



The Chapels Royal of St Peter ad Vincula and St John the Evangelist HM Tower

Dear friends,



On Bank Holiday Monday I took the opportunity to visit The National Gallery's latest free exhibition in Room 46: **The Last Caravaggio**. Was it worth the queue, and was it worth the annoying people taking pictures and the person who said, 'She doesn't look very much like a saint!?' I think the answer has to be yes.

This was Caravaggio's last painting, properly called **The Martyrdom of Saint Ursula** and painted in 1610, just two months before he died. It was not until 1980 that the painting was authenticated as being by Caravaggio and nowadays normally hangs in the Banca Intesa Sanpaolo's Gallerie d'Italia, in Naples.

According to legend, Saint Ursula, a fourth-century Christian princess, was killed for refusing to marry against her faith. The painting shows Saint Ursula holding, in her hands, the arrow that has penetrated her breast with fatal consequences. Caravaggio includes himself in the painting.

There have been other paintings of Saint Ursula and she has become something of a heroine for women, for putting her faith and conscience above the will of powerful men. Caravaggio's style is unmistakable. Was he perhaps trying, in the darkness of this fragile painting (along with his masterpiece **The Beheading of Saint John the Baptist**), to recognise the darker moments in his own troubled life?

With my best wishes to you all, Roger.

Sunday Service Details for 2nd June 2024

The First Sunday after Trinity

0915 Holy Communion (White Tower)

1100 Choral Matins St Peter ad Vincula

Psalm 139: 1-5, 12-18.

Readings 2 Corinthians 4: 5-12 and Mark 2: 23 - 3.6.

Collect for The First Sunday after Trinity

O God, the strength of all them that put their trust in thee, mercifully accept our prayers; and because through the weakness of our mortal nature we can do no good thing without thee, grant us the help of thy grace, that in keeping of thy commandments we may please thee, both in will and deed; through Jesus Christ our Lord. **Amen.**

Poem of the week

This week's poet, Alice Oswald, may not be as well-known as perhaps she should be. After studying classics at New College Oxford, she began to write poetry which has now made its mark across the world, particularly here in the UK and in America. She has received a number of prestigious awards and in 2019, became the first woman to be appointed as Oxford Professor of Poetry. She lives in Devon with her husband and family.

This poem, *Seabird's Blessing*, has both secular and deep religious overtones. Rowan Williams (himself a poet) once wrote, 'How would the non-human world pray if it had words to do so?' This poem challenges that idea. Currents of air carry the birds through different thermals, and the hope is that the 'wing-bone' (Christ on the Cross) will save them from a violent death. 'God the featherer' – perhaps an echo of 'God the Father' - will sustain the birds and, by extension, us as well. Perhaps we could consider how much of ourselves we see in the birds, and whether their prayer might also be ours.

Seabird's Blessing

We are the crowds of seabirds,
makers of many angles,
workers that unpick a web
of the air's treads and tangles.

Pray for us when we fight
the wind one to one;
let not that shuddering strength
smash the cross of the wing-bone.

O God the featherer,
lift us if we fall;
preserve the frenzy in our mouths,
the yellow star in the eyeball.

Christ, make smooth the way
of a creature like a spirit
up from its perverse body
without weight or limit.

Holy ghost of heaven,
blow us clear of the world,
give us the utmost of the air
to heave on and to hold.

Pray for us this weird
bare place – we are screaming
O sky count us not as nothing
O sky count us not as nothing

Alice Oswald b. 1966

Our Congregation

On Saturday 25th May, Ryan and Katy were married in the Chapel of St Peter. Ryan is the son of Yeoman Sergeant John Donald.



On Sunday 26th May, Rory Andrews was baptised in the Chapel of St Peter. His father Jamie Andrews was baptised here on 25th February 1990.



Patronal Festival

6.30pm, Wednesday 17th July

Choral Evensong followed by a reception on Chapel Green

Guest Preacher

Professor The Reverend Robin Griffiths-Jones, Master of the Temple

If you would like to attend, please email
TowerOfLondonChapelAdministrator@hrp.org.uk in advance.

Tracy's Garden – Honeysuckle



Tower of London – Jigsaw

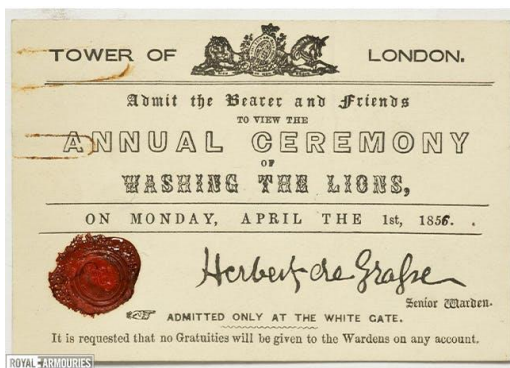
A great picture from the Chaplain of the conservation work taking place across the Tower. This week, the team were working on cleaning the lions by the main entrance.

<https://www.jigsawplanet.com/?rc=play&pid=24c4ad610910>



The Annual Ceremony of the Washing of the Lions is one of the earliest recorded April Fool's pranks.

A TICKET TO 'WASHING THE LIONS', 1856



The long history of lions at the Tower may, at first glance, explain this ticket dated to 1856. It promises entrance to the 'Annual Ceremony of Washing the Lions', including instructions to find the 'White Gate' with a serious seal and signature from the Tower's 'Senior Warden'.

Yet a closer look at the date reveals the truth. It was 1 April 1856; the Tower had no 'White Gate', nor any lions left to visit. The menagerie has been closed for over 20 years and the unlucky ticket holder was an 'April Fool'.

Image: © Royal Armouries

The article linked below by Minette Butler, Assistant Curator, Historic Royal Palaces has some great stories about this tradition, and some interesting pictures.

<https://www.hrp.org.uk/blog/washing-the-lions-a-famous-april-fools-hoax-at-the-tower-of-london/#gs.9h7dcj>

Prayers

Please continue to remember those on our sick list, some of whom are very ill, amongst whom we name:

Stanley, Claire, John, Dom, Barbara, Ann, Ros, Toby, Mark, Dan, Ian, Florence and Kofi.

RIP

Sqn Ldr Mark Long

Please continue to pray for Ukraine, Israel and Palestine:

God of peace and justice, we pray for the people of Ukraine, Israel and Palestine 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.

With best wishes to all, Roger.



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