



The Chapels Royal of St Peter ad Vincula and St John the Evangelist HM Tower of London

Dear friends,

What a delight it has been to see the glorious sunshine this week and to see the first signs of spring! The beautiful camellia next door to our house, along with the cymbidiums outside our front door, are looking magnificent and the ravens are chattering away to the many tourists.



Our Mothering Sunday service was blessed by the sight of beautiful triple-headed daffodils, distributed to all afterwards, and the service was followed by the baptism of Oscar Barker, whose parents and grandparents are regular members of the congregation.



Thought for the day in Lent

Romans 6:12 *'Therefore, do not let sin exercise dominion in your bodies, to make you obey their passions'*.

I have been driving for more years than I care to remember, and I'm not by nature someone who suffers from 'road rage'. I try to obey the rules of the road and, tempting as it might be to jump the odd traffic light and occasionally drive at more than 20 mph, I try to stick to the speed limit and other regulations. However, my normal calm breaks down when someone drives so recklessly that it puts my life, and that of others, at risk. I feel a kind of rage coming on when I need to merge into the traffic and another driver deliberately cuts me up, but I take comfort in knowing that other drivers must feel the same annoyance!

From time to time, we all slip up in our behaviour. The temptation in those moments is to move into full self-deprecation mode and to beat ourselves up. Momentary slips are different from deliberate choices made repeatedly. God asks us to be different and not to give in to our angry passions. Jesus can guide and strengthen us to live our lives in him. If we lean on Christ, such passions may weaken, and we can then easily recognise the spiritual turn signals.

With my best wishes and prayers for you all, Roger.

Chapel repairs

It would appear that the excavations outside the west end of the chapel are now almost complete. It's hoped that in the next few days, work will begin on the new lift and stairs.

The damp inside the chapel is slowly drying out and the process of repainting should begin very soon.

A final decision on when the scaffolding surrounding the chapel for the extensive (and expensive) roof repairs will be erected should be made in the next week.



**Sunday Service for 6th April 2025
The Fifth Sunday in Lent**

0930 Holy Communion in the White Tower

Readings Hebrews 9: 11-15

John 8: 46-end.

Collect for the Fifth Sunday in Lent

We beseech thee, Almighty God, mercifully
to look upon thy people; that by thy great
goodness they may be governed and
preserved evermore, both in body and soul;
through Jesus Christ our Lord. **Amen**

Prayer of the week

I write this Newsletter on Monday 31st March, which marks the anniversary of the death of John Donne. Donne was born in 1571 and brought up as a Roman Catholic. He was a great-great nephew of Thomas More (who is buried in the crypt of St Peter ad Vincula). He went up to Oxford and then Cambridge, after which time he studied abroad, and it was thought that he would go into politics. Although as a young man he was sceptical about religion, he eventually discovered his Christian faith in the Church of England. After much heart-searching, he sought ordination and later became Dean of St Paul's Cathedral. The people of London flocked to hear his sermons. His poems and prayers have stood the test of time and many are well known to Christians throughout the world.

This much-loved prayer is one that is sometimes used at Evensong and at funeral services, and indeed was used at the funeral of Her Late Majesty Queen Elizabeth II. The prayer has a Lenten feel to it as we mark Christ's Death and approach his Resurrection at Easter.

There is an excellent book on Donne called ***Super-Infinite: The Transformations of John Donne***, by Katherine Rundell, which is very readable, informative and thought-provoking.

A Prayer, by John Donne

Bring us, O Lord God, at our last awakening
into the house and gate of heaven,
to enter into that gate and dwell in that house,
where there shall be no darkness nor dazzling, but one equal light;
no noise nor silence, but one equal music;
no fears nor hopes, but one equal possession;
no ends nor beginnings, but one equal eternity:
in the habitations of thy majesty and glory, world without end. Amen

John Donne 1571-1663

Music: - *O vos omnes* (Juan Esquivel, c.1560-before 1630)

Note from Gareth Thomas, baritone in the choir

Despite its austerity and simplicity, Lent is often the most hotly anticipated season amongst church musicians as some of the most emotionally charged music is heard and sung at this time (think of Bach's Passion settings, Byrd's penitential motets or, from our own day, Sir James MacMillan's *Tenebrae Responsories*). The recorded piece from the choir this week is a brilliant but lesser-known example of how composers of sacred music seek to enhance the liturgy, even on the most sombre days of the church year. *O vos omnes* was published by the Spanish Renaissance composer Juan Esquivel. He's not a well-known composer today (you can see from his dates above that we're not sure when he was born or even the year of his death!) but he wrote a huge amount of sacred music which was published in three separate volumes in the early decades of the 17th century in Salamanca. Sadly only a few copies of these prints survive and so much of Esquivel's music remains obscure today – unfairly so in my opinion – with few modern performing editions available.

When I'm not singing (performing and teaching) I am often to be found with my head buried in manuscripts of old music, making modern performing scores. It's something I started at university and am fortunate enough to be able to do it as part of my career. I love uncovering neglected and long-forgotten works and composers and introducing them to modern choirs and listeners as this music is simply too wonderful to be left to gather dust hidden away in archive. A few weeks ago, Colm asked me if there were any short pieces in my collection of editions that might work for our current recording sessions to be shared during Lent and this setting of *O vos omnes* was top of my list!

Appearing in print in 1608, it sets words from the Lamentations:

“O all ye that pass by the way: attend and see if there be any sorrow like unto my sorrow.”

It begins simply enough with the four voice parts entering one after another, but the tension begins to build immediately with lots of suspended notes piling up on top of each other. However, the greatest moments of expression are saved for setting the words *dolor meus* (my sorrow). Esquivel does this by setting them to a long melodic phrase in each part and introducing more and more chromatic notes which take the music in unexpected directions. It finally unwinds and unravels but the end of the piece does not feel definitive, and the prophet's sorrow is left unresolved (Esquivel originally intended the piece to be sung on Palm Sunday, with the solemnities of Holy Week still to follow).

Many thanks to Colm for choosing this little-known gem from my collection. I hope you enjoy listening to it!

Jigsaw



One of the archaeological finds from the excavation works outside the Chapel of St Peter ad Vincula.

<https://www.jigsawplanet.com/?rc=play&pid=2b6dc884531a>

Prayers

Please continue to remember those on our sick list, some of whom are very ill, amongst whom we name: Stanley, John, Mark, Rob, Kofi, David, Val and His Holiness Pope Francis.

RIP

John Greaney, Dawn and Andy.

Please continue to pray for Ukraine and the countries of the Middle East:

God of peace and justice, we pray for the people of Ukraine and the Middle East today.

We pray for peace and the laying down of weapons.

We pray for all those who fear for tomorrow,
that your Spirit of comfort would draw near to them.

We pray for those with power over war or peace,
for wisdom, discernment, and compassion to guide their decisions.

Above all, we pray for all your precious children, at risk and in fear,
that you would hold and protect them.

This we pray in the name of Jesus, the Prince of peace. Amen.

With best wishes to all, Roger.



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The HM Tower of London Chapels Royal Foundation



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Standing Order

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