

# Fourth Sunday of Lent Passion Sunday 29<sup>th</sup> March 2020



## St Francis Weekly News

This bulletin may have come to you by email or through your letterbox, if you received it on paper but are happy to receive an email in future please email [deborah.lechmere@ntlworld.com](mailto:deborah.lechmere@ntlworld.com) If you know anybody else who would like this delivered or emailed please contact Deborah or Revd Janet: [revdjanetwyer@outlook.com](mailto:revdjanetwyer@outlook.com)

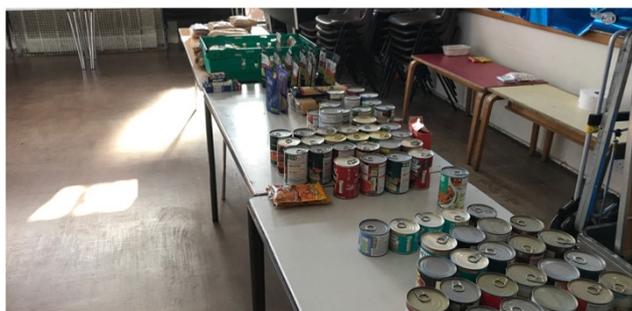
### WHAT'S HAPPENING IN ST FRANCIS CHURCH?

Over the past week so much has happened that it is very hard to know where to begin, but that said I think it's very important to begin with good news!

### COMMUNITY FRIDGE

Although our day to day life has been turned upside down – we have very swiftly fallen into place.

Firstly a word about the Community Fridge. For the time being we have had to close the Hive door and the community are no longer able to turn up and collect food as they once did. However, in a very short space of time all the food stored in the Hive has been moved to the Church Hall [along with the Fridge itself] and this is where our very small team of volunteers will pack and help distribute food to those who ask for food assistance.



For the most part, the collection of perishable food from the supermarkets has slowed to a trickle – there is very little surplus food because the shelves are being cleared very quickly. However, this is likely to change over the coming weeks and we anticipate that it will be business as usual in terms of what comes our way through the Foodshare initiative.

We may not have too much in the way of fruit and veg to distribute at the moment, but what we do have is a fair stock of non-perishables; and, thanks to a very generous donor, a precious fund to actually go out and buy what may be needed. This means that in terms of food provision we are in the blessed position of being able to really reach out and do what God asks of us, albeit in a small way.

As I write we are able to cope with what is coming our way, but if you might be able to help with packing, shopping or delivering I would be very pleased to hear from you.

### PASTORAL CARE

Using the Electoral Roll, the Parish Visiting Team list, and the help of the congregation we are hoping that we have now got a comprehensive list of everyone who might consider themselves as belonging to the St Francis family.

The purpose of the list is to ensure that everyone is able to tap into the loving care and encouragement that comes with being part of the church family. We aim to do this through an informal system of telephone support that will be overseen by our Pastoral Contacts.

Currently the team consists of: Revd Janet, Revd Isaac, Eleanor Laming [Pastoral Coordinator], Margaret Bell, Diana Cooper, Jane Cubitt, Sue Green, and Sarah Housden.

If you have not yet heard from your contact, or would like to add someone to our list so that they too can benefit from ongoing telephone support from the St Francis family please let me know by giving me a call: 01603 948627 / 07990 576118



Facebook:  
If you can – please like and follow our page. A good way to keep in touch.

## WORSHIP & PRAYER

Although the church door may be locked in terms of worship and prayer we are finding completely new ways of offering prayer, praise and thanksgiving at this time.

Through the ringing of the church bell four times a day, the message is being sounded out that St Francis Church is praying for the neighbourhood and that God's love is with us all. It is also a tangible reminder that St Francis is dedicated to serving the community, sharing the Good News and that we are still here – right at the heart of the community.

The Offices are prayed at 9am, 12pm, 5pm & 9pm – please, if you can, join with me in praying for the Heartsease community and all who are effected by the coronavirus outbreak; the whole world in fact.

We are not permitted to celebrate Holy Communion in the church building but all priests have been given special dispensation to celebrate in our own homes. I will therefore be offering up a service of Holy Communion in the vicarage every Sunday morning at 10.30am.



Revd Janet's Study – A Place of Prayer

If you would like to have a copy of the service I will be using so that you can follow in your home, please let me know and I will get that to you along with a note of how you can take part.

Alternatively for those of you with online expertise I encourage you to take a look at the 'front room' service being offered by the Church of England on Sunday 29 March at 9am with the Archbishop of York, recorded at Bishopthorpe Palace.

<https://youtu.be/uU-ZdfQ9sfo>

## REVD ISAAC

Welcome back Revd Isaac!

It is with deep joy I am able to share the good news that Isaac has recovered from his recent illness and has returned to light duties. In line with government and NHS guidelines Isaac will be working from home for the next 12 weeks. This will be a new way of undertaking parish ministry – but one full of exciting possibilities - look out for his Facebook posts!

## A WORD FROM THE VICAR

Lent 2020 is proving to be a time of abstinence in so many ways – but God's hand is at work among us, and we are finding new and wonderful ways of being God's Church. If you have any thoughts or suggestions as to how we can respond as Jesus Shaped People at this time, please let me know.

This may be a time of great uncertainty, but amidst the darkness of anxiety for the future there is a bright light shining – and that is the light of Christ.

Be assured that light shines for you and all the world. And be assured too of my continuing prayers for you all. God bless you – Revd Janet

'The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness can never extinguish it'. John1: 5

## FOR OUR PRAYERS

**We pray for those who are in acute need of prayer at this time:** Paula, Gill, Karen, Maegan, John R, Sonia & Lola, Colin, Lynn, Pete, Lauren, Fr Brian, David and Hazel L.

**We continue to pray** for all those in our Church, friends and family who are managing long term health issues including Alma, Rosemary, Sheila, John, Joy, Molly, Shirley.

**We remember with love** Ethel Norman, Tom Farrell and all those who have died in recent days and pray for their family and friends

God of compassion,  
be close to those who are ill, afraid or in isolation.  
In their loneliness, be their consolation;  
in their anxiety, be their hope;  
in their darkness, be their light;  
through him who suffered alone on the cross,  
but reigns with you in glory,  
Jesus Christ our Lord.  
Amen.

## PRAYERS FOR PASSION SUNDAY

Most merciful God,  
who by the death and resurrection of your Son  
Jesus Christ delivered and saved  
the world: grant that by faith in him who suffered on  
the cross we may triumph in the power of his  
victory; through Jesus Christ your Son our Lord,  
who is alive and reigns with you, in the unity of the  
Holy Spirit,  
one God, now and for ever. Amen

Gracious Father,  
you gave up your Son out of love for the world: lead  
us to ponder the mysteries of his passion, that we  
may know eternal peace  
through the shedding of our Saviour's blood,  
Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen

Lord Jesus Christ,  
you have taught us that what we do for the least of  
our brothers and sisters we do also for you: give us  
the will to be the servant of others as you were the  
servant of all, and gave up your life and died for us,  
but are alive and reign, now and for ever. Amen

## THE READINGS FROM SCRIPTURE

### EZEKIEL 37: 1 – 14

37 The hand of the Lord came upon me, and he brought me out by the spirit of the Lord and set me down in the middle of a valley; it was full of bones. 2 He led me all round them; there were very many lying in the valley, and they were very dry. 3 He said to me, 'Mortal, can these bones live?' I answered, 'O Lord God, you know.' 4 Then he said to me, 'Prophesy to these bones, and say to them: O dry bones, hear the word of the Lord. 5 Thus says the Lord God to these bones: I will cause breath to enter you, and you shall live. 6 I will lay sinews on you, and will cause flesh to come upon you, and cover you with skin, and put breath in you, and you shall live; and you shall know that I am the Lord.' 7 So I prophesied as I had been commanded; and as I prophesied, suddenly there was a noise, a rattling, and the bones came together, bone to its bone. 8 I looked, and there were sinews on them, and flesh had come upon them, and skin had covered them; but there was no breath in them. 9 Then he said to me, 'Prophesy to the breath, prophesy, mortal, and say to the breath:

Thus says the Lord God: Come from the four winds, O breath, and breathe upon these slain, that they may live.'

10 I prophesied as he commanded me, and the breath came into them, and they lived, and stood on their feet, a vast multitude.

11 Then he said to me, 'Mortal, these bones are the whole house of Israel. They say, "Our bones are dried up, and our hope is lost; we are cut off completely." 12 Therefore prophesy, and say to them, Thus says the Lord God: I am going to open your graves, and bring you up from your graves, O my people; and I will bring you back to the land of Israel. 13 And you shall know that I am the Lord, when I open your graves, and bring you up from your graves, O my people. 14 I will put my spirit within you, and you shall live, and I will place you on your own soil; then you shall know that I, the Lord, have spoken and will act, says the Lord.'



### PSALM 130

- 1 Out of the depths I cry to you, O Lord.
- 2 Lord, hear my voice! Let your ears be attentive to the voice of my supplications!
- 3 If you, O Lord, should mark iniquities, Lord, who could stand?
- 4 But there is forgiveness with you, so that you may be revered.
- 5 I wait for the Lord, my soul waits, and in his word I hope;
- 6 my soul waits for the Lord more than those who watch for the morning, more than those who watch for the morning.
- 7 O Israel, hope in the Lord!  
For with the Lord there is steadfast love, and with him is great power to redeem.
- 8 It is he who will redeem Israel from all its iniquities.

**11** Now a certain man was ill, Lazarus of Bethany, the village of Mary and her sister Martha. <sup>2</sup> Mary was the one who anointed the Lord with perfume and wiped his feet with her hair; her brother Lazarus was ill. <sup>3</sup> So the sisters sent a message to Jesus, 'Lord, he whom you love is ill.' <sup>4</sup> But when Jesus heard it, he said, 'This illness does not lead to death; rather it is for God's glory, so that the Son of God may be glorified through it.' <sup>5</sup> Accordingly, though Jesus loved Martha and her sister and Lazarus, <sup>6</sup> after having heard that Lazarus was ill, he stayed two days longer in the place where he was.

<sup>7</sup> Then after this he said to the disciples, 'Let us go to Judea again.' <sup>8</sup> The disciples said to him, 'Rabbi, the Jews were just now trying to stone you, and are you going there again?' <sup>9</sup> Jesus answered, 'Are there not twelve hours of daylight? Those who walk during the day do not stumble, because they see the light of this world. <sup>10</sup> But those who walk at night stumble, because the light is not in them.' <sup>11</sup> After saying this, he told them, 'Our friend Lazarus has fallen asleep, but I am going there to awaken him.' <sup>12</sup> The disciples said to him, 'Lord, if he has fallen asleep, he will be all right.' <sup>13</sup> Jesus, however, had been speaking about his death, but they thought that he was referring merely to sleep. <sup>14</sup> Then Jesus told them plainly,

'Lazarus is dead. <sup>15</sup> For your sake I am glad I was not there, so that you may believe. But let us go to him.' <sup>16</sup> Thomas, who was called the Twin, said to his fellow-disciples, 'Let us also go, that we may die with him.'

<sup>17</sup> When Jesus arrived, he found that Lazarus had already been in the tomb for four days. <sup>18</sup> Now Bethany was near Jerusalem, some two miles away, <sup>19</sup> and many of the Jews had come to Martha and Mary to console them about their brother. <sup>20</sup> When Martha heard that Jesus was coming, she went and met him, while Mary stayed at home.

<sup>21</sup> Martha said to Jesus, 'Lord, if you had been here, my brother would not have died. <sup>22</sup> But even now I know that God will give you whatever you ask of him.' <sup>23</sup> Jesus said to her, 'Your brother will rise again.'

<sup>24</sup> Martha said to him, 'I know that he will rise again in the resurrection on the last day' day

<sup>25</sup> Jesus said to her, 'I am the resurrection and the life. Those who believe in me, even though they die, will live,

<sup>26</sup> and everyone who lives and believes in me will never die. Do you believe this?'

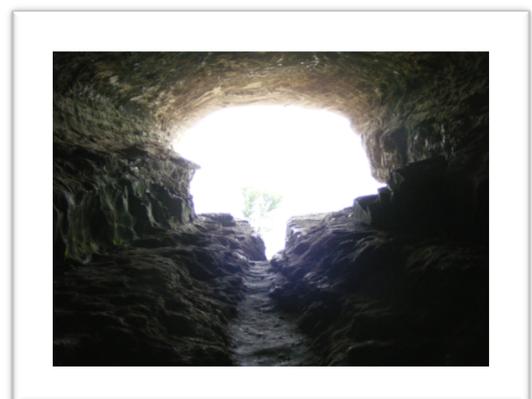
<sup>27</sup> She said to him, 'Yes, Lord, I believe that you are the Messiah, the Son of God, the one coming into the world.'

<sup>28</sup> When she had said this, she went back and called her sister Mary, and told her privately, 'The Teacher is here and is calling for you.' <sup>29</sup> And when she heard it, she got up quickly and went to him. <sup>30</sup> Now Jesus had not yet come to the village, but was still at the place where Martha had met him. <sup>31</sup> The Jews who were with her in the house, consoling her, saw Mary get up quickly and go out. They followed her because they thought that she was going to the tomb to weep there. <sup>32</sup> When Mary came where Jesus was and saw him, she knelt at his feet and said to him, 'Lord, if you had been here, my brother would not have died.' <sup>33</sup> When Jesus saw her weeping, and the Jews who came with her also weeping, he was greatly disturbed in spirit and deeply moved. <sup>34</sup> He said, 'Where have you laid him?' They said to him, 'Lord, come and see.' <sup>35</sup> Jesus began to weep. <sup>36</sup> So the Jews said, 'See how he loved him!' <sup>37</sup> But some of them said, 'Could not he who opened the eyes of the blind man have kept this man from dying?'

<sup>38</sup> Then Jesus, again greatly disturbed, came to the tomb. It was a cave, and a stone was lying against it. <sup>39</sup> Jesus said, 'Take away the stone.'

Martha, the sister of the dead man, said to him, 'Lord, already there is a stench because he has been dead for four days.' <sup>40</sup> Jesus said to her, 'Did I not tell you that if you believed, you would see the glory of God?' <sup>41</sup> So they took away the stone. And Jesus looked upwards and said, 'Father, I thank you for having heard me. <sup>42</sup> I knew that you always hear me, but I have said this for the sake of the crowd standing here, so that they may believe that you sent me.' <sup>43</sup> When he had said this, he cried with a loud voice, 'Lazarus, come out!' <sup>44</sup> The dead man came out, his hands and feet bound with strips of cloth, and his face wrapped in a cloth. Jesus said to them, 'Unbind him, and let him go.'

<sup>45</sup> Many of the Jews therefore, who had come with Mary and had seen what Jesus did, believed in him.



## REFLECTION FOR PASSION SUNDAY 2020

“Lord if only you had been here my brother would not have died” – one of the most poignant statements in the Gospel, if not in the whole Bible.

I wonder how often you have heard these words, or even spoken them yourself.

If only I'd got there earlier

If only I'd remembered to make that call

If only they'd done what I suggested

And sometimes you wish you had a Tardis, or a Time Turner so that you could just go back and try that section of your life over again.

So for Martha and Mary it felt like that their world had come to an end. Their beloved brother was dead and in his tomb, and their great friend who they'd hoped could save him had only just arrived, too late to do anything about it.

How must Jesus have felt when they both said the same thing to him? It's worth noting that he replies differently to each one.

To Martha, the practical one, there is a statement that “your brother will rise again” but her response really suggests “well that's not much good to me now” but Jesus goes further with the affirmation that “I am the resurrection and the life, those who believe in me, even if they die, will live” and that brings her response “Yes Lord I believe that you are the Son of God”.

To Mary, there are no words but he joins with her in her weeping, showing his deep sympathy for the loss she is feeling. Greek culture taught that Gods did not have feelings, and while we can find evidence in the Old Testament of a God who feels for his people and who cares for them it wasn't really a mainstream idea of how the Jews regarded their God, so the thought of a God who can sympathise to the point of tears was, and is, quite special.

The tears of Jesus show how completely he entered our humanity.

So Jesus consoles one sister with words and sympathises with the other by actions, what else can he do?

We have the Jews saying “If he could heal a blind man surely he could have kept Lazarus from dying, and it's interesting how high their expectations were, but they are about to witness something even more wonderful.

They go to the tomb. “Take away the stone”, says Jesus. But Lord, says Martha, ever practical, there will be a stench. He's been dead four days – in those hot climates bodies would decay very quickly.

“Did I not tell you that you would see the glory of God?”

They take away the stone.

There is no smell

Jesus calls Lazarus to come out and he does so, hobbling because he's still wrapped in the grave clothes.

This is Jesus last and greatest miracle. It shows that God can and does restore life where it is extinct. We had the story in the Old Testament reading of Ezekiel in the valley of dry bones. Poor Ezekiel, just imagine wandering through a valley so full of bones you can't avoid treading on them – how depressing. But then he's told to prophesy to them and, as he does so, the bones join together, flesh comes on the bones and skin covers the flesh until you have this vast army of standing corpses.

Ezekiel is then told to prophesy to the wind so that breath comes into them and they will live – and they do.

There are echoes here of Genesis 2 where God creates Adam from dust and then breathes life into him.

God says to Ezekiel “This is representative of my people”. You shall know that I am the Lord when I open your graves and bring you up from them. I will put my Spirit in you and you will live and then you shall know that I the Lord have spoken and will act.

**What Jesus has done in raising Lazarus is exactly what God promised, he has fulfilled the prophecy and it is his declaration that “I am the Lord”**

**Earlier we have heard him say “I am the resurrection and the life, those who believe in me will not die. He does not say “those who believe in God”, he says “those who believe in me!”. You can’t get much clearer than that.**

**Jesus shows us in this story that we have a God who can bring hope out of despair, a God who can bring life out of death, A God who can come into the most hopeless situations and make a difference.**

**A God who can deal with the “if onlys” of life**

**Martha and Mary had the wish behind their “if only” fulfilled in a very spectacular and very special way. It won’t always happen that way**

**But the wonderful thing is that God will take our regrets, our missed opportunities, our failures and weave them into something wonderful that fits his purpose. We don’t know how he does it, any more than we know how prayer works, we just know it does.**

**At this very difficult time, when most of us are worried and anxious, cut off from our normal daily activities, and wondering what lies ahead, let’s remember that we have a God who came down to share in our lives, to take part in our joys and our sorrows, to share in our celebrations and our pain.**

**We have a God who can deal with our “if onlys”, a God who has power to do more than we can imagine, a God who if we put our faith in him promises that we will see his glory.**

**So, with all our worries, and in all our difficulties, let’s turn to him and trust him just as Martha and Mary did.**

David Lechmere,  
Licensed Lay Minister



Signs of Spring - The Lechmere's Garden, March 2020

### **A PRAYER FOR LENT**

**Jesus, like a mother you gather your people to you;  
you are gentle with us as a mother with her children.**

**Despair turns to hope through your sweet goodness;  
through your gentleness we find comfort in fear.**

**Your warmth gives life to the dead,  
your touch makes sinners righteous.**

**Lord Jesus, in your mercy heal us;  
in your love and tenderness remake us.**

**In your compassion bring grace and forgiveness,  
for the beauty of heaven may your love prepare us.**

Anselm [1109]