

Parish of Our Lady of Mount Carmel & St Simon Stock, Carmelite Church
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Priests in the Parish: Fr Thaddeus Ekuma ocd, Fr Matt Blake ocd,
Fr Tijo Xavier ocd, Fr Theophilus Nyamali, ocd

Pastoral Letter for the 8th Sunday in Ordinary Time – 26/27 February 2022

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Jesus Christ,

Today I want to take a moment, first of all, to thank you for your faithfulness and for your presence here at Mass. These last two years have been very difficult and I thank God for the gift of faith which you have received, which you have nurtured and from which, I know, you receive great grace and strength. I know this to be true because it is true for me too.

Now I would like to ask your assistance.

During these last two years there were times when our way of life was severely curtailed. We were in 'lockdown'. At one time, for three months, even the doors of our churches were firmly closed. Being unable to enter the House of God and to take part fully in the celebration of the Mass was, for many, an experience of real dismay and pain.

But that is no longer the case. We are again able to fashion the way of life that we choose. The doors of our churches can stay wide open. Yet, as you know, many have not resumed the pattern of coming to church, week by week. Other activities have filled that space. For some, the thirst for being at Mass, for celebrating life-giving sacraments, has diminished.

This is where I ask for your help. I would like you to be ready to approach those whom you know, and who are not present here today, with a word of invitation for them to join us. I know this is not easy. You may well feel it is an intrusive thing to do. Also, taking the step across the threshold of the church can be daunting for someone who has been away for a long time. So I ask you to exercise great deference and kindness when approaching them, perhaps offering to accompany them on this return journey.

I make this request now not simply because fear and restrictions are eased, but because we are approaching Lent, the traditional and powerful season of our renewal in faith. Beginning on Ash Wednesday, this coming week, we respond to the Lord's invitation to come forward and meet him afresh. He invites us to come through the doors of the church to stand before him and receive his blessing, his mark of mercy.

Lent is the time to reset our patterns so that there is time for God in our hearts and in our weekly routines. You know well that the highest form of prayer is the celebration of the Eucharist. It is here, above all other places, that the Lord wishes to fill us with his gifts, so that we, in turn, can offer those gifts to others. And then, when we give that which we have received, we bring this precious light of Christ into our world. He is the best antidote to the darkness of the pandemic, to the loneliness it has brought, to the lack of clear hope for the future, to the deep weariness and unexpressed resentment that has entered into the souls of so many.

So, please, do what you can to invite those who are missing to come with you to be part of this great family of faith at prayer. If each of you can give a word of encouragement to one other person, to one other family, then the reward will be great. Then we can journey together to Easter. There we proclaim again that Jesus alone has mastered death, that he alone is the Lord of life, that he is now among us and calling us to come to meet him here, in this House of God, in this Gate of Heaven.

I thank you again for your presence here today. I thank you for all that you will do in response to this request and I ask God's blessing on the words that you will speak. Remember the words of St Paul that we have just heard: 'Keep on working at the Lord's work always, knowing that, in the Lord, you cannot be labouring in vain' (1Cor. 15:58).

Pease continue in your prayer for peace in Ukraine. We cry out: No more war, no more violence!

And remember me in your prayers as I will remember you, the faithful people of God!

Yours devotedly,

+ Vincent Nichols

✠ Cardinal Vincent Nichols
Archbishop of Westminster

NOTICES

Ash Wednesday

Masses on Ash Wednesday are as usual on weekdays - 8.00, 12.15 and 18.00. Ashes will be blessed and distributed at all masses.

Parish Lenten Reflections

Lent begins on 2nd March (Ash Wednesday). To accompany us in our spiritual preparations for Easter, there will be a weekly Lenten Reflection from the Carmelite Saints given by Fr Matt Blake **every Thursday of March**. Time is 5.00pm – 20 minutes reflection with exposition of Blessed Sacrament followed by Mass at 6.00pm

Details:

Thursday March 3 rd	St. Edith Stein
Thursday March 10 th	St. Teresa of Avila
Thursday March 17 th	Blessed Marie Eugene
Thursday March 24 th	St. John of the Cross
Thursday March 31 st	St. Elizabeth of the Trinity

[Those who cannot be present can follow on Website or YouTube]

Pilgrimage to the Shrine of Notre Dame de Vie

A Pilgrimage is being organised to the shrine of Notre Dame de Vie, Venasque, Provence, France, following in the footsteps of Blessed Marie Eugene. Date is Monday, May 30th to Friday, June 3rd with Fr. Matt Blake. For further information and booking please contact monivarenne@yahoo.fr

Pilgrimage to the Holy Land

Another pilgrimage is being organised to the Holy Land, with Fr. John McGowan o.c.d. Date is 6 - 13 June 2022: 2 nights in Tiberias, 2 nights in Bethlehem and 3 nights in Jerusalem. Price is £1499 per person. To book or for further information please contact: Clare at Tagney Tours, 01732886666.

Email: sales@tangney-tours.com Web: www.tangney-tours.com

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Collections Last Sunday

Offering	£1020
Gift Aid Envelopes	£87

Thank you for your generosity

Fr. Matt Blake, OCD