



Dear parishioners,

1. Lockdown continues, as does the cold weather. In these times, it is good to look out for those who might be finding these conditions especially difficult. If you know of somebody who is elderly or vulnerable, who would like some shopping done or just a telephone call to brighten their day, please do let us know. The easiest way is to drop us an email – balham@rcaos.org.uk. We will use our parish Society of St Vincent de Paul (SVP) to co-ordinate any help needed.
2. Our churches are permitted by law to open and hold services during the lockdown, but they need to be safe places. **Our very special gratitude goes out to our stewards**, whose work is now more important than ever. If you value our open churches, and the ability to come to Mass, please do consider volunteering as a steward – we need your help. You can volunteer here, <https://doodle.com/poll/hgeidsrn3ci7x2ym>. If you have any difficulty is using the Doodle, or other questions, you can email us at holyghostvolunteers@gmail.com. Thank you!
3. **Bishop John Sherrington**, an assistant bishop in the Diocese of Westminster, has written an open letter on behalf of all our Catholic bishops. It explains the vital work the Church continues to do during this pandemic, and why it is important that our churches can remain open, even during lockdown. A copy of his letter is attached to this email, and it is well worth reading.
4. Lastly, our saint of the week is **St Thomas Aquinas**, whose feast falls on 28th January. St Thomas (who is pictured above) was born in 1225, in southern Italy. As a young man, he became a Dominican friar, and devoted the rest of his life to the study and teaching of theology – sharing with others his knowledge of God. St Thomas is probably the most important and influential theologian in the whole history of the Catholic Church, and is particularly revered for his monumental work, the ‘Summa Theologica’, which remains essential reading for students of theology throughout the world. Thomas also had a great

devotion to the Holy Eucharist, and is said to have composed many of the hymns and prayers we associate with the feast of Corpus Christi (including the 'Tantum ergo' which is still often sung at Benediction). St Thomas died in 1274, and is buried at Toulouse in France, where his relics are still venerated.

With our prayers and best wishes for the week ahead –

Fr Richard and Fr Giovanni