



TIMES OF THE LITURGY

**Sunday** - 7.45am - Lauds | 8.15am - Low Mass | 9.15am - Dominican Rite Mass (Extraordinary Form) | 11am - Sung Conventual Mass | 6pm - Low Mass | 7pm - Vespers.

**Monday - Friday** - 7am - Lauds | 7.30am - Conventual Mass | 6.15pm - Devotions and Meditation | 6.30pm - Vespers. [N.B. First Fridays of the month, Vespers in the presence of the Blessed Sacrament with a period of Adoration from 6.15pm.]

**Saturday** - 9am - Lauds | 9.30am - Conventual Mass | 4.30-6pm - Confessions | 6.15pm - Sung Litany of the Blessed Virgin Mary | 6.30pm - Vespers.

THIS WEEK

- Sun 19 **II SUNDAY OF OT**
- Mon 20 *feria*
- Tue 21 S Agnes
- Wed 22 *feria*
- Thu 23 *feria*
- Fri 24 S. Francis de Sales
- Sat 25 CONVERSION OF S PAUL
- Sun 26 **III SUNDAY OF OT**



Lauds, Mass, and Vespers are broadcast daily on Radio Maria. To listen visit:  
<https://radiomariaengland.uk/>

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[cambridge.bursar@english.op.org](mailto:cambridge.bursar@english.op.org)

2025 AQUINAS LECTURE

HOW TO SURVIVE  
YOUR OWN DEATH:  
A THOMISTIC  
APPROACH.

DR GAVEN KERR

TUESDAY 28 JANUARY, 6PM.

*The lecture will be followed by a drinks reception.*

# NICAEA LECTURES AT FISHER HOUSE

## THE CREED: ITS HISTORIC CONTEXT

Rev. Dr Mark Smith  
Monday 27 January = 6pm

## I BELIEVE IN GOD

Professor Eamon Duffy  
Thursday 6 February = 6pm

## CREATOR OF HEAVEN AND EARTH

Very Rev. Dr Aidan Nichols, OP  
Thursday 20 February = 6pm

## CONSUBSTANTIAL WITH THE FATHER

Dr Elizabeth Theokritoff  
Monday 24 February = 6pm

## INCARNATE OF THE VIRGIN MARY

Rev. Dr Alexander Jensen  
Thursday 20 March = 6pm

## THE LORD'S PRAYER IN THE GOSPEL OF ST MATTHEW

*And forgive us our debts as we have forgiven our debtors.*

The word translated as 'forgive' in the Lord's prayer is worth looking at. The Greek word is a combination of the word for 'from' and the verb meaning either to send or to let go of something. In classical Greek, it tends not to have a very positive force, so it means more to let go of something than to throw it away. It is not merely passive, as it always involves a choice. It is used in classical Greek to mean divorce, but this usage does not occur in the New Testament. This would be one of the more active meanings but a failure to do a duty, such as to keep guard of a prisoner, although it still involves a choice, would be more a case of not doing something, than an actual action. Such neglect might involve another action such as running away, where the neglect is a component of what is being done.

In classical Greek, it can be used for forgiveness, more in the sense of remitting a punishment, but it would not be the core meaning of the verb. This raises the question of whether to forgive is the core meaning of this verb in the New Testament, especially in St Matthew's Gospel. I would say not, since the word occurs many times in Matthew, forty in all, often where forgiveness would not apply. We have 19:14 where Christ tells the disciples are told to leave the children alone and not to prevent them to come to him. This would suggest that to leave something or someone alone would be the obvious meaning in the Greek. St Peter says that the disciples have left everything, to follow Christ, (19:27) in reference to the rich young man who is unwilling to sell all that he owns to follow Jesus. We can't forgive our own property, but we can certainly let go of it. Forgiveness is then a special way of leaving someone alone, or more accurately a way of leaving some aspect of our relationship to them. This particularly applies to debt, which is what the prayer says. Leave our debts alone as we leave the debts of others alone. This works if debt is seen as a bond which we hold over others. We might see other people's debts as a benefit to us, but it could also be seen as a sort of burden. Especially if we see ourselves as having to enforce that debt. The debt then begins to control us.

This is the story told in Ch 18:21 to 18:35, the parable of the unforgiving servant. The story is about debt in the literal sense, even though we must take debt to God as a special kind of debt, the debt which in fact the whole of humanity has incurred. The man who owes a great deal to his master, called a king in the parable, begs the king to give him time to pay his debt, ten thousand talents of silver which is meant to be a ridiculously high debt. A debt which could not be paid, even though the man promises to pay the king everything. In fact, the king remits the debt entirely, the word remit being the same word as in forgive us our debts. The man who is in debt then demands that one of his fellow servants pay his debt to him. It is described in extravagant terms where the man tries to strangle his fellow servant. The other fellow servants report this to the king who berates the man in debt.

***'Then his master summoned him and said to him, 'You wicked servant! I forgave you all that debt because you pleaded with me' (Matthew 18:32).***

Forgive here is once again 'to let go.' Since the master here is God, the one who judges in Chapter 25 of Matthew, where it is the king who divides humanity into the sheep or the goats, 25:34, the remission of debt is not something which involves any loss on his part. God lets go of our debt because we are to let go of our debt which is in others. As God, God whether as Father, Son or Holy Spirit, cannot be hurt by our debts to him. It is we who are hurt by our debts to him. Since we are in debt to God, this relativises the debts of others to us. It does not mean that debt as a concept is abolished. The fellow servant whom the man in debt tries to strangle does promise to pay his debt if given time. But the man in debt to God will not give him even that time. What he does in place him in custody to make him pay.

Imprisonment for debt has been practiced in Christian countries, but bankruptcy law has replaced this practice in many countries. It is hard to see this parable as approving the practice of imprisonment, though it might be argued that the existence of debt law is not being attacked here. Rather it is the call of Christ for those who follow him to go beyond demands of justice, to willingly let go of debts of various sorts. We are to do this because the debt becomes a burden for us. Mercy is a free choice that we are to make, and we are to make that choice as much as we can bring ourselves to do so, because in doing so we become like God.

***'You therefore must be perfect, as your heavenly Father is perfect' (Matthew 5:48).***

This perfection is explained in terms of doing more than the gentiles or the tax collectors. The word 'perfect' comes in with the story of the rich young man who is told what he must do if he wishes to be perfect. Once again it is a matter of choice rather than compulsion. It is very dangerous to seek perfection in society by using the law to compel such perfection. The law does not enforce all morality, but only in certain spheres where it is regarded as necessary to enforce what should be seen as a minimum requirement. We have to do better, because if we do not try to do more, we may fail entirely. Our commitment is open ended, which is why despite the rich young man not being forced to give away what he has, Jesus then tells his disciples that it is impossible for a rich man to enter the kingdom of heaven. It is not the riches but the clinging on to them no matter what that leaves us unable to forgive. We keep the debt, but we lose the brother. We are to forgive, to let go, to not be hampered by a sense of justice which separates us from our brothers and sisters. It is this destruction of brotherhood which is threatened by our inability to forgive. So, Peter asks how often I should forgive his brother, and the practical advice about how to reconcile given in 18:15-20 which precedes the parable of the debtor, ends by saying that if you succeed you have gained your brother. The Lord's prayer cements this greatest of all obligations, the obligation to show mercy to each other.

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## THE PRIORY OF ST MICHAEL THE ARCHANGEL

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