



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. On Fridays in Lent, Stations at 6.50pm. [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 23 **LENT III**

Mon 24 *feria*

Tue 25 **THE ANNUNCIATION**

Wed 26 *feria*

Thu 27 *feria*

Fri 28 *feria*

Sat 29 *feria*

Sun 30 **LENT IV**



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

IN REASONABLE HOPE:

SOME REFLECTIONS ON ULTIMATE MEANING

To celebrate the Jubilee Year, we will be holding a series of half-hour talks on hope. The first talk will be TODAY immediately after the 9.15am Mass, around 10:15am. by our prior, Fr Robert.



THE SOLEMNITY OF THE ANNUNCIATION OF THE LORD

First Vespers on Monday 24 March at 6.30pm | Tuesday 25 March - 7am - Lauds | 7.30am - Conventual Mass | 6.15pm - Devotions and Meditation | 6.30pm - Vespers.

STATIONS OF THE CROSS

Every Friday after Vespers there will be Stations of the Cross in our chapel at around 6.50pm.



SEARCH FOR MEANING

This Conference is inspired by the life and work of Edith Stein (St Teresa Benedicta of the Cross, OCD), with a team of speakers, including Prof Peter Tyler, Professor of Pastoral Theology and Spirituality at St Mary's Catholic University, Twickenham, and author of *The Living Philosophy of Edith Stein*. Open to All. 9 - 11 May 2025. Attendance can be full residential, daily attendance, or online. £250 for full Residential attendance (includes Friday dinner and overnight stay until Sunday). NB: If NOT able to attend in person, or online, or are contacting us from abroad, beyond our own UK time-Zone, you will be sent recordings of the Talks.

BLACKFRIARS COMMUNIO GROUP

The Communio Group meeting will next take place on Wednesday 26th March 2025 at 7.30 pm in the Old Library, Blackfriars Cambridge. We will be discussing "Can Humility and Obedience be Trinitarian Realities?" by Guy Mansini OSB. Sr Magdalene Eitenmiller OP will introduce the article and lead the discussion. Do let us know if you're coming to the meeting and/or bringing a friend - please email <cambridge.communio@english.op.org>.

THE PRISON CHAPLAIN'S STORY

My story is meant for Lent, I'll explain later. But it was all the fault of Fr Kieran O'Shea, really, a big gentle Irishman with a twinkle in his eye who was Catholic chaplain in Leicester jail and had a golden reputation as the prisoners' friend. He was my kind friend too, and when he quite suddenly took ill and died one spring day, thirty years ago now, the Father Provincial asked me to take his place. Prison was now to be my business, here and in Belgium, for 17 years.

Leicester is what they call a local prison, where men are remanded into custody to await trial and sentence. In the 1990s (I can't speak for today) it was desperately overcrowded, with abject living conditions, the cell intended in the Victorian age for a single prisoner now housed two men and their shared toilet, and prison uniform was a shapeless baggy tracksuit. The men waited for their turn to work out in the gym, trudge round the exercise yard or do simple boring tasks in the workshop. A high rate of reoffending meant that the same faces reappeared time after time. They were looked after by a humane and caring staff whose qualities I learnt to appreciate and want to imitate. The chaplaincy was an absolute gift, the affair of a team of women and men, six colourful characters who loved their work.

If there is one piece of advice that can safely be given to any priest it is, stay close to the poor. We have to go into the prisons if only because they are such concentrations of poverty, not only in terms of material privation but in the good things of the spirit. A typical inmate may be the product of a broken union and a broken home, have a disturbed schooling, be a slow learner, have come before the juvenile court at an early age. A spell inside comes between the offenders and all that matters, making a living, having a home life, the other half of their couple: it's such an uphill task to get it all back, but a successful resettlement depends on having it. Many offenders are functionally illiterate and there's a high percentage of identifiable mental illness. Prison is in no way the best place for these.

To take a wider view of the world's penal establishments, too many are without a therapeutic purpose or lack a competence in education and training. Some are no better than slums, some are racked by violence. There are too many scenes of idleness and boredom that don't prepare for a return to society. A progressive penal system aims to protect the public by pursuing the humane ends of care and resettlement of offenders, and good chaplaincy too is oriented towards creativity, reform and resettlement, we are for everything that can give prisoners a sense of purpose and a confidence that they do matter. The Catholic Church and her members care a lot about prisons.

Even in the most basic establishments there is so much that can be done to accompany inmates with warmth and insight. We should let in a breath of fresh air, signal that there awaits another life "on the out." We come in the name of a God who has all the time in the world to listen to us, where we have been, what we have done, where we went amiss. Our God is not scandalized to hear our story, will not stop his ears and rush away into the street, he knows all hearts and from him no secrets are hid. The chaplains accept you as they find you and know how to listen for as long as it takes to come at the heart of things, and they are keepers of secrets. They close a cell door to leave a presence behind.

But the problems begin when they are put out of the gate, prisoners have often told us so. It is true. Sentences only get longer, the prison population goes on climbing, and the longer the sentence, the more harm done to the family and the couple, the less likely a successful fresh start, and you have a failed institution. One figure you never meet inside the walls is the local MP or even a town councillor. They won't come looking for the inmate's vote because he hasn't got one, and indeed has no way of expressing himself, and warders too can't combine. Those who live and work in the system know where it fails, but who will give them a voice?

With the millennium and a new century, there came a new beginning, there was to be an international house of our Order in Brussels and a community formed of brothers of nine Provinces. I was recruited to be the English member. A new modern prison was about to open at Ittre, near Tubize, and they needed a chaplain, so I retrained for the job. Ittre was very different, prisoners were allowed conjugal visits, care was taken to have children visit their fathers, there were solid rewards for performance and good provision for end-of-sentence jobhunting, with a liberal provision of time for supervised parole. Early release on completion of a portion of the sentence was not automatic - it depended on the decision of a court which met within the prison to take evidence about the offender's attitude and conduct, and see what efforts he had made in favour of his victims. There was a restorative justice programme which promoted encounters between the offender and the victim of the crime. Another difference: warders had their trade union, could withdraw their labour and sometimes did.

In the English penal system, chaplains are engaged by the governor and join the staff. Staff regulations limit their dealings with ex-prisoners. They are establishment figures really. The Belgian state, on the other hand, is neutral with respect to religion, and the governor, if he has to put up with me, is not my employer. My governor expected the chaplaincy to contribute to reform

and resettlement. He let me select and deploy my Catholic volunteers to visit in cells and gather men for prayer and discussion, he asked for help to accompany men on day release to see potential employers in Charleroi or Brussels. There was advocacy to be done and reports to make, and authority was willing to listen to a well-argued case. My priory helped with hospitality to prisoners on leave, and parishes helped by collecting funds to help resettle ex-prisoners. The Knights of Malta made sure of the Easter eggs.

Of course there is much more to say. But for now, just let me ask you for a simple Lenten gift, the solidarity of your prayer. It's the season of penitence, and a prison is a penitentiary, a place for regretting the past, making the most of the present and daring to hope for the future. In sign of which, Pope Francis likes to go into prison in Holy Week to wash their feet and pray with them. So let us pray too.

fr Bob Eccles, OP

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Lowliness is assumed by majesty, weakness by power, mortality by eternity. To pay the debt of our sinful state, a nature that was incapable of suffering was joined to one that could suffer. Thus, in keeping with the healing that we needed, one and the same mediator between God and men, the man Jesus Christ, was able to die in one nature, and unable to die in the other.

He who is true God was therefore born in the complete and perfect nature of a true man, whole in his own nature, whole in ours. By our nature we mean what the Creator had fashioned in us from the beginning, and took to himself in order to restore it.

For in the Saviour there was no trace of what the deceiver introduced and man, being misled, allowed to enter. It does not follow that because he submitted to sharing in our human weakness he therefore shared in our sins.

He took the nature of a servant without stain of sin, enlarging our humanity without diminishing his divinity. He emptied himself; though invisible he made himself visible, though Creator and Lord of all things he chose to be one of us mortal men. Yet this was the condescension of compassion, not the loss of omnipotence. So he who in the nature of God had created man, became in the nature of a servant, man himself.

Thus the Son of God enters this lowly world. He comes down from the throne of heaven, yet does not separate himself from the Father's glory. He is born in a new condition, by a new birth.

From a Letter of Pope St Leo the Great.

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THE PRIORY OF ST MICHAEL THE ARCHANGEL

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