little more positive understanding of what it’s all about. On the surface it can be seen in the fact that many people will be doing something, rather than giving up something for Lent. But more importantly we now appreciate that it is not simply the season that comes before Easter, but the season that helps us to prepare for Easter. And that’s a very key difference.

Preparing for anything raises some key questions. For instance, if I’m preparing to cook a meal I need to decide what the people sharing it would like, or, maybe more realistically, what I can afford; do I have the key ingredients in the house, or do I need to go to the shops; what time do we want to be sitting down, as that will determine when I need to start prepping (yeh, I do watch some of those programs!) and actually cooking. Or maybe it’s my ambition to run a marathon – and believe me, it isn’t – then I should realise that I need to build up my fitness levels over a sufficient period of time; I’ll also need to watch my diet, and go for ever longer practice runs, and so on.

You might very reasonably be asking, and how does all this relate to Lent? Well, it’s easy for us to say it’s a period of preparation for Easter, but, in reality, what does that actually mean? Easter will happen whether I prepare for it or not. You can’t say that about a meal or running a marathon. But if I see Easter as me personally, and as a member of the Christian community, celebrating the Risen Christ, and his most gracious offer that I can share in that risen life, then I can ask myself how can I use this period of preparation to help me have that life grow ever stronger in me and through me. Then maybe I can recognise those things in my behaviour that are distracting me from a more loving way of life, and start working on getting rid of them. But I can also hopefully see that there are positive ways I can build on the strengths and talents I have to more consciously and practically live that risen life.

And our gospel this Sunday is offering some thoughts that maybe will help us get on our way on this journey towards Easter. For instance, maybe we are a little too inclined to offer to take the splinter out of our neighbours eye, rather than being aware that there is a huge plank in our own. Or maybe we’ve forgotten that one of the signs of a healthy tree – or person – is that it produces good fruit. To coin a phrase, we’d be nuts to miss out on living a spiritually fruitful life. Have a blessed and positive Lent.

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We pray for the sick and housebound of our Parish - Karen Hodges; **we remember those who have died recently** – Christine Steele, Mrs. Josephine Prior, Clive Ellis; **we remember those whose anniversaries occur at this time** – Maureen Waldron, Tommy and Kathleen Carroll, John Anthony Murphy, Hanni and Christalla Savva, Francesgos and Aipina Francesgou.

Ash Wednesday:

This Wednesday, 6th March, is Ash Wednesday. Ashes will be blessed and distributed at the usual weekday Masses at 9.30am and 6.30pm.

Lenten Project:

Last week I reprinted for you an extract from what Fr. Rick had written in 2010 in the immediate aftermath of the devastating earthquake in Haiti. In the intervening years Fr. Rick and his many co-workers, who have now also been joined by another Passionist priest – Fr. Enzo – have worked extremely hard and effectively to alleviate the sufferings of the poverty-stricken people. (By the way, for those who are relatively new to the parish, Fr. Rick is an American Passionist priest who went to be trained as a doctor also so that his service to the people might bring healing not only to soul, but to body also.) But despite all their efforts there is still an unacceptable level of suffering, as the extract from his recent letter shows -

With great wailing Bertina finally accepted that death had taken her little girl, and gave Sabina's body to me. I asked her to come back to see me, which she did today, we spoke for a while, and we gave them some help to pay for a funeral. I see Bertina as strong and noble. She will need those virtues for the many years to come. Her other three children are also very young.

This is the kind of thing that happens when roads are blocked with violence, when hatred rules the streets, when mothers are afraid to risk the roads with their sick children.

We have had a few calmer days with minimal riots, and Bertina finally could come to the hospital with Sabina, today. When the nurses asked her why she didn't come early in the morning, she said that morning was her only chance in the past two weeks to refill her buckets, barrels and jars with water. She could not miss the chance. She needed water for the children, for drinking and cooking, to wash and clean and bathe. She planned to bring Sabina to the hospital after she could assure water for her family.

This is the kind of thing that happens when you live in absolute poverty, when in the hierarchy of needs, all basic and essential, the needs must compete with each other, since you can only choose one at a time.

It is important for all of us to see clearly the rotten fruit of poverty, and violence. It's not just about the smashed storefronts, or the burning cars. Silently and tragically, at the level of a mother and her child, the consequences are deadly.

Bertina, and the many other parents in the same situation, is in no way responsible for the tragic circumstances in which she lives – nor are we. She desperately needs the help of Fr. Rick and his co-workers. She desperately needs our help. She has no choice – we have. As usual we will be having an exit collections after all the Sunday masses during Lent. Please support as generously as you always have.

Christian Stewardship:

Last week's collection amounted to £1,315. In addition we receive an average of over £900 per week in standing orders. We are very grateful for your outstanding generosity in supporting your parish.

Stations of the Cross:

During the season of Lent there will be Stations of the Cross immediately after the 6.30 pm. Mass each Friday. This is a particularly appropriate form of prayer during Lent, especially in a Passionist church, as it encourages meditation on the profound mystery on the depth of the Lord's love for us as expressed in His passion, death and resurrection. Of course, if the set time is not suitable for you, you can also do this particular form of prayer at any time on your own or with some friends.

Lent Groups:

Details of the ecumenical Lent Groups meeting this year are available in the porch. There is a range of courses with daytime or evening meetings. Courses begin in the week of 11th March so please pick up a leaflet and sign up on the list in the porch as soon as possible. St. Joseph's Group will be studying the new York Course *Daring to see God now*, meeting in the Red Room, 10.45 for 11.00am on Tuesdays, beginning March 12th.

100 Club:

The February Draw for the 100 Club was held in the Monastery during the week. The number of entries was 108 and the winners were: £400 N&K Baumgartner (130), £100 Connor Kennedy (53), Fieke Van den Berg (93). A copy of the results may be obtained from the Parish office on request. Thanks once again to all who support the parish in this way, and especially to everyone who has responded to our recent membership appeal. Membership forms are still available in the porch, and new members are welcome at any time of the year.

Tracing Kevin Williams:

We've had a request in relation to the above, believed to have lived for a time at Holly Lodge Estate. If anyone knew him, and would be willing to share information with his nephew, could they please let Fr. Pat know.