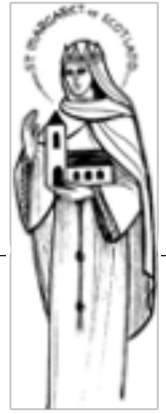


ST MARGARET'S PAGE

2nd Sunday of Easter (A)

19th April 2020



In Peter writes:

When St Augustine came to write his autobiography, known to us as *The Confessions*, he highlights an incident that took place while a young man teaching pagan philosophy in his home town, Thagaste, during his 20s. He is not sparing on himself; 'in public we were cocksure, in private superstitious and everywhere void and empty'. Years later he could see, on reflection, that God's providence was subtly working on his soul, helping him see the dead end to which his philosophy of life was leading. During his years at Thagaste he had a close friend. A year after his return to his home town his friend, who had taken up Augustine's intellectual and social waywardness took ill, became unconscious and was baptised. This shook Augustine who remonstrated with him on his recovery, but his friend resisted, told him not to deprecate his baptism, and before Augustine had time to argue with him again, died. This sequence of events had a profound effect on Augustine and he saw it as his path towards the conversion for which his mother, Monica, had always prayed. As he wrote, 'I had become a puzzle to myself, asking my soul again and again 'Why are you downcast? Why do you distress me? But my soul had no answer to give. Referring to his pagan deities, 'the well-loved man (his baptised friend) whom she (the pagan Deity) had lost was better and more real than the shadowy being (himself) in whom I would have her trust'. (*The Confessions*, Book 4, Chapter 4).

These life questions, ones whose answer charts the direction of our lives, stand out from the norms of daily life. Such questions, about life and death, open up the questioner the fragility of life and that the answers to life cannot be found within oneself alone. Paradoxically the fragility of life expresses its greatest value and true explanation when that life becomes open to the power of another. This may take religious form, in opening one's heart to God, or a more humanistic form, of dependence upon others, and through that unconsciously to God. This pandemic has shown much of the second, with countless community initiatives and friendly gestures to those living nearby. The dependency has become a marvellous platform for the British eccentric such as the 99-year-old army veteran who has raised over £10 million pounds by walking around his garden. The existential questions

flowing from this outpouring of community action may lead to question about what is life about, not simply about how it is or how I can help.

The religious form of the question, about what is life about and on to whom do we lean was for Augustine something profoundly personal, an intellectual and spiritual quest that led him eventually into the Catholic Church. Augustine had a story to tell of his conversion through adversity, of death of his childhood friend. The same is true for ourselves. Everyone will have a story to tell about how they coped with the lockdown, how they suffered and recovered from Coronavirus, or much more tragically how members of their family died, or how they knew of friends, members of their community dying in isolated circumstances. Yet out of these stories, something deeper can emerge about the fragility and value of life. Some may see within this, a pattern of God's action prompting us to turn to Him as it did in the case of St Augustine.

The current pandemic is not the great leveller proposed by some because the economic and social consequences are unique to each person. This crisis, though, does offer the possibility to reflect on the fragility of life and to find the answer to the meaning of life beyond themselves. No-one can be forced to answer this question in a religious manner but the question has to at least be answered in a humanistic way. 'No man is an island' whether one believes in God, Jesus or not.

The Christian has a particular understanding of the other person as being incorporated, along with themselves, into something larger the Body of Christ, of which the Church is the visible manifestation. The community of St Margaret of Scotland does not stand above everyone else in the neighbourhood but amongst everyone else. To the Christian Jesus Christ is the cornerstone on which to continue the journey of faith that recognises both our fragility and the value we place on life itself. The Resurrection of Jesus confirms both, in His fragility Jesus died to sin, and through His divinity rose to new life, confirming the eternal value that God places on every life.

RECENTLY DECEASED

Please pray for the repose of the souls of Peter Cassidy and Rose Mitchell, long time parishioners here at St Margarets and Joyce Nunns, resident in Lynde House. The current regulations prohibited funerals in Churches so there will be Memorial Masses for them after the lockdown is lifted.

Please also pray for the repose of the souls of John Blackwood's father and Melanie Blackwood's grandmother who both died recently.

May their souls and the souls of the faithful departed rest in peace.

PRAYERS FOR THE SICK

Mary Reagan, Pauline Slawson, Janet McAllister, Ben, Mark Titmus, Mary Ibbett, Carol Samba, Colin Bartram, Gerry McEntee, Rose Williams, Peter Coughlan, Hilary Sudell, Rose Lorden, William Hamilton, Mary Arnold, Cesar Juan Urrutigoity, Mary Ethel Arnolda, Francesca Bianchin, Sydney and Patricia Parkes, Judith Thomas, Wanda Ostrowska, Christopher Browne, Antonella Sesta, Margaret Masterson, Bernard Sharratt, Carmen Ruibal, Ann Macpherson, Donal Dwyer (brother of Mary Ibbett), Chris McLoughlin (son of Olga), Paul Costello and Kevin Sweeney

THE FINANCIAL WELFARE OF ST MARGARET'S

For everyone, the coronavirus lockdown means a period of uncertainty about our health, our loved ones, and our financial stability. We understand that some families have experienced dramatic reductions in income. This will be a very worrying time and we keep them in our prayers.

With the suspension of church services, the parish has lost its income from cash collections and envelope giving, which amounts to a loss of approximately £2,600 per month. Income from hall rentals and regular car parkers has disappeared. As in every household, the bills continue to arrive and have to be paid even though our income has been cut dramatically. Some of our costs are less and we have taken steps to manage expenditure as prudently as possible. However, it is clear that there will be a significant detrimental effect on the parish finances and our ability to serve our community.

If you normally offer either cash or use the envelopes at Sunday Mass and are in a position to be able to make a donation, please consider either making a direct donation to the parish bank account using the details below or setting up a regular standing order. We will also be shortly setting up a Virgin Money Giving "Donate Now" Button on the parish website which is a secure method for giving. If you are able to add gift aid to your donation and have not yet signed a gift aid declaration with the parish, please contact the parish office for details of how to do this.

Even if you are only able to donate less than you might normally do, every gift is valuable to the parish community.

Thank you to everyone for your generosity.

The planned project to refurbish the Hall has been put on hold as potential tenderers cannot visit site to produce their quotes for consideration. The Finance Committee will review the situation at the end of June and come to a decision as to a potential start date.

With my prayers for hope, healing and your well-being.

Fr Peter

Bank account details:

Account Name: WRCDT – St Margaret of Scotland, East Twickenham

Sort Code: 40-05-20

Account Number: 01094823

Please add your surname and initial as a reference, to help our bookkeeper. Donations to general offertory funds should be referenced "XOF" and to the building renovation fund as "XBF".