

**PARISH OF OUR LADY OF MOUNT CARMEL AND ST SIMON STOCK
CARMELITE CHURCH 41 KENSINGTON CHURCH STREET LONDON W6 4BB**

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Priests in the Parish: Fr Thaddeus Ekuma ocd, Fr Matt Blake ocd,
Fr John McGowan ocd, Fr Tijo Xavier ocd, Fr Theophilus Nyamali, ocd

First Sunday of Lent – 21 February 2021

We have begun our journey of Lent. Or rather we should say, we have consciously and wilfully begun a journey with Christ through Lent. The past year has been for all of us a Lenten period which we did not choose. But at this time we consciously embark on a Lenten journey which would perhaps help us understand and put into context what we have been experiencing for the past year. Our Lord now offers us this opportunity of Lent to reassure us that He is with us through all our experience of suffering.

As we probably know, the word 'Lent' refers to Spring (the lengthening of daylight) – this time of the year when nature begins to bud, to flower and to grow. In other words, Lent is simply a time of budding and flowering. But as we know for any sort of growth to happen, whether in plants or animals, there is a concomitant process of giving up something, whether it is shedding of leaves in plants or the shedding of skin in upper mammals. Hence the word 'Lent' encompasses the whole process through which we, as Christians, grow and flourish. As with the rest of creation which naturally and automatically engage in this process of 'Springing' up at this time of the year, we too embark on a journey towards renewal with Christ our Lord who is showing us the way of Spring.

The life of Christ, our pattern of life, shows us that to come to new life (to experience resurrection) we first have to suffer and to die as a conscious choice. As I already said, we have all experienced enormous suffering in the past year but we did not choose it. At this time we have to reflect on the meaning of that suffering in order to own it and understand its meaning, its place in our growth process. We read in today's Gospel that Jesus was led by the Spirit into the desert. The desert as an image is a frightening place not only because its aridity represents deprivation but also because it exposes the truth about the person who finds himself/herself there. It tests one's faith and resilience. We learn from Matthew's Gospel that Jesus was tempted with three major lures of our human life – food, power and financial security. In the past year, we could say that we have been in the desert, besieged by loneliness and uncertainty. Our livelihoods and financial security have also been threatened. And like Jesus, we have remained trusting in God, repeating those words of Jesus "a person shall not live by bread alone but by every word that comes from the mouth of God."

But what might be the meaning of our experience of this desert? St Paul tells us that water, through which the first earth was destroyed, is a type of baptism. Also in Mark 10:38 (Lk 12:49) Jesus refers to his suffering as baptism. If our suffering is analogous to our baptism, it means that it is the single passageway to our sharing in the life of Christ. The experience of the desert becomes a prerequisite for being a Christian. Just as baptism symbolizes our purification from original sin, suffering or the experience of the desert in Christian terms is a process of purification that makes us ready to embrace Jesus at His resurrection. It means that our desert experience of the past year is not in vain. When properly understood it is a source of grace. Like our Lenten period, God has

used the experience of the past year to challenge and purify our values, to make us a better community that has now a greater chance of survival. During this Lent, let us take time to relish this experience and thank God for what He is secretly doing in our lives.

NOTICES

Lenten Retreat

Our Parish will host a Lenten Retreat with the theme “*Now is the favourable time, this is the day of salvation*” [1Cor 6:2]. It will consist of livestreamed talks given by Fr Matt Blake for five Wednesdays (February 24th, Mar 3rd, 10th, 17th and 24th) and a piece of reflection that will be available on our website. Each talk will be livestreamed at 10.00am and repeated at 8.00pm on our website www.carmelitechurch.org and our YouTube channel ‘Kensington Carmelite Church.’ You are all invited to participate at this retreat.

Church Opening

Our church remains open for prayer and common worship at the usual times. We continue to do everything possible to make this church safe for everyone that comes here in order to provide spiritual support to everyone that needs it at these critical times.

Stations of the Cross

As part of our common worship, we will have Stations of the Cross every Friday throughout the Lenten period at 5:15pm. On these Fridays, the evening exposition of the Blessed Sacrament will begin at 4.30 as usual and end at 5.10pm.

Preparations for Confirmation

The candidates for Confirmation have now started their classes on Zoom. But it is still possible to register. Please contact the parish or send an email to enquiries@carmelitechurch.org.

Cardinal’s Lenten Appeal

Cardinal Nichols thanks you for your generous support for the Cardinal’s Lenten Appeal, especially throughout the unprecedented events of 2020. Your donations help fund initiatives in parishes, schools and charities in three mission areas which are more critical than ever. **Marriage and Family Life:** enriching and supporting marriages, the essential building block of society and the Church. **Youth and Evangelisation:** helping young people, the future of the Church, as they grow in their relationship with God and deepen their Catholic faith. **Caritas Westminster:** putting our faith into action by serving those in need. **Education Service:** supporting our schools. This year, the Cardinal is asking us to think about families who are struggling to put food on the table. Poverty is deepening across our Diocese and the need for foodbanks and supermarket vouchers has accelerated. Through your generosity we’re continuing to provide food for those people most in need. Please take a donation envelope. You can use the QR code to make your donation online. Thank you for your generosity.

<u>Collections Last Sunday</u>	Offering	£1054
	Gift Aid	£252

Thank you for your generosity

Fr. Thaddeus OCD