



CATHOLIC CHAPLAINCY TO THE LIVERPOOL UNIVERSITIES

The University Church of St Philip Neri Church ~ "The Oratory Church"

30 Catharine Street L8 7NL Tel: 0151-709 3858

Chaplain: Fr Neil Ritchie

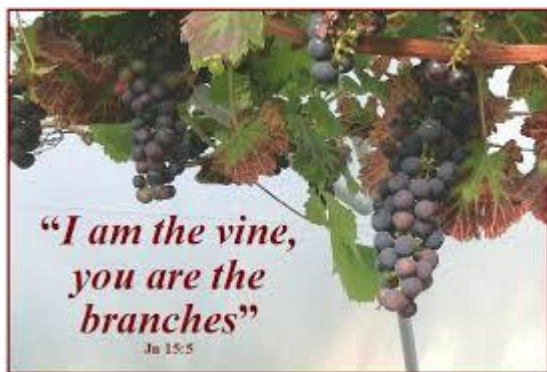
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 [Liverpool CathChap Facebook Page](#)  [liverpoolcathsoc](#)



28th April 2024

Fifth Sunday of Eastertide (year B)



Email addresses: unichap@rcaol.org.uk is a general address.

If you want to contact Fr Neil privately, use:

n.ritchie@rcaol.org.uk. To contact Hana, use

h.koubkova@rcaol.org.uk

Events for Students and University Members:

Masses & Services This Week:

Monday: 8am Mass at the [Missionaries of Charity](#) house, 55 Seel street – students are always welcome!

Tuesday: Morning prayer 8am, followed by breakfast; Mass 7pm *

Wednesday: 12.30pm Mass at Faith Express

Thursday: Mass 5.30pm (no Adoration or £1 supper)

Saturday: Mass 9.30am

Sunday: 5.15-5.30pm Confession

6pm Mass (Sixth Sunday of Easter; Vocations Sunday)

"Mary Mondays"

Starting tomorrow, there is a weekly prayer group at 1800 in the 502 building TR3. There will be a talk each week (tomorrow, Fr Derek

Lloyd will be talking on the Luminous mysteries), then recitation of the Rosary, and time for reflection. The room is then booked for revision. Feel free to bring drinks and snacks.

Tuesday evening: CathSoc ProLife evening, focussing on how you can become involved in pro-life issues. This will start at after Mass, which this week will be at **7pm**.

Staff & PhD Group: Wednesday 6pm in the chaplaincy. We meet every other Wednesday during university term time for a fellowship, prayer and faith-based discussion. Open to all university staff and doctoral students.

Weekly Collection & other donations, you can pay online at

philipnerihouse.sumupstore.com

Thank you so much for your contributions



The Interfaith Panel Discussion organised by the Islamic Society will take place this Thursday May 2nd ; Lecture Theatre 2 in the University's 502 building from 6-9pm. On the panel there will be representatives of the Jewish and Muslim faiths, as well as a representative from the Anglican church, as well as Fr Neil. There will be Mass here at the chaplaincy at 5.30pm, and of course no £1 supper.

Sunday Mass on 12th May will be at 11am (no 6pm Mass on that day). Bishop Tom Neylon will be coming to baptise, confirm and administer First Holy Communion to Rosie, Maria and Yasmin, and confirm Chloe. Please keep them all in your prayers in these last two weeks!

Sunday Mass will remain at 11am until our last Mass of term, in late June. Sunday Mass will resume in September. So **next** Sunday will be the last 6pm Mass of term.



Advance notice....Our End of Year BBQ will take place on Saturday 25th May

at 12noon!

Please note: all chaplaincy events are open to university members who are **18 yrs of age or older**. If you are under 18 at the moment, please make yourself known to Fr Neil or to Hana

He Leadeth Me –

being a disciple and a priest in the most extreme of situations

Today's Gospel reminds us to 'abide in Christ'; he is the vine, and should be the source from which we draw life. If we remain in Him, he tells us, we will bear abundant fruit.

In these last few weeks, I have been reading an extraordinary book, by an extraordinary man, Fr Walter Ciszek SJ. The book is called "He Leadeth Me", and it is the account of a man who bore much fruit as a priest in the most extraordinary circumstances.

Fr Walter, from Pennsylvania, USA, was ordained in 1937 as a Jesuit priest. He had studied in Rome, and had been specially trained to minister as a priest in the Russian Greek Catholic Church (similar to the Ukrainian Greek Catholic Church whose liturgy some of us attended last year). For a short time he ministered in what was then Eastern Poland, but at the outbreak of the 2nd world war it was invaded by Soviet forces. He continued to work as a priest, although it was harder under Soviet occupation. After careful discernment, he decided to travel to the Ural mountains, well inside Russia, and to obtain employment in a logging camp.

Here conditions were very harsh; you were paid according to the weight of timber you managed to move each day. Often they were paid barely enough to buy a loaf of bread. His plan had been to use this context as a way of talking to his fellow employees about God, and quietly ministering to them as a priest, but he found that his fellow workers did not want to talk about God or religion: in an atheist state it was a dangerous subject, and best avoided. For a time, he was rather sad and frustrated. "I could have stayed in Poland" he thought. Yet, he began to realise (he saw this as a grace from God) that this was not the way he should look at it. He had responded to the call of God in coming there; now he realised that it wasn't about what *he* thought he should be doing; God had placed him in this situation: here and now, whatever the limitations, was where God was calling him to be. It was not about the achievements of results as he saw it; that was the spirit of the world. God had his purpose in being there; he simply had to learn to trust this.



When Germany and the USSR declared war on each other, he was arrested and taken to the infamous Lubyanka in Moscow, headquarters of the NKVD (predecessor to the KGB) where he was kept in solitary confinement for 5 years. Frequently interrogated (sometimes for days on end) and told to 'confess' to being a spy, always cold and hungry, always living with the prospect that he could be shot at any time, he prayed each day as best he could, reciting the Divine Office and the prayers of the Mass from memory. Here, he learned utter dependence on God. Under interrogation, he realised that he could not rely at all on his human efforts; he had to fully abandon himself to God.

Eventually, he was sentenced to a Siberian prison camp, where for 15 years he lived and worked under even worse physical conditions than he had known so far. Yet here, he, along with other priests serving sentences there, he was able to find an 'apostolate' among his prisoners. They found ways of celebrating Mass, often outside in a secluded corner of the worksite. They of course had no proper vessels or vestments: all had to be improvised. He heard confessions, and even organised retreats for fellow prisoners – of course this had to be done against the background of daily hard labour for hours on end, often going a full month without a day off. And it all had to be done in secret: there were harsh penalties for anyone actually found practising religion.

Fr Ciszek's book is not just testament to someone who managed to survive (in 1963 he was released and returned to the USA, in exchange for 2 Soviet spies) – but someone who returned from this harrowing experience full of gratitude to God for what he had received. It is a humbling account of a man who learned to see the will of God in the most brutal of circumstances. In so doing, he learned deeply the meaning of prayer, of the Mass, of priesthood, of apostolate. He certainly learned to "abide in Christ" in a most "God-forsaken place". I

certainly felt humbled reading this precious book – it put my grumbles and complaints into harsh perspective! And, indeed, challenges me to see things in a different light!

God bless

Fr Neil

