BLACKFRIARS
CAMBRIDGE

24 August 2025
Twenty First Week in Ordinary Time

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 24	**XXI Sunday**
Mon 25	*feria*
Tue 26	Bl. Dominic Barberi
Wed 27	S. Monica
Thu 28	S. Augustine
Fri 29	The Beheading of S. John the Baptist
Sat 30	Our Lady on Saturday
Sun 31	**XXII SUNDAY**

Support Us

Our ministry relies on the generosity of our friends and supporters. If you would like to support us make a donation in the cloister, visit our website, or speak to or email the bursar, Fr Albert.

cambridge.bursar@english.op.org

March for Life

Saturday 6 September

For more information visit:
<www.marchforlife.co.uk/>
or email: <info@marchforlife.co.uk>

-

Lay Mission Institute

The English Dominican Province in collaboration with the Lay Mission Institute are planning to form some Lay Mission groups. Members of a Lay Mission group will participate in a three-year formation programme in which they will learn what it means to have a lay vocation and how to live it out. Most weeks require about a two-hour commitment with an extra hour or two every other week to meet other group members. If you would like to join a Lay Mission group or would just like to find out more, please email lay.mission@english.op.org.

Safegauarding

Blackfriars Cambridge operates in accordance with Statutory Safeguarding Guidance and the Safeguarding Policies of the Catholic Church in England and Wales at all times. Our Lay Safeguarding Representative is Emanuela Di Pietro. She can be contacted on 07516 667752 or at <safeguardingrepresentative.cambridge@english.op.org>. The local safeguarding friar is fr Gregory Pearson, OP. He can be contacted on 07724 062971 or at <gregory.pearson@english.op.org>. Alternatively, the Religious Life Safeguarding Service can be contacted on 0151 5562311 or <safeguarding@religioussafeguarding.org> if you have any concerns.

Day of Renewal: "A Fountain of Hope"

6 September 2025 10:00 - 16:15 at St Henry Morse Church, Shelfanger Rd, Diss, IP22 4DX. Guest speaker Father Alvan Ibeh SMMM. The day commences with Holy Mass at 10am. You can expect inspiring talks from Fr Alvan along with Praise & Worship, Adoration of the Blessed Sacrament, fellowship, opportunity for Reconciliation & individual prayer ministry. Come as you are, whether you are spiritually weary or seeking something more - this is a day for you! Please bring a packed lunch. Tea and Coffee will be available. The event is free, donations to cover costs are much appreciated. For more info email: <renewaleastanglia@gmail.com> or phone Pam Smith: <07869 652115>.

Good Friday: Rex Tragicus, or, Christ Going to His Cross

Put off Thy Robe of Purple, then go on
To the sad place of execution:
Thine houre is come; and the Tormentor stands
Ready, to pierce Thy tender Feet, and Hands.
Long before this, the base, the dull, the rude,
Th'inconstant, and unpurged Multitude
Yawne for Thy coming; some e're this time crie,
How He deferres, how loath He is to die!
Amongst this scumme, the Souldier, with his speare,
And that sowre Fellow, with his vineger,
His spunge, and stick, do ask why Thou dost stay?
So do the Skurfe and Bran too: Go Thy way,
Thy way, Thou guiltlesse man, and satisfie
By Thine approach, each their beholding eye.
Not as a thief, shalt Thou ascend the mount,
But like a Person of some high account:
The Crosse shall be Thy Stage; and Thou shalt there
The spacious field have for Thy Theater.
Thou art that Roscius, and that markt-out man,
That must this day act the Tragedian,
To wonder and affrightment: Thou art He,
Whom all the flux of Nations comes to see;
Not those poor Theeves that act their parts with Thee:
Those act without regard, when once a King,
And God, as Thou art, comes to suffering.
No, No, this Scene from Thee takes life and sense,

And soule and spirit, plot, and excellence.
Why then begin, great King! ascend Thy Throne,
And thence proceed, to act Thy Passion
To such an height, to such a period rais'd,
As Hell, and Earth, and Heav'n may stand amaz'd.
God, and good Angells guide Thee; and so blesse
Thee in Thy severall parts of bitternesse;
That those, who see Thee nail'd unto the Tree,
May (though they scorn Thee) praise and pitie Thee.
And we (Thy Lovers) while we see Thee keep
The Lawes of Action, will both sigh, and weep;
And bring our Spices, to embalm Thee dead;
That done, wee'l see Thee sweetly buried.

This poem by Robert Herrick has long been one of my favourites. I quote it here in its original spelling, which I hope is not too annoying. Although better remembered for his love poems, Herrick was a parish priest in the Church of England, and he did write religious poetry, though not quite as intense as the poetry of George Herbert, another Church of England priest. Line 17 of the poem explains the true purpose of the poem, where he say, 'Thy cross shall be Thy stage. When we reach this point the meaning of the poem is transformed by this simple image which is the full point of the poem. The crowd which is the crowd which mocks Jesus is described in contemptuous terms, the base, the dull, the rude, rude meaning uncultured rather than impolite, but these images are drawn from the ambiguous attitude to theatre in the Elizabethan and Jacobean age. The plays were watched by the aristocracy from special position but the theatre was disreputable, not least in the normal audience. Actors were admired for their craft but not revered. Audiences shouted a lot, did not always appreciate the finer points of the art, and so were ripe for the many insulting words which Herrick applies to them. Once we understand the image of the cross as a play, we see why the insults seem more appropriate to the crowd in a theatre than the crowd at the actual crucifixion. The crowd at the Passion of Christ mock him but out of hatred, rather than the disappointment that a theatre audience would show. Yet the image of the theatre is to show that the cross is indeed a great spectacle.

While it is unlikely that Herrick would know of one of the earliest poems in English, the Anglo-Saxon poem the Dreme of the Rode, which means, the Joy of the Cross, not dream, the ancient theme recurs of the cross as a wonderful spectacle which astonishes the whole of the creation. Herrick though, stresses that it is the personage of Christ which transforms the cross. Without him, a crucifixion attracted people at their worst, who take an unholy joy in the death of a human being, even a guilty one. This death is different because it is Christ who is to die. The last word of the second line of the poem is now seen to have a double meaning. 'Execution', means that Christ is to be put to death, but the word could also be used to the putting into effect some project, principally a work of art. An artist could be praised for his execution. Herrick is trying to use the theatrical imagery to show that Christ is in charge of his own death, even though it is imposed on him. This is the double meaning of execution. A god and king as thou art. The poor thieves

who die with him, act without regard. Once again a double meaning. 'Regard' refers to the praise that an actor or playwright receives, but it also refers to awareness, the ability to see what is happening, and the thieves lack both. 'Ascend Thy throne, And thence proceed to act thy passion.' Acting may mean playing a part but it also means causing something to happen, another ambiguity but the double meanings are not carefully balanced. The prime meaning is always the reality of the cross, so that it is his work, an action which is the work of a God and king. 'As hell and earth and heaven may stand amazed.' The actual crucifixion was not theatrical performance even though the mob treated it as such, an entertainment, which to be fair to those who come to gawp at public executions may be a way of avoiding the terrible reality of someone being put to death. Yet Herrick by treating the death of Christ as a performance, paradoxically, shows that his death is indeed a performance but of a quite other sort. The play is always intentional, being a work of art, so that the death of Christ too is intentional, coming from his choice to allow himself to be killed. It was not a happenstance of life, as the crowd may have seen it, a mere unfolding of the events of life at their most bitter. Then again, a play is still a fiction, and the death of Christ was no fiction, but a dreadful reality. It is only God who can make the events of life conform to a pattern, be a work of intention, and so make life itself be his work of art. None of us are in control, we are part of the inconstant multitude, and life seems to be just something that happens to us.

The play imposes on the audience, so that the crowd is forced to praise and pity, even though they wish simply to feel contempt, 'though they scorn thee'. Those who truly understand are those who feel love for the Christ. He speaks of 'we' who love thee, thinking perhaps of how the performance element of liturgy, the operatic masses, could obscure the reality of the death of Christ which is at the heart of all prayer, liturgical or real. The true mourners stop being spectators but join in the play by caring for the dead body of Christ, to see him sweetly buried. There is no mention of the Resurrection but the fact that the lovers have joined in the play, shows that there is more to come.

fr Euan Marley, OP