

**S.SILAS THE MARTYR AND THE MOST HOLY TRINITY, KENTISH TOWN**Presbytery: Tel and Fax 020 7485 3727. Website: [www.saintsilas.org.uk](http://www.saintsilas.org.uk) E mail: [ssmktw@gmail.com](mailto:ssmktw@gmail.com)**News sheet for the week beginning 17<sup>th</sup> May 2020.**

I hope that you are well and continuing to survive the curious world in which we live at the moment. It is still unclear when we shall be allowed to open the Church again for worship and I imagine that what we are allowed to do in it will continue to be severely restricted. But there is no point in speculating about it. This Sunday morning, as last week, the outer doors of the porch at S. Silas will be open from 10.30 to 12 noon and at any point during the day, you may care to come and leave a lamp at the Crucifix outside. I shall also leave out a few lamps for people to light any time during the week. The perpetual lamp at the crucifix continues to burn and the lamps at the Shines in Church burn every day during Mass. I shall offer Mass in S. Silas at 12.30pm on Sunday and 12 noon every other day Monday – Saturday. If you can, please join me in prayer from your homes at that time. Do let me know of any Mass intentions or intercessions and I shall include them. This Thursday is Ascension Day.

Please would you remember in your prayers: All doctors, nurses and medical staff and those who are supporting them; all key workers who continue to do their jobs to help us all; those children and staff who are back to work in our school; those affected by the Virus, particularly those who are seriously ill; those who are sick – Mary Hinton, Doreen Moodie, Sarah Acres, Joan Rawlins, Clare Smith, Gill Bell, Julie Bell, Ethel Hostler, Amber Arthurs, Katharine Love, May Burton, Mary Maunsell, Patrick O'Donnell, Maura O'Donnell, Bert Brace, Francine Livingston, Margaret Hughes, Marquis Coker, Cynthia Grosvenor, Ellen Scott-Thomas, Cerys Chan, Maria Dunn, Fr Beaumont Brandie, Sutherland Manson, Janet Dann, Damien Knight, Hector Chisholm and Joan Phillips; those recently bereaved; those who have died as a result of the Virus, and also Margaret Paine, Barrie Swann, Elizabeth Matthews, Ted Russell, Betty Lister, Douglas Perkins (Pr and Geoffrey Kirk (Pr) (recently departed), and Derek Jackson, Camille Tambakis, Ellen Ward, Brian Groombridge, Elsie Paine, Nicholas Johnson, Keyna Davies, James O'Brien, Delia Faye, Gloria Tarr, Nathaniel Jones, Ruby Rollanson-Williams, Harry Bird, Clara Johncock, Walter Percival and Gordon Tugwell (Pr). (Anniversaries).

A brief reflection on the readings for today

In his novel *'The Plague'*, Albert Camus explores the meaning - or rather the meaninglessness - of human suffering. He compares the reactions of a priest and of a doctor who is an atheist, both helping the suffering during a plague in North Africa. Early on, the priest preaches that the plague is a punishment for people's sins, their neglect of God and of each other. The doctor does not understand or agree – he is only concerned with particular people, trying to bring them back to health, not with this idea of punishment of the human race. They both appear at the bedside of a dying boy. As he dies in agony, the doctor asserts that he at least was innocent: what meaning can there be in his suffering and death? The priest replies that we still have to love what we do not understand – and then suddenly admits that he has only now begun to understand what we call grace.

It is too easy to claim that suffering and death is a punishment from God: that is not how it works, that is not the love which we find in God, who takes on our weakness in the person of Jesus. Suffering and death is part of our human condition; that is why God's Son suffers and dies. In today's Second Reading, S. Peter points out to us that the death and resurrection of Jesus is the reason for the hope that we have, which in some way we need to express in our words and in our lives as Christians. When we cannot find those words, when we are so surrounded by troubles that we cannot see that hope, *someone* is there with us to do it for us and to lead us on. In the Gospel, we hear Our Lord speaking to his friends at the Last Supper, just before he goes out to his death. He promises that they will never be left alone: the Father will send another Advocate to be with us for ever. This Holy Spirit is one whom the world in general 'cannot receive' because we each need to invite him into our lives; but once he is there, he will never leave us.

The Holy Spirit *defends* us. He comes to our help when we feel at our most helpless: he speaks on our behalf when we cannot find the words with which to pray. The Holy Spirit *counsels* us. He teaches us what is the best way to carry on, he shows us how we might help and support those who need us. That has been one of my daily prayers for what seems like months! The Holy Spirit *comforts* us. Our Lord knew that his disciples would miss him even more than we do if a parent or a child has died, but promises 'I will not leave you orphans'. This Advocate is not only there to defend us like a barrister in a court, he is in us. And therefore he will show us how to love, how to live with the questions, how to carry on when life is confusing or bleak.

During this plague, we have come to realise quite a lot about what is actually important in our lives. We understand how life-giving are those human contacts every day which we took for granted. We have come to appreciate those thousands of people around us who work to keep the structures of our society going. We have learned how to support one another. We know how vital our health is and how many put their own lives at risk so that we can live. But I hope we also know that, through the mystery of his grace given to us by the Holy Spirit, God will always be with us whatever may happen.