

Bolingbroke Deanery Team Parishes

Faithful, Confident, Joyful

24th April 2022

SECOND SUNDAY of EASTER

(Gold/White)

[A Service for Low Sunday](#)

24/04/2022



A Service for Low Sunday, from The Benefice of Trelawny in the Diocese of Truro. This service will be led by Rev Richard Allen, who will be preaching on The Resurrection.

9.00am Sunday Service at Home Watch the service Church online
Join us for our weekly online services, streamed each Sunday at 9am.

<https://www.churchofengland.org/more/media-centre/church-online>

10.00am **Prayer in our own homes** See below



SECOND SUNDAY of EASTER 24/04/2022

Services in the Spilsby Cluster

9.30am Spilsby Eucharist (FJ)
11.15am Lt Steeping Eucharist (PC)

Services in the Marden Hill Cluster

9.30am East Keal Eucharist (JC)
3.00pm Old Bolingbroke Service of the Word (FJ)

Services in the Stickney Cluster

11.15am Stickford Holy Communion (FJ) Banns:
3rd Kieran Mark Geoffrey Swales & Henrietta Alice Pissarro both of Newcastle for OB
21/05/2022

Services in the Partney Cluster

~~11.15am Langton Holy Communion (F)~~
~~11.15am Sausthorpe Morning Prayer (F)~~
3.00pm Skendleby Evening Prayer (PC)

Services in South Ormsby

9.30am Harrington Holy Communion (PC) Banns
2nd Timothy John Roberts & Hayley Marie Seal of Brinkhill for Scrivilsby 21/06/2022

Monday St Mark

12.00noon Tetford: Claire Vines' Funeral

2.00pm St James Spilsby Annual Parochial Church Meeting

Tuesday St George Transferred

12.00noon West Keal: June Gibson's Funeral

Wednesday Christina Rossetti 27 April Poet, 1894

10.30am Spilsby Eucharist

4.15pm Team Meeting

7.00pm Deanery Synod via Zoom

Thursday Peter Chanel 28 April Missionary in the South Pacific, Martyr, 1841

Friday Catherine of Siena 29 April Teacher of the Faith, 1380

12noon Partney: Peter Beardow's BofA

7.00pm Mavis Enderby's Annual Parochial Church Meeting

Saturday Pandita Mary Ramabai 30 April Translator of the Scriptures, 1922

10.00am Spilsby: Open Meeting Bolingbroke Deanery on the next stage of our journey

Bolingbroke Churches on line:

We will continue to publish a short video on YouTube and link it to our website.

Our Web Site <http://lincoln.ourchurchweb.org.uk/spilsby/index.php>

Bolingbroke Team Churches - watch our videos

https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCqTDWzvl2jxeB6ESF-aP9Nw?view_as=subscriber

THIRD SUNDAY of EASTER 01/05/2022

9.30am Hundleby Morning Worship (FJ)

10.00am Spilsby Morning Prayer (PMcL)

11.15am Halton Hologate Eucharist (PC)

3.00pm Great Steeping Eucharist (PC)

Services in the Marden Hill Cluster

9.30am East Keal Holy Communion (PC) Banns

1st Joseph Andrew Motley & Sophie Louise Potter West Keal 18th June

Services in the Stickney Cluster

11.15am Stickney Morning Worship (FJ) Banns:

1st Joseph Edward Young & Lucy Emma Meyer Stickney 18th June

1st Stephen James McArthur & Samantha Jane Wooding Stickney 25th June

11.15am Partney Holy Communion (TMcL)
 3.00pm Scremby Holy Communion (TMcL)

9.30am Ruckland Holy Communion (TMcL) Banns:
 3rd Timothy John Roberts & Hayley Marie Seal of Brinkhill for Scrivilsby 21/06/2022

Spilsby Daily 8am Morning Prayer & at Noon

God of love, turn our hearts to Your ways and give us peace. Amen

The sick at home or in hospital,

Nigel Worth, Kathleen, Molly, Veronica, Dorothy, Maggie J. Betty Brawn, Tristan, Michael P, Joan T. Mark, Jossie Lee, June, Hilary, Michael, Harriet, Rose L., Abby, Sheila Janes, Fleur, Mary, Jeff Mason, Rosie, Bob, (Baby) Chloe Lear, Lawrence, Ann Howman, John Prince, Sylvia Bonsey, Anthea B, Jo & John, Bessie Reddin, Mary Julyan, Norman Huntingford, Kerry Brown, Roy Harrison.

The Departed: Ian Whitworth, June Gibson, Claire Vines, Elizabeth Bibbings, Mark Baumber, Barry Hudson.

Anniversary Carol Tobbias, Geoffery Elphic, Janet Bucknell, Doris Tuplin, Pauline Nash, Mickey Grant, Harold Cresswell, Peter Parr, Daisy Drinkell, Enid Kisby, Beryl Derby, Fr Adrian Sullivan, Jean Kelly. Raymond Ward, Graham Moles. Madge Gregory, John Large, Phylis Bauer, Audrey Rogers, Jacqueline Handcock, David Dawson, Albert Padley, Frank Senneck, John & Lizzy, Terry Hill, Mark Faulkner, Barry Arnold, Peter Gibson, David Slater, Audrey Murden Robin Healey, Roy Evers, Sylvia Page, Alistair Miller, Shirley Holderness Sylvia Emerson, June Acaster, Vera Wroe, Cliff Royston, Gill Rymer, Rodney Dodds, June Wilkinson, Lawrence Fenwick, Bill Short, Jean Timmings, Gwen Worth, Sheila Mee, Lillie Marriott, Edna Brammer, Michael Dobson, Nev Chamberlain, Dorothy Haseldon, Thomas Litster, Bob Kirk, Georgina English, Gill Denniff, John Milliken, Emma Masterton, David Mason, Jacylin Shaw, Sandra Gorham, John Hudson, Jean Jeffries, Ann Hicks, Janet Enderby, Prince Philip, +Robert Hardy (Bishop of Lincoln 1987-2001), Beryl White.

Sunday 24 th 2 nd Sunday of Easter <i>Press/media</i>	When it was evening on that day, the first day of the week, and the doors of the house where the disciples had met were locked for fear of the Jews, Jesus came and stood among them and said, "Peace be with you." <i>John 20: 19</i> <i>The Anglican Church of Papua New Guinea</i>
Monday 25 th Mark the Evangelist	The Deanery of Lawres – Rural Dean: Revd Richard Crossland, Lay Chair: Mr Russ Coulter Pray for the ongoing discussions in the Time to Change

<p>Prisons</p>	<p>Together process and for an awareness of God's leading.</p> <p><i>The Diocese of Lagos Mainland – The Church of Nigeria (Anglican Communion) (Lagos Province)</i></p>
<p>Tuesday 26th George, Martyr, Patron of England, c.304 (Transferred)</p> <p>Social Services</p>	<p>Church Schools in the Deanery of Lawres Dunholme St Chad's, Fiskerton, Hackthorn, Nettleham, Reepham, Scampton, Scothern Ellison Boulters, Welton St Mary's, Welton William Farr.</p> <p>Trusts Committee</p> <p><i>The Diocese of Lagos West – The Church of Nigeria (Anglican Communion) (Lagos Province)</i></p>
<p>Wednesday 27th Christina Rossetti, Poet, 1894</p> <p>Tourism</p>	<p>The South Lawres Group – Revd Penny Green Pray for the preparations for the Open Churches Festival next month and the people who will visit our churches.</p> <p>Clergy Housing Committee Assets Committee</p> <p><i>The Diocese of Lahore – The (united) Church of Pakistan</i></p>
<p>Thursday 28th Peter Chanel, Missionary in the South Pacific, Martyr, 1841</p> <p>Universities and Colleges</p>	<p>The Owmy & Springline Group – In Vacancy Pray for all the people who are helping us keep our services running whilst in vacancy.</p> <p>Financial Reporting Advisory Panel Rural Deans</p> <p><i>The Diocese of Lainya – The Province of the Episcopal Church of South Sudan (Central Equatoria Province)</i></p>
<p>Friday 29th Catherine of Siena, Teacher of the Faith, 1380</p> <p>Young Peoples Uniformed Organisations</p>	<p>Nettleham – Revd Richard Crossland Pray for all the people who give their time to lead us in worship together.</p> <p><i>The Diocese on the Lake – The Church of Nigeria (Anglican Communion) (Owerri Province)</i></p>
<p>Saturday 30th Pandita Mary Ramabai, Translator of the Scriptures, 1922</p> <p>Youth and Children's Work</p>	<p>Welton & Dunholme with Scothern – Revd Adam Watson Pray for all who run and support out monthly Vinyl nights which help us connect with the local community.</p> <p><i>The Diocese of Lango – The Church of the Province of Uganda</i></p>

Bolingbroke Team Ministry

Easter II Service of the Word



Come, let us find the risen Lord.
Come with your whole self, with your worries and your successes, your fears and
your joys, your questions and your answers.
Come, all who are excited and all who are anxious.
Come, all who are confident and all who are searching.
God will meet us here.

Hymn:

**This joyful Eastertide, away with sin and sorrow!
My Love, the Crucified, has sprung to life this morrow.
Had Christ, that once was slain, ne'er burst his three-day prison,
our faith had been in vain;
but now hath Christ arisen, arisen, arisen, arisen.**

**My flesh in hope shall rest, and for a season slumber,
till trump from east to west shall wake the dead in number.**

**Death's flood hath lost its chill, since Jesus crossed the river:
Lover of souls, from ill my passing soul deliver.**

Words: George Ratcliffe Woodward (1848 – 1934)

Prayer of Confession

Like Mary at the empty tomb, we fail to grasp the wonder of your presence.

Lord, have mercy. **Lord, have mercy.**

Like the disciples behind locked doors, we are afraid to be seen as your followers.

Christ, have mercy. **Christ, have mercy.**

Like Thomas in the upper room, we are slow to believe.

Lord, have mercy. **Lord, have mercy.**

Assurance of Pardon

May the Father of all mercies cleanse us from our sins, and restore us in his image to the praise and glory of his name, through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

Reading: Acts 5:27 – 42

When they had brought Peter and the apostles, they had them stand before the council. The high priest questioned them, saying, 'We gave you strict orders not to teach in this name, yet here you have filled Jerusalem with your teaching and you are determined to bring this man's blood on us.' But Peter and the apostles answered, 'We must obey God rather than any human authority. The God of our ancestors raised up Jesus, whom you had killed by hanging him on a tree. God exalted him at his right hand as Leader and Saviour, so that he might give repentance to Israel and forgiveness of sins. And we are witnesses to these things, and so is the Holy Spirit whom God has given to those who obey him.'

When they heard this, they were enraged and wanted to kill them. But a Pharisee in the council named Gamaliel, a teacher of the law, respected by all the people, stood up and ordered the men to be put outside for a short time. Then he said to them, 'Fellow-Israelites, consider carefully what you propose to do to these men. For some time ago Theudas rose up, claiming to be somebody, and a number of men, about four hundred, joined him; but he was killed, and all who followed him were dispersed and disappeared. After him Judas the Galilean rose up at the time of the census and got people to follow him; he also perished, and all who followed him were scattered. So in the present case, I tell you, keep away from these men and let them alone; because if this plan or this undertaking is of human origin, it will fail; but if it is of God, you will not be able to overthrow them—in that case you may even be found fighting against God!'

They were convinced by him, and when they had called in the apostles, they had them flogged. Then they ordered them not to speak in the name of Jesus, and let them go. As they left the council, they rejoiced that they were considered worthy to suffer dishonour for the sake of the name. And every day in the temple and at home they did not cease to teach and proclaim Jesus as the Messiah.

Hymn

**I believe in Jesus. I believe he is the Son of God
I believe he died and rose again. I believe he paid for us all
And I believe he is here now, standing in our midst
Here with the power to heal now and the grace to forgive**

**I believe in you Lord. I believe you are the Son of God
I believe you died and rose again. I believe you paid for us all.
And I believe you are here now standing in our midst
Here with the power to heal now and the grace to forgive**

Words: Marc Nelson

Reading: John 20:19-31

When it was evening on that day, the first day of the week, and the doors of the house where the disciples had met were locked for fear of the Jews, Jesus came and stood among them and said, 'Peace be with you.' After he said this, he showed them his hands and his side. Then the disciples rejoiced when they saw the Lord. Jesus said to them again, 'Peace be with you. As the Father has sent me, so I send you.' When he had said this, he breathed on them and said to them, 'Receive the Holy Spirit. If you forgive the sins of any, they are forgiven them; if you retain the sins of any, they are retained.'

But Thomas (who was called the Twin), one of the twelve, was not with them when Jesus came. So the other disciples told him, 'We have seen the Lord.' But he said to them, 'Unless I see the mark of the nails in his hands, and put my finger in the mark of the nails and my hand in his side, I will not believe.'

A week later his disciples were again in the house, and Thomas was with them. Although the doors were shut, Jesus came and stood among them and said, 'Peace be with you.' Then he said to Thomas, 'Put your finger here and see my hands. Reach out your hand and put it in my side. Do not doubt but believe.' Thomas answered him, 'My Lord and my God!' Jesus said to him, 'Have you believed because you have seen me? Blessed are those who have not seen and yet have come to believe.'

Now Jesus did many other signs in the presence of his disciples, which are not written in this book. But these are written so that you may come to believe that Jesus is the Messiah, the Son of God, and that through believing you may have life in his name.

Homily from the Diocesan Website

It is absolutely certain that Jesus did not have any management qualifications, and it is fair to say that the team he had around him was not the most cohesive unit around at the time. Probably that honour would have gone to one of the Roman Legions. But the disciples knew that, in a crisis, they could find comfort in one another's company. Or, at least, most of them did. Because in that upper room,

where Jesus appeared to the disciples, Thomas was missing. Why? Where was he? Did he run out on his friends too, as well as Jesus?

Well, over the years, Thomas has had pretty bad press. We know him as “Doubting Thomas” but that is not the name that was given to him by the Gospel writers – they simply recorded him as Thomas the Twin. If we examine the role of Thomas in John’s Gospel, who do we meet?

Do you remember the story of Lazarus, who was raised from the dead? When Jesus decided to go to Judea, to the home of Mary and Martha, the disciples were horrified – “But Rabbi”, they said, “a short while ago the Jews tried to stone you, and yet you are going back there?” Thomas was a lone voice. It was Thomas who declared “Let us also go, that we may die with him.” So we meet a Thomas who was quietly loyal to his master, even if that meant facing danger.

Later in John’s Gospel, we meet Thomas again. This time, Jesus is teaching his disciples at the last supper, and he talks about going to prepare a place for them in his father’s house. “And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come back and take you to be with me that you also may be where I am. You know the way to the place where I am going.”

And again Thomas spoke up – “Lord, we don’t know where you are going, so how can we know the way?” Jesus answered “I am the way and the truth and the life. No-one comes to the Father except through me.”

So we meet a Thomas who is not afraid to be totally honest with Jesus, to admit to him that he did not understand, and to get the answer to the question that probably all the disciples wanted to ask.

The third occasion we meet Thomas in John’s Gospel is in the story we heard from the Gospel reading. And for the first part of the story, Thomas was not there. But I think that the glimpses of Thomas we have already seen, give an understanding of why Thomas was not there. Thomas was totally loyal to Jesus, and yet, at the crucifixion, just like all the other disciples he ran away. Thomas was not used to running away – it was alien to him - it must have shocked him to the core – 3 years of following Jesus disintegrated in 1 backward step. And before he could face being with the other disciples, perhaps he had first to face himself. And he had to face himself with that brutal honesty that he possessed, and reach the conclusion that perfection had passed him by. He had failed.

And the enormity of that failure must have hit him hard – because Thomas was no Simon Peter, who opened his mouth and put his foot in it, and no doubt laughed at himself louder and longer than others laughed at him. Thomas was very different – he seems to have been more of a thinker, someone who chose his words with care, who didn't open his mouth unless he had something important to say. So it should not surprise us that Thomas was not with the other disciples in the upper room on that first Easter day. Thomas needed to be on his own.

However, it is partly because he was not there, that Thomas has earned his reputation as a doubter. Is that fair?

There are times in our lives when all of us are forced into the position of having to take a long hard look at ourselves - which of us does not have moments of despair when facing up to our failures. Which of us can feel able to stand before God and assert our total loyalty to him? Which of us has never had any doubts about the Christian life we have chosen to lead? And which of us feels guilty about expressing the doubts we have.

But that is exactly what we should do – Thomas expressed his doubts “I will not believe it until I see the nail marks in his hands and put my finger where the nails were and put my hand into his side.” And by expressing his doubts, he was given the opportunity to face those doubts and to come to believe. For a long time we have been encouraged to believe that doubt is wrong, that a true Christian does not have any doubts, that doubt is the absence of faith. But doubt is not the absence of faith, Thomas shows us that. It is through our doubts that our faith is strengthened.

Jesus did not criticise Thomas for his doubt. Rather, he allowed him to explore those doubts – “Put your finger here, see my hands. Reach out your hand and put it into my side. Stop doubting and believe.”

Jesus did say, “Because you have seen me, you believe. Blessed are those who have not seen and yet have believed.” Is that not criticism of Thomas's doubt? Probably not – criticism of Thomas's doubt would indicate that he had in some way acted differently to the other disciples in the room – and yet they too only believed when they had seen Jesus, just a week earlier. Is Jesus' comment not more of a unifying statement, bringing Thomas back into the fellowship of the disciples, who had all experienced the same thing?

It is right to admit to having fears and doubts – What matters is that despite the fears and the doubts we feel able to say, together with Thomas, ‘My Lord and my God’.

Questions for Reflection

1. What fears or doubts do you have which might get in the way of nurturing your faith?
2. How has your faith developed despite the fears and doubts?
3. How might expressing our fears and doubts help us to grow as a Church?
4. Is there anything else from the passage that speaks to you not already discussed? What is it?
5. What will you do this week in your Monday-to-Saturday ministry in response to what you have heard today? #everydayfaith

Declaration of Faith

We believe in God the Father, from whom every family in heaven and on earth is named.

We believe in God the Son, who lives in our hearts through faith, and fills us with his love.

We believe in God the Holy Spirit, who strengthens us with power from on high.

We believe in one God; Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Amen.

Hymn

**How deep the Father's love for us?
How vast beyond all measure?
That He should give His only Son
To make a wretch His treasure
How great the pain of searing loss?
The Father turns His face away
As wounds which mar the Chosen One
Bring many sons to glory**

**Behold the man upon a cross
My sin upon His shoulders
Ashamed I hear my mocking voice
Call out among the scoffers
It was my sin that held Him there
Until it was accomplished
His dying breath has brought me life
I know that it is finished**

**I will not boast in anything
No gifts, no power, no wisdom
But I will boast in Jesus Christ**

His death and resurrection
Why should I gain from His reward?
I cannot give an answer
But this I know with all my heart
His wounds have paid my ransom

Words: Stuart Townend

Prayers of Intercession

Lord Jesus, we thank you that you are alive! We praise you for the glory of your resurrection which means that we will never be separated from you. We pause for a moment to remember times when we have known your presence in our lives this week.

Help us to look for signs of you in everything we do, wherever we go and whoever we meet this week. Keep us focussed on you, our risen triumphant Lord. Help us to kneel with Thomas and say, 'My Lord and my God'.

Lord Jesus, even when we don't have your physical presence with us: help us to know what's real.

Lord Jesus, Thomas needed to see the wounds in your hands and side to know that you really had risen. We thank you that those scars demonstrate to us that you are a wounded God who therefore understands all our sorrows and suffering. We know that you have gone before us into the darkest places. We lift to you now all the places in our world that are suffering right now. We pray for Ukraine, still in the grip of war; we pray for Afghanistan and Yemen whose conflict and pain has gone from our news screens; we remember the victims of flooding in South Africa. In the silence we bring to you any other places of pain in our world.

Lord Jesus, your wounds remind us that you are there and that you care: help us to care for them too.

Lord, we know that when you stretched your arms out on the cross it was to show love for the whole world. Everyone matters to you. Everyone is within the realm of your love. Everyone is loved equally by you. We particularly pray for refugees and all those fleeing persecution. We ask that our government will show compassion to all those who are seeking safety and stability in our country. We pray for people that the world seems to have forgotten: the lost and alone; the housebound; those in hospital for many weeks. We pray for children living on the streets; those in the care system; those who feel unloved.

Lord Jesus, your outstretched arms tell us that you love the whole world: help us to love everyone too.

Lord, you came into that upper room, into a place full of fearful people and brought the beauty of your peace. We pray for all those we know who need your peace at

the moment: those who are sick; those who are anxious and troubled; those who are sad or grieving; those who are dying; those who are facing exams soon; those who are afraid.

Lord Jesus, breathe your peace deep into their hearts:
and fill them with the knowledge of your presence.

Lord, you didn't want your disciples to keep the good news of your rising to themselves. You said to them: 'As the Father sent me, so I am sending you.' Help us not to be afraid to tell our family and friends about you. Show us who to talk to and how to show your love to those around us: at work, at school, in our streets and in our homes. We pray for all those we know who are struggling to believe that you are real and that you really rose again from the dead. Help us to share with them what we know about you and help us to show them your reality by living and loving like you did.

Lord Jesus, you give us your peace and love:
send us out to take your love and peace to others around us.

Lord Jesus, as we start a new week, take us out of our upper rooms and into the world to live and breathe your presence. Go before us into every situation we face and help us to know that you are really there. Thank you, Lord, for rising again for us: and filling our hearts with joy. Amen.

Collect

Risen Christ, for whom no door is locked, no entrance barred: open the doors of our hearts, that we may seek the good of others and walk the joyful road of sacrifice and peace, to the praise of God the Father. Amen

Gathering our prayers and praises into one, as our Saviour taught us, so we pray together:

**Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name,
your kingdom come, your will be done, on earth as in heaven.**

Give us today our daily bread.

Forgive us our sins as we forgive those who sin against us.

Lead us not into temptation but deliver us from evil.

**For the kingdom, the power, and the glory are yours
now and for ever. Amen.**

Hymn

**Christ is made the sure foundation, and the precious cornerstone,
Who, the two walls underlying, bound in each, binds both in one;
holy Zion's help forever, and her confidence alone.**

**All that dedicated city, dearly loved by God on high,
in exultant jubilation pours perpetual melody;
God the One in Threefold glory singing everlastingly.**

**To this temple, where we call thee, come, O Lord of hosts, today:
with thy wonted loving-kindness hear thy people as they pray;
and thy fullest benediction shed within its walls for ay.**

**Here vouchsafe to all thy servants gifts of grace by prayer to gain
Here to have and hold forever those good things their prayers obtain
and hereafter in thy glory with thy blessed ones to reign**

**Laud and honour to the Father, laud and honour to the Son,
laud and honour to the Spirit, ever Three and ever One,
One in love, and One in splendour, while unending ages run. Amen**

(Words: tr. J M Neale)

God beyond our understanding, yet always with us, we offer to you:
our minds to think of your words and your promises;
our hearts to show your love for the world;
our imagination to dream big for your kingdom;
our hands to work for a better world,
and all of our lives to love and serve you always. Amen.

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An act of Spiritual Communion

*You may wish to find a space for prayer in front of a cross, a candle, or a special place.
You might choose to make your Spiritual Communion at a particular time of day, or after
viewing a live streamed service.*

Reflect on the day and on your relationships.

- *What good things have come from God today? Where have I fallen short? What might I do tomorrow? You may wish to say or pray*

Lord, have mercy. Christ, have mercy. Lord, have mercy.

Read the following words from Scripture. If you have access to today's readings for Holy Communion, you may wish to read and reflect on them.

Jesus said, 'I am the bread of life. Whoever comes to me will never be hungry, and whoever believes in me will never be thirsty.'

John 6.35

Pray for the needs of the world, for your local community, and for those close to you. End with the Lord's Prayer.

Our Father...

Give thanks for the saving death and resurrection of Jesus and ask him to be with you now. Thanks be to you, Lord Jesus Christ, for all the benefits you have given me, for all the pains and insults you have borne for me. Since I cannot now receive you sacramentally, I ask you to come spiritually into my heart.

O most merciful redeemer, friend and brother, may I know you more clearly, love you more dearly, and follow you more nearly, day by day. Amen.

after the Prayer of St Richard of Chichester

Conclude with the following:

The Lord bless us, and preserve us from all evil, and keep us in eternal life. **Amen.**

George 23 April Martyr, Patron of England, c.304 (Transferred to 26th)

Remembered as a martyr the details of the life of George have been lost in time, although fifth century records attest his existence, and to the beginning of his commemoration. In all probability George was a soldier, and a victim of the Diocletian persecutions in Lydda, in Palestine. The known facts of his life state that George, an officer in the Roman Army, 'gave his goods to the poor, and openly confessed Christianity before the court'.

Diocletian was responsible for the most devastating and sustained persecution of the Early Church, from 303-304 AD. Only his abdication prevented more permanent damage being sustained to the Church, and many unknown Christians, like George, would have given their lives for the sake of the gospel, and would have been remembered with gratitude from that time onwards.

The more popular stories of the life and death of George can be traced back to the Eighth century. The slaying of the dragon is not connected with his name until the Twelfth century, and it may be that the origin of this story is the Greek myth of Perseus slaying a sea monster. George's story was included in the 'Golden legend' (1260), which became a popular source of 'history', and received widespread attention in the Middle Ages.

His popularity as a saint of national identity grew with the Crusades, and he became the patron saint of Soldiers. Richard I called upon him for protection before the third Crusade in 1187 and a red cross on a white background, became the 'uniform' of his crusaders and, in time, England's national flag. George was personified as the ideal knight. He was made patron of England in preference to Edward the Confessor by Edward III in 1347. Shakespeare added to the reputation of George, when he 're-

created' Henry V's speech before the battle of Agincourt (1415) in which St George is invoked as a powerful ally of king and nation:

Follow your spirit; and upon this charge,
Cry, 'God for Harry, England and Saint George!'

Henry V, Act III, Scene i

Mellitus 24 April Bishop of London, first Bishop at St Paul's, 624

Mellitus, born of a noble family, was first a monk, and then abbot of a monastic community at Rome. He led the second group of monks sent by Pope Gregory the Great to evangelize Britain in 601. This group was sent to support the work of Augustine of Canterbury, who had been given the responsibility for the mission to the Anglo-Saxons earlier in 597. Mellitus was consecrated by Augustine in 604/5 as the first Bishop of the East Saxons and was based in London.

After an inauspicious start, Augustine's and Mellitus' missionary activity was modified by Gregory the Great. He instructed Mellitus to use the old Saxon temples as places of Christian worship. He was only to cleanse the temples and to remove the Saxon idols, not completely destroy them. As a result the Saxon temples became Christian places of worship, and old Saxon feast days were re-directed towards Christian celebrations. Bede reports that the Pope declared 'If the people are allowed some worldly pleasures . . . they will more readily come to desire the joys of the Spirit'. This instruction to Mellitus radically altered missionary endeavour throughout the Saxon regions, and had a profound effect on the spread of the gospel.

At the end of the sixth century Britain was a collection of independent Anglo-Saxon kingdoms – the Heptarchy. The southern parts of Britain were receptive to the particular form of Christianity spread by the Church of Rome. The rest of the country was more responsive to Celtic Christian influence. In spite of their similarities, political emphasis and difficult relationships led to division. Two key areas of Britain, Kent and East Anglia, proved to be a stronghold for the Roman interpretation of Christianity, yet it was with these areas that Mellitus was to encounter difficulty.

In 604 Mellitus was involved in a dispute with new kings of both Kent and the East Saxons who once enthroned ceased practising Roman Christianity and reverted to paganism instead. However, they both still demanded that Mellitus perform the Eucharist for them. This was unacceptable to Mellitus, and he refused. Accordingly he was banished from their kingdoms and he fled to Gaul in 616. He returned in 619 and in the same year became the third Archbishop of Canterbury.

A staunch follower of Roman Christianity, Mellitus attempted to secure the dominance of this interpretation of the faith in southern Britain, and stood against syncretism in the face of great pressure.

The Seven Martyrs of the Melanesian Brotherhood 24 April The Seven Martyrs of the Melanesian Brotherhood, Solomon Islands, 2003

The Melanesian Brotherhood was founded in 1925 by Ini Kopuria (see 6 June) as a lay brotherhood of young men who took vows for a specific period of time and engaged in prayer, mission and service. The Brotherhood, initially established on Guadalcanal, quickly spread throughout the Province of Melanesia (the Solomon Islands and Vanuatu) and even beyond, to Fiji and Australia.

The Brotherhood was influential in helping to resolve a violent period of ethnic conflict in the Solomon Islands in 1999-2000 and took part in the disarmament process. But one rebel leader, Harold Keke, refused to sign the peace agreement of 2000 and continued his campaign of violence and intimidation. Undeterred, the Brotherhood continued to work for peace. But this peacemaking came to a violent conclusion when Brother Nathaniel Sado was kidnapped, tortured and killed by the rebels. On Easter Day 2003 news was broadcast on the national radio from an eyewitness, reporting that Brother Nathaniel had been beaten to death by Keke's militants.

Six other Brothers set off from the capital, Honiara, on 23 April to find out what had happened. Knowing what the outcome might be, the Assistant Head Brother of the Melanesian Brotherhood, Robin Lindsay, went with five other brothers – Francis Tofi, Alfred Hill, Ini Paratabatu, Patteson Gatu and Tony Sirihi – aiming to find Brother Nathaniel and, if he was indeed dead, to bring his body home for burial. For over three months the community waited day and night, hoping and praying for their safety. In June the situation became even worse when five Novices and two Brothers in the neighbouring district of Mbanbanakira were also taken hostage. Eventually they were released but what was worrying was that during their captivity none of them had seen any sign of the original six Brothers. Then their worst fears were confirmed. When the Regional Assistance Mission arrived in the Solomon Islands with troops from Australia, New Zealand, Papua New Guinea and Fiji Keke surrendered and confirmed that all seven Melanesian Brothers had been killed. In fact three were killed when they had first arrived (on 24 April), the others a day later, after being tortured. The bodies of the seven martyrs were recovered and re-interred at the mother house of the Melanesian Brotherhood in the autumn. Their funerals, attended by crowds in the tens of thousands, saw an extraordinary outpouring of popular grief and affection, and their example of costly love has done much to heal the community divisions within the islands.

In February 2004 the Brotherhood was presented with the first prize in the regional category of the Pacific Human Rights Awards 'for its sacrifice above the call of duty to protect the vulnerable and build peace and security in Solomon Islands during the civil conflict and post-conflict reconstruction'.

Christina Rossetti 27 April Poet, 1894

Christina Rossetti, the youngest member of a remarkable artistic Anglo-Italian family, was born in London in 1830. A devout Anglican from an evangelical background, Christina and her sister became greatly influenced by the Tractarians

and her sister Maria eventually entered the sisterhood of All Saints', Margaret Street.

Some of Christina's earliest work, written under the pseudonym 'Ellen Alleyne', was published in *The Germ*, the organ of the pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood. Her poetry reflected her Christian faith and also a pervading sense of melancholy, both strong facets of her character. She also wrote fantasy poems and pieces for children, for example her 1862 work, *Goblin Market*. But this can also be interpreted as a religious allegory with themes of temptation, sin and redemption clearly apparent. She gave up the prospect of marriage for religious reasons. She broke off her engagement to James Collinson in 1850 when he became a Roman Catholic and in 1866 she turned down a proposal from James Bagot Cayley. Not surprisingly the themes of renunciation of earthly love and the habitual Victorian concern with death are also recurring themes, particularly in her later poetry. Her poetry is recognized by critics as having a high degree of technical perfection and encompasses a wide range of styles and forms. Two Christmas carols, *In the bleak mid-winter* and *Love came down at Christmas*, remain popular today and are in many hymn books. At one point she was considered as a possible successor to Tennyson as Poet Laureate.

When her father's failing health and eyesight forced him into retirement in 1853, Christina and her mother attempted to support the family by starting their own school, but it was a short-lived venture. Her brother Dante's breakdown in 1872 and death ten years later affected her deeply. She herself suffered from chronic ill-health in later life and became something of a recluse. She developed cancer in 1891 and died three years later. Shortly before her death she published the poem 'None other Lamb', later put to music as a hymn:

None other Lamb; none other name,
None other hope in heaven or earth or sea,
None other hiding-place from guilt and shame,
None beside Thee.

My faith burns low, my hope burns low,
Only my heart's desire cries out in me,
By the deep thunder of its want and woe,
Cries out to Thee.

Lord, Thou art life, though I be dead,
Love's fire Thou art, however cold I be:
Nor heaven have I, nor place to lay my head,
Nor Home, but Thee.

Peter Chanel 28 April Missionary in the South Pacific, Martyr, 1841

Born of humble parentage at Cuét in the Ain department of France in 1802, Peter Chanel was ordained priest in the Roman Catholic Church in 1827. Routine parish ministry occupied him for some years, but his imagination was fired by reading the

letters of missionaries in far-away lands and in due course he himself offered for missionary service, joining the Society of Mary (the Marists) in 1831. In 1836 he embarked for the South Pacific.

He was assigned by his bishop to the island of Futuna, in the New Hebrides (today Vanuatu) and landed in 1837, the first Christian missionary to set foot there. In common with many Pacific islands cannibalism and endemic inter-tribal warfare had reduced its population to a few thousand by the time Chanel landed there.

Despite the difficulties of mission work among such savagery, Chanel laboured faithfully amid the greatest hardships, learning the native language, attending the sick, baptizing the dying and gathering around him a small band of Christian converts and a larger group who were being taught the rudiments of the Christian faith. European missionaries were always vulnerable in such situations but Niuliki, the chief, initially gave Chanel his support and even declared him 'taboo', so that he was not harmed; but his attitude changed when he saw the decline of tribal religion and, what was even worse, the conversion of his son and daughter.

With the chief's apparent agreement, a plot against Chanel was put into practice by Musumusu the Prime Minister. At dawn on 28 April, 1841 the mission compound was attacked and after a number of the converts who were caught unawares were wounded, Chanel's hut was attacked and he was battered to death, his head being split by a blow from an adze.

But as so often, before and since, the blood of the martyrs proved to be the seed of the Church and two Marist missionaries resumed Chanel's work the following year with remarkable results. At the same time Chanel's remains were exhumed and taken back to France. Chanel was beatified by Pope Leo XIII in 1889 and is revered in the Roman Catholic Church as the proto-martyr of Oceania, though in fact his death took place some eighteen months after the martyrdom of John Williams of the London Missionary Society at Dillon's Bay on the nearby island of Erromanga.

Catherine of Siena 29 April Teacher of the Faith, 1380

Born at Siena in Italy in 1347 Catherine was the 23rd of 25 children. From an early age she was known to want to lead a life of prayer and penance, despite opposition from her parents and family. She refused marriage, and instead opted for a life of solitude. She joined the Dominican order as a Tertiary (lay volunteer) at the age of 16. She lived in solitude for three years, until she felt a call to leave her seclusion and care for the poor.

As Catherine became involved for caring for the sick, a diverse group of followers, both men and women, clerical and lay, gathered around her. This group soon became known for their desire for reform of the Church, their call for a life of total devotion to God, and their focus upon the crucified Christ. Unsurprisingly this group attracted criticism as well as praise wherever they went.

Catherine was a great correspondent, but had to dictate all her letters as she never learned to write herself. She wrote a 'Dialogue' in which explained her beliefs and

expounded the sense of devotion to the crucified Christ that so ordered her life. This work was dictated to others when she was in a state of prayer and ecstasy. Eventually, as her calls for reform went unheeded, Catherine became more and more involved in the political life of the Church. She acted as a peacemaker between Church and State when relationships deteriorated. The schism of 1378, when rival popes were elected after the death of Gregory XI, saw Catherine attempting to intervene and bring clarity to the situation. She supported Urban as the genuine Pope, although she was not unafraid to challenge him on his more extreme and unbending attitudes to the Avignon papacy.

She died, of a stroke in 1380, before the papal split was resolved. Her devotion to Christ is evident throughout her 'Dialogue':

The soul begins to lose fear, knowing that fear alone is not sufficient to give eternal life. And so the soul proceeds, with love, to know itself and God's goodness within, and begins to take hope in God's mercy in which the heart feels joy. Sorrow for grief, mingled with the joy of hope in mercy, causes the eye to weep, and these tears issue from the very fountain of the heart.

The 'Dialogue' of St Catherine of Siena

Pandita Mary Ramabai 30 April Translator of the Scriptures, 1922

Born into a high-caste Indian family in South Kanara in 1858, Ramabai was taught Sanskrit by her father, an expert on the language. But she lost both her parents during a pilgrimage to South India in 1874 and had to fend for herself, travelling with her brother to sacred Hindu shrines, where she recited Sanskrit poetry to the crowds. She ended up in Calcutta and it was there that she was accorded the then novel title of Pandita ('mistress of learning'), so unusual in Indian culture was an educated woman with such linguistic skills.

She challenged traditional Indian culture by making calls for female emancipation and by marrying a man of a lower caste. But her marriage was short-lived and she was left a widow with no status and with a small child to care for. This experience gave her an insight into the sufferings of Hindu women and widows less privileged than herself.

In Bengal she encountered Christian believers and finding that Hinduism, with its expectation of resigned suffering was no help to her, studied the Bible and Christianity. At the same time she opened welfare and education centres and campaigned to improve the political situation of widows and women in general. Invited to England by Anglican nuns – the Wantage Sisters – for further education, she and her daughter were baptized there.

Returning to India she continued her work, extending it to unmarried mothers and young girls. She was criticized by Hindus for denying her roots and by Christians because conversion of the people she worked with was not a major priority. She had no time for denominational in-fighting and based her faith on the Jesus of the Bible and sought to express it in an authentically Indian way.

In 1891 she experienced an evangelical conversion and added evangelism to her social work. Her main sphere of work was the administration of the Mukti Institution which she had founded at Kedgaon near Poona (Pune). Opening as a small school, it quickly developed into a much larger institution where lower-caste women, widows and orphans found care and support. This demonstration of practical Christianity resulted in many of the women becoming Christians. But Ramabai never turned entirely away from her scholarly upbringing and, in addition to her work amongst women in need, she lectured widely on social issues and translated the Bible into the Marathi, the language of educated Hindus. She died in 1922.

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A Prayer for Ukraine

God of peace and justice,
we pray for the people of Ukraine 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.
We pray in the name of Jesus, the Prince of Peace.
Amen.

Archbishop Justin Welby
Archbishop Stephen Cottrell

