



Welcome to the 10th edition of *The Word*. In this issue we have returned to the original presentational format following difficulties some parishioners have had reading the revised format we introduced with Issue 5.

In this issue we have articles from Fr Austin, Sr Sandra & David Underwood plus others. In the Web Resources article we have a few tips to help you in searching our website.

<http://www.stthomaswoodford.org>

If you would like to feature your group, ministry or activity in a future edition then please send a mail to [parishnews@stthomaswoodford.org](mailto:parishnews@stthomaswoodford.org). Your contributions are vital to keep alive the communication within our parish family. Articles can be of any length up to around 1000 words.

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## The Cross *Fr Austin*

Many carry the cross daily: poverty, social injustice, forced immigration, fractured relationships... Sadly what too many have in common is that it doesn't feel like carrying the cross, it just feels like more and more pain. Spirituality is about what we do with our pain. In an environment that has no room for the transcendent, there is no higher power to come to our aid – where there is no cross and resurrection suffering has no meaning and is perennially absurd. As life is at any given moment all we can do is insist that we are victims, and so have the moral high ground; which is when we cease growing and become a misery for others.

To stop growing – when we won't let go or forgive; we don't recognise mutual dependency and resort to accusing another of being worse than I am. Victims have found ways to be superior – with cross becoming a logo instead of an invitation to gaze. Jesus neither played victim nor victimised – simply one who forgives. Human suffering and pain is mostly transmitted. History tends to be little else than a narrative of who killed who and why. In fact no one else is my problem – once this is recognised I am ideally suited for change. Jesus got the victim situation right – as liberating victim, but at a price.

If I need to hate I will destroy all who tell me my hate is the problem. We have subverted the Gospel and replaced it with bargaining with God, going to Church. This sees Jesus as problem solver who makes promises for the next world and not the one who shows us how to live creatively now. This is little more than insurance policy religion.

We are familiar with the Paschal Lamb simultaneously slain and totally alive. This paradox is the Gospel. Whereas for us the tendency is either fight or flight – fight like Simon the zealot, forever tracking down evil to destroy in the belief that this is God's will. Flight is living in denial – walking away saying I'm right and you are wrong. Everything is understood in black and white terms. What is the life-giving way? The fighting is within, the fleeing is now, fleeing from knee-jerk responses – which is the theme of Paul writing Romans.

Anxiety we want to be free from – it wrecks peaceful living, yet we need to hold a degree of anxiety. Leaders who have no anxiety never lead to a new way. Interesting that the phrase do not be afraid appears 365 times in the Bible! We tend to define ourselves more by what we are against – resulting in a negative sense of self. Faith-living builds on what is positive, and an inner instinct for yes instead of a belligerent no. All God needs is a tiny hint of yes to love – even tough love – which carries even just a hint of excitement – which is why true faith is rare! Relying on group identity is unhelpful, since I don't have to be personally positive, just go with the flow and go to church.

The same applies to our attitude to social justice which tends to be based on anger at what is happening rather than being prompted by love for God and what God loves. We need to learn to face hate without becoming hate; we need to experience joy in failure, not anger; not just winning or being seen to be right. Revenge tends to appear to be a logical response. But it doesn't work. Look at troubled areas and see how conflict is

intensified not resolved by retaliation. What is noticeable about the impact of the Resurrection is Jesus has no punitive reactions whatsoever towards his killers. How soon we forgot this and became enthusiastic for the Crusades.

The one thing I have been doing since I was born and will continue to do until life ceases is breathe. Jesus identifies forgiveness as necessary as breathing. Forgiveness is not something we do – it is meant to be who we are. It tended to be seen as some kind of recovered worthiness, something earned by sincere repentance. Forgiveness is not making me clean and pure, it is opening up my future as a way which lets me walk out of the shadow of self-destruction. We have more knowledge than ever that our anger at injustice is valid – but of itself can make no provision for tomorrow. Which is why scapegoating has become an art form.

There are many well informed and educated who hate and exclude; and when there is no one out there to hate we turn on each other – evident in all organisations, including the Church. From where was Pope Francis experiencing much opposition? See how the fear of litigation impedes medical, legal and social services. The most brutal wars are civil wars, just as most murders are family related.

Once again, it is faith that holds the creative tension. The reason we foster evil, commit sin is largely because we have experienced either rejection or exclusion – or both. Imposing conformity will never bring transformation. Transformation is paying the price for another person's growth. ☩

## Introduction to Lectio Divina *Sr Sandra*

Today I have been asked to write on "Lectio Divina". It is a group which was initiated in this parish some years ago, after receiving approval and the green light from the Friars.

We had a group of some 6+ people who have been meeting regularly once every week initially, then fortnightly, and we met in the evening. Since then we have changed the timing to meet during the afternoon.

We read a passage from Scripture, usually from the following Sunday's Liturgy and then in the quiet we reflect on the passage. After a 2nd reading we have further quiet and if we so wish we share our reflections with the group. There is no discussion as such but everyone is free to add more of how they feel the Spirit is prompting them to speak. There are no comments on what or how the person shares, and everything is said and kept within the confines of the room. Usually a 3rd reading is done in silence and is followed then by shared prayer for all the Intentions of the group. These can be very inclusive of people in our families, our friends, our sick / disabled / housebound parishioners or whatever needs there are in our busy lives. Afterwards we usually find a suitable date for our next meeting and disperse.

Most attendees say they find the sessions inspiring in that they help the person to understand and to appreciate the following Sunday's Liturgy better. They give a background to our Scriptural understanding and provide guidance for the coming week.

If that is so then, at least we have helped some parishioners on their way to a deeper reflective appreciation of scripture and its richness in our lives.

If after "Lockdown" others feel interested in attending our sessions then you are free to come. No passport needed!

We need also to thank the Friars who have so willingly provided the premises for this prayer, and have often attended and shared in this event. Thank You! ☩



## Fairtrade *David Underwood*

As previously reported on our website, during Fairtrade Fortnight this year a number of parish groups joined in the celebration of 25 years of the Fairtrade mark in the UK. [Link to the report on the website](#)

## The Story of Chocolate - Unwrapping the Bar

If you enjoyed some chocolate over Easter you may be interested in "The Story Of Chocolate" at the link below which looks at the heart of the chocolate industry and how Fairtrade is working towards a living income for cocoa farmers. It specifically focuses on women cocoa farmers in Côte d'Ivoire and the role of women in community development. The story is about 11 minutes long.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-XbP4cn8xhU>



Saturday, 9th May was *World Fair Trade Day*, a moment to celebrate the role that fair trade plays in the fight against poverty across the globe. In the face of a global crisis, farmers and workers around the world are playing a vital but often forgotten role.

[Click here to out more >>>](#)



## Brentwood Catholic Children's Society (bccs)

For the past 11 years, parishioners at St Thomas', along with St Edmund's (Loughton), have generously supported the circular sponsored walk for bccs through Epping Forest that takes place in June from the Becket Centre. Due to the Coronavirus lockdown, the walk this year is to be re-scheduled to later in the year.

### Coronavirus update

In line with the latest government advice to avoid non-essential contact, **bccs** has revised its working practices. It will be reviewing this situation and has made the difficult decision to withdraw its school-based staff for their safety and that of others.

Its professional team is currently supporting children and families remotely by telephone or video calls and it is supporting schools who have a Service Level Agreement with it by offering five free hours of supervision per week.

**bccs** will be updating its webpage as new advice is issued by the Government.

### How can we help?

**bccs** relies heavily on voluntary donations to fund its work; with the indefinite suspension of its fundraising calendar, never have these donations been more vital.

*"We know that our loss of income along with an immediate need to increase our support services will make things extremely difficult for us in the future, but for now our priority is the children and families who need us; we are committed to ensuring that this is where the focus of all our efforts will be. Together, we really can make a difference to the lives of children and young people who are struggling with their emotional health - thank you."*

Please go to our *Take A Minute Appeal Page* to find out what practical support schools and individuals can give to us at this time." <https://www.bccs.org.uk/take-minute>



## More reflections on the Virus pandemic *Peter Parker*

It is true this has been the most trying and difficult time for so many in this country and around the world. Schools and businesses closed, churches, temples and mosques locked, shops boarded up, work premises finished and workers furloughed to await better times. Queues everywhere and scarcity re-appearing for the first time since war years. All due to an unseen and unknown enemy virus which has taken millions out of action and defied governments in their activities. How have people coped and behaved in this crisis?

For many it has seen the loss of loved ones who are irreplaceable. For others, severe illness, and for many of us a period of "Lockdown" which has stunted our growth as individuals and as functioning communities. Many have found the isolation worrying at best and disastrous at worst. For those with caring families and concerned neighbours it has meant a time of sharing and caring, second to none, as families rallied to support those deemed most vulnerable in our society and those most at risk.

However, for some individuals it has been a time for reflection and renewal. People have stopped off the merry-go-round of life to discover more of what life is really about. There has been time to think and think deeply on why and how this situation has happened. Also to ponder the surroundings of our town and city . . . to go for the Walk proposed by the government for exercise, while keeping the required distancing from everyone with the same intention!

We have become adept at finding suitable online services particularly from our local churches: the world has grown smaller in one sense as we participate in radio and TV streaming live services –including Papal audiences –into our homes. Never has BT had such devoted clients, with social media and mobiles competing for our trade.

Yet in all this we need to realise why we have been so engrossed in the past in so many activities. This time is given to us for a purpose. We all need to see what are our real priorities in life . . . has it been work? Or accumulating money, prestige, or spending time away from our duties to God, our family, or our real friends. Many have discovered that with time on their hands they have begun to pray more, to read our Bibles more, to listen more to our inner spirit—which guides us. Or alternatively and also, to become more aware of their partner in life's journey and of the real needs of their children and families.

Everything happens for a reason, we were always told. So maybe Good can come out of this pandemic also.

**"All will be well, All will be well, and all manner of things will be well ."** Julian of Norwich

## Prayer of Spiritual Communion

My Jesus,  
I believe that You are present in the Most Holy Sacrament.  
I love You above all things,  
and I desire to receive You into my soul.  
Since I cannot at this moment receive You sacramentally,  
come at least spiritually into my heart.  
I embrace You as if You were already there  
and unite myself wholly to You.  
Never permit me to be separated from You.  
Amen

*Spiritual communion was supplied by Rhonda Anderson.  
It came from the end of a Mass from the Cathedral in Perth,  
Western Australia.*



## Unite against Coronavirus

We are living through the biggest public health crisis in a century. Right across the UK, Coronavirus is having a devastating impact on all of our daily lives, and many people have lost precious loved ones. But in many developing countries where poverty is widespread and

healthcare systems are much more fragile, the effects are likely to be disastrous. We must never forget that we are one global family, united in this struggle. Now is not the time to build barriers, but for the world to unite in love and compassion.

Out of love for our sisters and brothers overseas, **sign our petition to the the Prime Minister** asking him to ensure that the most vulnerable people are the priority in the UK's international efforts as well as at home.

### Sign our petition

Our sisters and brothers overseas do not have access to healthcare systems as brilliant as the NHS. I urge you to work together with other world leaders to:

- Make sure that any vaccine developed with UK public money is made available to everyone regardless of their income or where in the world they live.
- Provide urgent financial and technical support to help developing countries cope with this crisis.
- Cancel all debt payments by developing countries due in 2020 so that countries can spend money on much needed healthcare rather than debt repayments.
- Put plans in place to rebuild a fairer, more just society after the crisis so that the world's most vulnerable people can live in dignity and to restore our common home for future generations.

★ [Click here to sign petition](#)

## Coronavirus Appeal

**The most vulnerable across the world will suffer the most. Help us provide care and sanitation to them. We are expanding and adapting our programme work to prevent the spread and reduce the risk of coronavirus in communities. Every step we take now getting food and safe, clean water to families, will help prevent deaths and reduce suffering.**

★ [Click here to donate](#)

## Web Resources *Mike Eggleton*

A simple way to search for something on the parish website is to go to the search box on the homepage and type in whatever you want to find e.g. Gospel/ Sacrament/ Baptism etc. This will then bring up a number of results relating to the word you have entered. (NB searching in the singular will bring more results than the plural e.g. Baptism etc. will include more results than Baptisms etc.)

On the parish website homepage if you look along the top menu on the site and go to *Centres* then here you will find various centres within the parish. If you hover your mouse over the word *Centres* you will get a submenu with the various centres listed. The next item along on the menu is *Sacramental Programmes*. Again this lists the various programmes and by hovering your mouse over the words *Sacramental Programmes* you can see a list of all of all of these.

On the homepage you can also find a link to watch live mass being streamed on Sunday mornings at 10am during the lockdown. If you are unable to view mass at this time then scrolling further down on the homepage you can find the icon *Mass Online*. Clicking on this will enable you to be able to view the recording of the Sunday mass once it has been uploaded.

You can also find us on Facebook and Twitter (details below).

- St. Thomas Parish Website: <http://www.stthomaswoodford.org>
- The Prayer App: Pray with the Pope – ‘Click to Pray’ prayer app – available on Android and iOS.
- Steward of the Gospel – The Vision Document and other documents related to our Parish Partnership are available on our website. To view go to:  
<https://www.stthomaswoodford.org/steward-of-the-gospel>
- Parish Facebook: [@STOCWoodford](https://www.facebook.com/STOCWoodford)
- Parish Twitter: [@STOCWoodford](https://twitter.com/STOCWoodford)
- Pope Francis at the Vatican: <http://w2.vatican.va/content/vatican/en.html>
- Follow Pope Francis on Twitter: <https://twitter.com/Pontifex>
- The Art of Dying Well - what does the church say about death? <http://www.artofdyingwell.org/>
- Order of Friars Minor in Great Britain: [http://www.friar.org/ home](http://www.friar.org/home)