



HIGH TIDE

January 2022

PARISH MAGAZINE
SAINT PAUL'S, WEYMOUTH



This Magazine contains: *Letter from the Vicar - Notices & News - Articles from Fr Bruce & Kathy, Fr Tony, Katherine Harrison, Jeanne James, Eileen Galling - Psalm 14 - St. Anthony Abbot - Merit - and more*

You can detach pages 17-28 and use it for Morning & Evening Prayer
<http://www.stpaulsweymouth.org>

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*Many thanks to all who have contributed to this issue of the Parish Magazine
and to Liz Evans for the proof-reading.*

*The next Magazine will be published on **Sunday 30th January**. Please, send all articles,
information, news you wish to be publish by Sunday 23rd December.*

From the Vicar

Dearly Beloved,

We have left a strange but exciting year behind us. Many good things happened in 2021, some signs of a promising future appeared, and with your generosity and support we managed to do some important works to the building as well.

Indeed, I must thank you all for your continued help: be it prayer, financial support, hard work, faithful presence, or generous undertaking of various tasks. A special thank-you is due to Fr Bruce and Fr Tony, to the Churchwardens, to all members of the PCC and of the various Sub-Committees, to our servers and choir members, to our brilliant organists, to the Cell of Our Lady of Walsingham for their constant prayers for the Parish, to all who take care of the flowers, vestments, and Altar linens, to the Hall Trustees, to all who run or help with S.P.O.T., the Munch Club, Recycled Teenagers, to all who volunteer for all the various rotas - such as coffee after Mass, cleaning, Sunday School, readers and to all you who, whenever I call with something to do, respond so promptly, so generously for the good of our Parish.

For the third time since my Incumbency, we ended the year with Eucharistic Adoration on New Year's Eve. The Blessed Sacrament was enthroned on the High Altar and as in the dimmed chancel the golden monstrance reflected the candles, the Sacrament appeared to be a consoling, strengthening, and guiding beam. Certainly smaller in dimensions but I still compare it with the Column of Fire that guided Israel through the desert, towards the Promised Land.

It is our faith that the Eucharist, while enthroned on the Altar, was surrounded by an invisible court of Angels and Saints, and by the blessed souls of the departed. I was pleased to see that this invisible "army" was joined by quite a few of you - I hope even more will come next year. There, in Jesus' presence, we offered him our gratitude, we prayed for our Parish, we put down at his feet our anxieties and fears, we asked his - and each others' - forgiveness for whatever wrong we did, and with his grace we tried to forgive those who wronged us or whom we simply struggle to like.

And this, indeed, is my vision and wish for us all in 2022: united and reconciled in the Lord Jesus, guided by his Word, nurtured by his Sacraments we pray, build, live, walk, and grow all together.

Assuring you of my prayers, I am,
ever yours in Christ,

Fr. Gregory

News - Events - Notices

Wednesday 10am Mass - from January tea, coffee, and biscuits will be offered after Mass on every Wednesday to enjoy some midweek moments of fellowship. If you miss a good chat, some company, a tiny little bit of healthy gossip (only good things!!) then come and join us. It is also a good occasion to try to introduce new people to church.

Lights - hopefully physical darkness in church will soon be gone thanks partly to longer daylight and improving weather (fingers crossed) and partly to the new lights that will be installed.

We have already petitioned the Diocese for faculty (it is a sort of planning permission required for works) and the permission, together with the new lights, is expected towards the end of January. The new lights are all dimmable LED lights of 47watts and will replace the current halogen floodlights of 400watts. This will reduce significantly our electricity bills.

Kenya - as you will or already have read in Fr Tony's article: it is good to make new year resolutions that will benefit others (as well) rather than only ourselves. Why not consider "adopting" a child in Kenya, assuring education and future for them with that money you save by giving up (partly) something.

House blessing - Epiphany-tide is the traditional time when our homes are blessed. By saying prayers of blessing, sprinkling the house with holy water and "chalking" the entrance, the Church, through the ministry of the priest, asks God to bless and protect our homes and all those who live there, to keep away physical or spiritual harm and evil from it. The Vicar is happy to come and do the blessing and chalking - get in touch with him! As experience shows, the marking of the entrance is often a good occasion to talk about our faith and church to curious friends, neighbours or passer-byes.

Funeral wishes - on more than one occasion we have discovered that some Funeral wishes are missing. Some instructions and wishes which were thought to be in the Parish safe, are in fact not there. The Vicar has an updated list of Funeral wishes kept in the safe - please, check with him if yours is supposed to be there. As an insert in the January Parish Magazine, please, find a form to register your wishes and instructions for your own funeral. The best practice would be to give the Parish a copy of your wishes, indicating where the original is kept. Not only relatives often have no idea where to search for these wishes, but in most cases because of grief the existence of these wishes does not even come to their mind.

Happy New Year

Father Tony writes:

“And I said to the man that stood at the gate of the year: ‘Give me a light that I may tread safely into the unknown’. And he replied: ‘Go out into the darkness and put your hand into the hand of God. That shall be to you better than light and safer than a known way’. So I went forth and finding the hand of God, trod gladly into the night. And He led me towards the hills and the breaking of day in the lone East.”

(Minnie Louise Haskins 1875-1957)

The new year begins, and as it does I’m thinking of two customs/traditions which often accompany its coming.

The first may not be very familiar to you as I’ve discovered in recent conversations with members of the congregation. It’s very common “up North” (well north of the Northway anyway!). It’s usually known as letting the New Year in. It varies slightly, but by and large follows a common pattern.

As midnight chimes, a man, preferably tall and dark, arrives at the front door of the house. This is prearranged, and those in the house leave the door unlocked and listen for his coming. He carries a lump of coal. At the door, once midnight has passed, a rhyme is recited.

*“I knock on this door and enter in,
I let the old year out, and the New Year in.”*

He enters the house and passes through it leaving the house by the back door, those inside remaining in silence. He speaks to no one until he returns into the house where everyone is greeted. A “wee dram” is often offered, and gladly accepted!

I guess this custom like many others is dying out. Shame really... As a young man, when I was tall and dark, I was in great demand!

The second custom is known to us all, the making of New Year resolutions. I imagine the vast majority of us make such a resolution. Why do we make them? Are they just “something we do?” Or are they a genuine expression of a desire to change our habits or lifestyle? There may be two pitfalls as we make them.

Firstly we may set ourselves unrealistic targets. We set the bar so high that we soon begin to fall short, and when we do we lose heart and slowly but surely give up. A feeling of failure can give way to a sense of guilt. Or we set the bar too low and there is no real stimulus to challenge us. It’s all too easy and it possibly leads to a feeling of “well, it’s not worth bothering.” So we stop.

The second pit fall is that of resolutions being too self centred. People resolve to, give up sweets, give up alcohol, lose weight, etc. All laudable but the main, or only beneficiary, are the people themselves. Others should benefit too? So perhaps a resolution to restore broken relationships, to make a point of talking to people in the congregation we don't know too well. To make phone calls to older members of the congregation especially those who live alone. How such things enrich the lives of all involved.

None of us know what this new year will bring. I personally don't believe that examining the tea leaves, or visiting a fortune teller, or feeling the bumps on my head, will be of any benefit at all.

Whatever this year may bring we are not alone and we do not face it ourselves. We are in this together as a community of faith and as children of God, relying and trusting more in Him and less on ourselves.

The poem says, "*Go out into the darkness and put your hand into the hand of God. That shall be to you better than light and safer than a known way*". Wow, what a resolution that will be.

Happy New Year.

Fr.T



Kathy and Fr Bruce have kindly allowed me to publish this photo of the gingerbread house their daughter had asked them to do. It took them a whole day and I think it was very much worth it!

I am sure you all agree Kathy and Fr Bruce should be on GBBO...

...but until we see them on TV, why don't we have our own baking competition in the new year?? Tickets would give access to a selection of cakes to try, a vote to cast and all income would help the Parish.

The winner, of course, would leave with a wonderful prize and eternal fame...

Good and Evil

Father Bruce and Kathy write:

Before Christmas we watched the original Scandi Drama “Millennium” on BBC4. It is violent and horrific in a few scenes but overall it is the story of an awkward girl, Lisbeth Salander, and her desire to live a private life and try to right some of the wrongs around her. She is particularly engaged with stopping men abusing women and uses her considerable computer hacking skills to this end. As with much fiction it all works out well in the end, but there are many cliff hanging moments.

One of the carols we sang at our carol concert in St Pauls in December was originally a poem by Henry Longfellow and set to music by Philip Ledger. The words are:

*I heard the bells on Christmas Day, Their old familiar carols play,
And mild and sweet the words repeat, Of peace on earth this Christmastide.
Till, ringing, singing, on its way, the world revolved from night to day,
A voice, a chime, a chant sublime Of peace on earth this Christmastide.
And in despair I bowed my head “There is no peace on earth”, I said,
For hate is strong, and mocks the song Of peace on earth this Christmastide.
Then pealed the bells more loud and deep: “God is not dead, nor does He sleep!
The wrong shall fail, the right prevail, with peace on earth this Christmastide.*

Longfellow presents the conflict between good and evil, the evil which is ever present around our lives and gives us the answer too.

The Christian Gospel is about the final victory of good over evil, love swamping hate. It is our story, and the daily battle we are engaged in. We travel from the hope and expectation of Advent to the Good News of Christmas and then to the acceptance of suffering being resolved into the victory of Easter Day. St Theresa’s Bookmark springs to mind as it so often does:

*Let nothing affright thee,
Nothing disturb thee,
All things are passing,
God never changeth,
Patient endurance attaineth to all things,
Whom God possesseth in nothing is wanting,
Alone God sufficeth.*

Thankyou to all who kindly gave us Christmas greeting cards and gifts. It is much appreciated. We wish you all well for 2022.

With love and prayers from Kathy and Father Bruce

Winter blues (a form of depression) is a real issue for many. As we are made of body and soul, here are two articles which offer some advice to Christians how to fight winter blues. The first article focuses on body - after all, we do live in and through our bodies on earth and it is important to take good care of our body ("Thou shalt not kill").

The second article approaches winter blues from a more explicitly Christian point of view. It is in God that we can find strength and healing, he is our ultimate refuge from all ills, be they physical, spiritual, or mental.

Beating the winter blues (1)

Article sent by Jeanne James:

It is thought the winter blues, or seasonal affective disorder (SAD), affects around 2 million people in the UK and more than 12 million people across northern Europe. It can affect people of any age, including children.

Key symptoms:

- depression
- sleep problems
- lethargy
- overeating
- irritability
- feeling down and unsociable.

But there is usually something that will help, so do not give up if the first remedy you try doesn't work. Just keep trying.

1. *Keep active* - Research has shown that a daily one-hour walk in the middle of the day could be as helpful as light treatment for coping with the winter blues.

2. *Get outside* - Go outdoors in natural daylight as much as possible, especially at midday and on brighter days. Inside your home, choose pale colours that reflect light from outside, and sit near windows whenever you can.

3. *Keep warm* - If your symptoms are so bad that you cannot live a normal life, see your GP for medical help. Being cold makes you more depressed. It has also been shown that staying warm can reduce the winter blues by half.

Keep warm with hot drinks and hot food. Wear warm clothes and shoes and aim to keep your home between 18-21 Celsius

4. *Eat healthily* - A healthy diet will boost your mood, give you more energy and stop you putting on weight over winter. Balance your craving for carbohydrates, such as pasta and potatoes, with plenty of fresh fruit and vegetables.

5. *See the light* - Some people find light therapy effective for seasonal depression. One way to get light therapy at home in winter is to sit in front of a light box for up to two hours a day.

Light boxes give out very bright light at least 10 times stronger than ordinary home and office lighting. They are not available on the NHS and cost around £100 or more.

6. *Take up a new hobby* - Keeping your mind active with a new interest seems to ward off symptoms of SAD. It could be anything, such as going to church, playing bridge, singing, knitting, joining a gym, keeping a journal, or writing a blog. The important thing is that you have something to look forward to and concentrate on.

7. *See your friends and family* - It has been shown that socialising is good for your mental health and helps ward off the winter blues. Make an effort to keep in touch with people you care about and accept any invitations you get to social events, even if you only go for a little while.

8. *Talk it through* - Talking treatments such as counselling, psychotherapy or cognitive behavioural therapy (CBT) can help you cope with symptoms. See your GP for information on what is available locally on the NHS and privately.

Beating the winter blues (2)

1. *Spend time in Eucharistic adoration* - Many parishes have Eucharistic Adoration each month (at St. Paul's: on first Fridays). It's a peaceful time in the Lord Jesus' presence. The silence and peace of adoration can be a balm as well as providing a quiet place to listen to God's voice.

2. *Attend church daily* - I mean it. Get up. Get yourself out of bed and out of the house. Get dressed decently. Especially if you are working from home or if you are retired. God made the seventh day for rest, not *all seven days*. Starting your day with Mass or worship is incredible.

It's often challenging to make it to Sunday Mass, so adding daily worship to an already overloaded schedule can seem impossible. Yet, the

graces, strength, consolation, and other spiritual benefits we receive last well beyond the 20-30 minutes we spend in church.

3. *Nurture your prayer life* - Perhaps the strongest defence against the winter blues is a deep, fulfilling spiritual life, and that begins with the habit of daily prayer. Whether it means praying the Rosary, studying Scripture, participating in a Bible study group, or learning to sit quietly in God's presence, nurturing and expanding prayer life is a real "game changer".

4. *Go on retreat* - Planning a silent, solitary retreat or participating in a formal retreat weekend offers both spiritual growth and the opportunity to leave ordinary life, if temporarily, to focus on the things that really matter. Seek information from your parish, the Diocese, or a local religious community.

5. *Help others* - Volunteering gets us out of our rut and empowers us to help others. What better way to improve our lives and brighten our spirits? Consider ladling meals at a soup kitchen or reading to youngsters or delivering food to needy families – the opportunities to assist others are endless. Consult the parish bulletin for ideas, or contact Charities, a local food bank, or SPOT.

6. *Contemplate rather than complain.* - There's something to silence and meditation that can bring us closer to God. God who was born in the deepest silence of the night, who raised gloriously from the dead under the veil of the silence of the night. Silence is a gift of our Christian spirituality.

If there is silence, don't try to create noise but try to experience it. Don't break silence for the sake of hearing something distracting but give a chance to God to speak to you. Don't complain just to hear your own voice. Listen. Listen to the still and small voice of God speaking to you or just wanting you to know that he is there.

7. *Celebrate* - Can the Church have any more feast days? Actually, we probably could, but that's not the point. Pick a feast day. Start a novena. Learn the Rosary. Read about the life of Saints. Rejoice over Christmas. Or Epiphany. Or the Holy Family. Or the Baptism of Jesus. Or the Conversion of St. Paul. Read again and again the stories as great things God has done for *you!* Yes! - you, because you are that much loved, that important! Or choose your favourite Saint of the month, or of the week. Reading about their life is sometimes amusing and entertaining, is often rather exciting or illuminating, is always inspiring - and they offer so much comfort, joy, relief, consolation, strength. They are our brethren - let us rejoice with and in them!

What to do in your garden in the month of January

Katherine Harrison writes:

- Emergency Job – it's still not too late to plant tulips. They may flower a little later but will still produce a beautiful display. Plant at least 4 inches deep.
- Press mistletoe berries into the bark of apple trees to establish your own mistletoe plants.
- Move dormant plants that are growing in the wrong place and place them in a more ideal spot.
- Continue pruning climbing roses, while they are dormant.
- Buy in your seed packets and throw away all the out of date ones.
- Tidy up the greenhouse, get rid of broken pots, old compost. Ventilate the greenhouse on sunny days to prevent humidity building up.
- Plant amaryllis in pots and place on a warm windowsill.
- Plant Snowdrops.
- Sow geraniums thinly in small trays using seed compost, bury seeds.
- Recycle your Christmas tree by shredding it for mulch.
- Give the leaves of indoor plants a thorough clean this month using a cool damp cloth. Make sure to remove the build up of dust. *Dust in my house? Never!!*

From a notice board in a church porch

Sent by Eileen Galling:

“What?! Giving again?” - I said in dismay.
“Must I always be giving away?”
“Oh no” - said the Angel looking me through,
“Only as long as the Lord gives to you...”

Your donations and giving are essential to the survival of our Parish. Please, consider prayerfully if you can increase the amount you give. We need approx. £4000 each month only to cover our Deanery Share.

If you can, please make your giving through a monthly standing order - this will help us greatly to plan our expenses.

While the Vicar, the Churchwardens, and the PCC are deeply grateful for your giving, please, remember that giving to the Parish is our Christian duty and through it we recognise and thank God for all his gifts.

The circumcision of Jesus

By Timothy O'Malley in "Church Life Journal"

A little over four years ago, I was in a hospital in Fort Wayne, Indiana, awaiting the discharge of my newborn son. At birth, he had trouble breathing (a skill he would learn with ease in a day or two), and thus spent nearly five days surrounded by the whirl of hospital machinery intended to monitor his every breath, a group of top-notch nurses embodying *charity*, and the overwhelming love of his 'newborn' parents. My son had not yet known the possibility of pain.

Until his circumcision. He was taken from his hospital room for the brief procedure. Upon his arrival back, he cried and cried and cried. We were instructed to put ointment on the place of his recently removed foreskin (otherwise, the skin would stick to the diaper and cause a fresh wound). For weeks, every time I changed his diaper, I encountered a color red as blood—a wound that did not quickly disappear.

I think of this moment in encountering the Gospel [which] speaks about the shepherds glorifying God, having encountered the good news of salvation announced by the angelic hosts. And then, a small, almost throwaway verse:

"When eight days were completed for his circumcision, he was named Jesus, the name given him by the angel before he was conceived in the womb." (Lk 2,21)

Jesus Christ, the Word made flesh, was circumcised. At one level, the text tells us that Mary and Joseph were simply following the gift of the Law. But at another, for those of us who have watched our sons suffer the pain of circumcision, we encounter the true scandal of the Incarnation: God really became human. God really took up all that human life entails. This is such an important point that before the Second Vatican Council, January 1 was not the feast of Mary, the Mother of God, but of the circumcision of Jesus.

The feast of Christmas, the feast of Mary the Mother of God—these are the celebration of something scandalous. The Word took upon himself all that it meant to be human. He did not feed himself in the womb but received total nourishment from the food that his mother consumed. He learned love not as an abstract principle but from the kisses bestowed by Mary and Joseph alike. He learned to obey the will of God through conforming his own will to the Law and his parents alike. He watched Joseph, his father, die. He hungered and thirsted in the desert. He knew the disappointment of total rejection, he knew what it meant to await his own death. He died alone,

surrounded only by the mockery of empire and the wounds of love visible upon the faces of his mother and the beloved disciple. The Word was made flesh and dwelt among us ... and the flesh part ... the human part ... it really matters.

And indeed, this is the scandalous Good News of Christmas: that our humanity has become part of God's very life. Salvation does not mean becoming less human. It means that when we truly become human, when we love unto the end, we become divine. As a letter of St. Athanasius declares (in the Office of Readings):

“Our Savior truly became man, and from this has followed the salvation of man as a whole. Our salvation is in no way fictitious, nor does it apply only to the body. The salvation of the whole man, that is, of soul and body, has really been achieved in the Word himself. What was born of Mary was therefore human by nature, in accordance with the inspired Scriptures, and the body of the Lord was a true body: it was a true body because it is the same as ours. Mary, you see, is our sister, for we are all born from Adam.”

Christmas means that we will never be saved if we try to escape this life, to escape our existence in time and space, as historical bodies intended for relationship and love. Rather, it is only through all that makes us human, all the joys and sorrows of human life, that we too become divine. This world is not to be passed over as mere transitory matter. Instead, we experience the joy of salvation when we conform ourselves to the humanity of the Word made flesh. No wonder the shepherds sang songs of praise.



Three reasons why was Jesus circumcised

While the topic of circumcision is not one that naturally comes up at dinner table - and we all can fully understand why - it is nevertheless a historic fact that Our Lord was circumcised when he was 8 days old. While the Feast of Circumcision has been celebrated for centuries in many Christian churches (it is still present in the Anglican and Orthodox Calendars), some (like the Roman Catholic Church) recently “got rid” of the feast out of some sort of embarrassment. And I mean theological embarrassment - that is: we, modern Christians, have no clue whatsoever why did Jesus obey *this* Old Testament Law when he did abolish or disregarded other laws and customs. What is the meaning, the theological meaning, of this feast?

The act of circumcision offers us a deeper knowledge and understanding of who Jesus, the Messiah, our Saviour and Redeemer, is.

Jesus was a Child of the Covenant

The first act with the baby Jesus after his birth was an act of obedience to Jewish Law. Mary and Joseph had their son circumcised. It marked him, both humanly and spiritually, as a child of the covenant.

In the book of Genesis, God said to Abraham, “*This is my covenant, which you shall keep, between me and you and your descendants after you: Every male among you shall be circumcised. He that is eight days old among you shall be circumcised; every male throughout your generations. So shall my covenant be in your flesh an everlasting covenant?*” (Genesis 17,10-13).

In John 4,22 Jesus declares very clearly: “salvation is from the Jews” and then in his letter to the Romans, St. Paul foretells the conversion of all of Israel before the end of times (11,25-26).

Thus Jesus’ circumcision should:

- fill us with respect and gratitude for Israel, the chosen people of the Old Covenant. Their unique mission in the history of Salvation made the coming of the Messiah possible. When our human race was wondering far from God, in complete oblivion of God’s plans and promises, a small nation was living according to the Law, was loving and serving the only true God, and was keeping faith in God’s promises alive. While Israel’s mission and chosen status now belong to the Church, our respect and gratitude should not, must not diminish at all!

- At the same time, the tragic failure of Israel to recognise Jesus as the promised Messiah, must keep us from falling into the sin of spiritual presumption, pride, or sloth. We must thank God daily for having called us into his Church, for his daily graces - yet we must not stop “*working on our own*”

salvation with fear and trembling” (Philippians 2,12). Prayer without a Christian life is of no value. Presumed faith with no church-life or worship is an illusion. Worship without charity is an empty act and offensive to God. If we want to be part of the promised kingdom, we must follow the commandments of God and the laws of the Church, pray and worship individually and collectively, live in purity of heart and charity towards each other, love and serve and pray to God - following indeed the example of the Child Jesus who constantly “*increased in wisdom and in stature, and in favour with God and man.*” (Luke 2,52)

Jesus is fully human

Every good Christian knows that Jesus, conceived within the intimacy of Mary’s womb, is fully, totally, completely man and fully, totally, completely God. He came into the world that way, lived that way, died, rose from the dead and ascended that way. However, in practical terms, often we forget about it. That God, in Jesus, had real human birth, was physically wrapped tight and laid bodily in a manger. He cried. He nursed. He had bodily functions that required the loving attention of his parents.

And today, 8 days after his birth, his flesh, his... - I am hesitant even to write it down - his penis was cut. Our natural uncomfortable reaction to this fact proves this immense mystery. How could we speak of God this way? Exactly. His circumcision is a line of explicit exclamation marks emphasising the scandalous reality of the Incarnation.

None can understand more our pain, our sufferings, our needs, our embarrassment, our difficulties, our joys, our sorrows, our body, our soul than Jesus Emmanuel: the God made man.

Finally, Jesus’ circumcision foreshadows his Passion

Lancelot Andrewes, Anglican Bishop (+1626) and Caroline Divine writes: “*Christ entered Bond anew with us, and in sign that so He did, He shed then a few drops of his blood, whereby he signed the Bond ... and gave those few drops then ... as a pledge or earnest, that when the fulness of time came, He would be ready to shed all the rest, as he did*”.

It was in his circumcision that Jesus first shed his blood, foreshadowing the piercing of his side by a soldier as he hung on the Cross (John 19,34). While God is omnipotent there are things he cannot do. He cannot be obedient (whom would he obey?). He cannot suffer (He is pure spirit and beyond any change). Yet - in Jesus all this became reality: God obeys the Law, Mary, and Joseph. God feels pain. God suffers. So much he

loves us. The pain, blood, and humiliation of circumcision is the first payment in earnest required for the horrific debt of our sin.

The Feast of the Circumcision of Jesus shows us that we possess an unspeakably beautiful faith that brings the human and the divine together in profound ways.



Andrea Mantegna's (+1506) painting is a graphic homily on the Circumcision. Let us observe the Child Christ's face. His desperate infant clutch upon Mary's shawl. His utter vulnerability. Mary's stricken face, which will certainly turn away at the moment her Son's sacred Blood is revealed.

But the suffering Infant is crowned. His divine and universal majesty is revealed in the shedding of his Blood - just as his universal Kingship will be

manifest on the Cross. "*When I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all men to myself*" (John 12,32). Mantegna wants us to see the Circumcision as Christ's first passion. It's there in Jesus' tiny face, in his bodily reaction. Just as in Gethsemane, as he looks to his Father, asking if he could possibly be spared what is to come, he has this same experience with his Mother. "Mother, why is this happening to me? Help me, please." Our Savior was not stoic, neither here nor before the Cross, but entirely human who abhorred suffering and pain and only accepted it out of love.

**Calendar, Service times,
and Prayer Intentions**

Anniversaries of death

**The Order of Morning and Evening Prayer
at St. Paul's**

Calendar for January 2022

SAT	1 st	CIRCUMCISION OF THE LORD	9.30am
SUN	2 nd	THE MOST HOLY NAME OF JESUS	10am, 4pm
MON	3 rd	<i>Feria</i>	9am
TUE	4 th	<i>Monthly Requiem Mass</i>	9am
WED	5 th	Vigil	10am
THU	6 th	EPIPHANY OF THE LORD	10am, 6pm
FRI	7 th	<i>Feria</i>	12noon
SAT	8 th	<i>Of Our Lady</i>	9.30am
SUN	9 th	THE MOST HOLY FAMILY	10am, 4pm
MON	10 th	<i>Feria</i>	9am
TUE	11 th	<i>St. Hyginus Pope & Martyr</i>	9am
WED	12 th	<i>Feria</i>	10am
THU	13 th	BAPTISM OF OUR LORD	6pm
FRI	14 th	St. Hilary Bishop	12noon
SAT	15 th	St. Paul the First Hermit	9.30am
SUN	16 th	2ND SUNDAY AFTER EPIPHANY	10am, 4pm
MON	17 th	St. Anthony Abbot	9am
TUE	18 th	St. Peter's Chair at Rome	9am
WED	19 th	St. Wulfstan Bishop	10am
THU	20 th	Sts. Fabian Pope & Sebastian, Martyrs	6pm
FRI	21 st	St. Agnes Virgin & Martyr	12noon
SAT	22 nd	Sts. Vincent & Anastasius, Martyrs	9.30am
SUN	23 rd	CONVERSION OF ST. PAUL APOSTLE	10am, 4pm
MON	24 th	St. Timothy Bishop & Martyr	9am
TUE	25 th	CONVERSION OF ST. PAUL APOSTLE	9am
WED	26 th	St. Polycarp Bishop & Martyr	10am
THU	27 th	St. John Chrysostom Bishop	6pm
FRI	28 th	<i>Monthly Anointing Mass</i>	12noon
SAT	29 th	St. Francis of Sales Bishop	9.30am
SUN	30 th	4TH SUNDAY AFTER EPIPHANY	10am, 4pm
MON	31 st	St. John Bosco	9am

*We pray for...*

- 1st Walsingham - *Harriet Edward Davison, Earin Dean, Hilda Everett, Ron Samways*
- 2nd Our Parish - *Edwar Davison, Maug Wignall, Janet Formosa, Peter Moss pr.*
- 3rd Chapter of St. Aldhelm - *Howard Butler, Thomas Sefton pr, Roger Keat pr.*
- 4th Departed - *Phyllis Brujford*
- 5th Our Benefactors - *Arthur Stonton pr, Edie Bowring, Glyn Price pr.*
- 6th Our Parish - *Fred Parsonage, Fred Palmer, John Bentley, Henrietta Cooper, Paul Sylvester*
- 7th Dying - *Ernest Cooper, Edna Humm, Barbara Smith*
- 8th Cell of O.L.W. - *Ivy Waight, Sheila Colwell*
- 9th Our Parish
- 10th Our Families - *Rbeta Mogasha*
- 11th Victims of human trafficking - *Sylvia Toop, Frank Harvey, Nora Hooper*
- 12th Struggling businesses - *Irene Heasman, Bob Wray, Celia Hoskins*
- 13th Grace of a holy death - *Brian Humm, John Buffrey pr.*
- 14th Those who lost their job - *Jack Biles, Mary Buxton, John Pryer*
- 15th Vocations to religious life - *David Green pr, Norman Print pr.*
- 16th Our Parish - *Frank Uphill*
- 17th Creation - *Frank Anderson, Cyril Hicks, Patrick Weavis, Alun Taylor,*
- 18th Bishops. *17 Jan: Ross Staddon, Mary Jackson*
- 19th Persons with eating disorders - *Martin Gibbs pr., Brian Day*
- 20th Armed forces - *Doris Lansdowne*
- 21st Purity of life - *Reginald Uphill, Leonard Toop*
- 22nd Addicts - *Doris Moore*
- 23rd Our Parish
- 24th Unity of the Holy Church - *John Tute pr.*
- 25th Our Parish - *Lucy Hussey, Iris Fitt, Kit Jackson, Brenda Chedzoy, Monica Tarrier*
- 26th Persecuted Christians - *Sybil Bridge, Reginald Gentle, Ivy White*
- 27th Beechcroft School
- 28th Sick - *Brian Groves*
- 29th Missions - *John Jones*
- 30th Our Parish
- 31st Young people - *Alice Wray, Olly Denman, Eric Goddard, Scott Tolman*

If there are names missing from the list or you want to add names, please, talk to the Vicar.

Open, O Lord, my mouth to bless thy holy Name; cleanse also my heart from all vain, evil, and wandering thoughts; enlighten my understanding and kindle my affections; that I may worthily, attentively, and devoutly recite this Morning Prayer, and so be meet to be heard before the presence of thy divine Majesty. Through Christ our Lord. Amen.

MORNING PRAYER

V. The Angel of the Lord brought tidings to Mary.

R. And she conceived by the Holy Ghost.

V. Hail Mary, full of grace, the Lord is with thee. Blessed art thou amongst women and blessed is the fruit of thy womb, Jesus.

R. Holy Mary, Mother of God, pray for us sinners now, and at the hour of our death. Amen.

V. Behold the handmaid of the Lord.

R. Be it unto me according to thy word.

V. Hail Mary... R. Holy Mary...

V. And the Word was made flesh.

R. And dwelt amongst us.

V. Hail Mary... R. Holy Mary...

V. Pray for us, O holy Mother of God.

R. That we may be made worthy of the promises of Christ.

V. Let us pray. We beseech thee, O Lord, pour thy grace into our hearts, that as we have known the Incarnation of thy Son Jesus Christ by the message of an angel, so by his Cross and Passion we may be brought unto the glory of his Resurrection; through the same Christ our Lord. R. Amen.

V. O Lord, open my lips.

R. And my mouth shall proclaim your praise.

V. O God, make speed to save me.

R. O Lord, make haste to help me.

V. Glory be to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit.

R. As it was in the beginning, is now, and ever shall be, world without end. Amen. Alleluia!

V. Let us rejoice in the Lord; let us joyfully sing to God our Saviour! Let us come into his presence with thanksgiving; let us joyfully sing psalms to him!

R. O taste and see how sweet is the Lord!

V. For the Lord is a great God, and a great King above all gods. In his hands are the depths of the earth; and the heights of the mountains are his.

R. O taste and see how sweet is the Lord!

V. The sea is his, for who but he made it; and his hands fashioned the dry land. O come, let us worship and fall down, and weep before the Lord who made us! For he is the Lord our God, and we are the people of his pasture, and the sheep of his hand.

R. O taste and see how sweet is the Lord!

V. Today if you shall hear his voice, harden not your hearts: As in the provocation, on the day of temptation in the wilderness, where your fathers tempted me, and put me to the test, and they saw my works.

R. O taste and see how sweet is the Lord!

V. For forty years I loathed that generation, and I said: They always err in heart, they have not known my ways, so I swore in my wrath: they shall not enter my rest.

R. O taste and see how sweet is the Lord!

V. Glory be to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit. As it was in the beginning, is now, and ever shall be, world without end. Amen.

R. O taste and see how sweet is the Lord!

HYMN

O Jesu, King most wonderful
Thou conqueror renowned,
Thou sweetness most ineffable,
In whom all joys are found!

When once Thou visitest the heart,
Then truth begins to shine;
Then earthly vanities depart;
Then kindles love divine.

O Jesu, light of all below,
Thou fount of life and fire,
Surpassing all the joys we know,
And all we can desire:

May every heart confess thy Name,
And ever thee adore;
And, seeking thee, itself inflame
To seek thee more and more.

Thee may our tongues forever bless;
Thee may we love alone;
And ever in our lives express
The image of thine own. Amen.

The appointed Psalm(s) and Reading(s) follow:

1	Psalm 103	Genesis 17,1-13 Romans 2,17-end	2	87	Exodus 3,1-6 Acts 4,5-12
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3	127, 128, 131	Ruth 2 Colossians 3,1-11	18	106	Genesis 7,11-end Matthew 24,15-28
4	89 v. 1-37	Ruth 3 Colossians 3,12-end	19	110, 111, 112	Genesis 8,1-14 Matthew 24,29-end
5	8, 48	Ruth 4,1-17 Colossians 4	20	113, 115	Genesis 8,15 - 9,7 Matthew 25,1-13
6	132, 113	Jeremiah 31,7-14 John 1,29-34	21	139	Genesis 9,8-19 Matthew 25,14-30
7	55	Baruch 1 Matthew 20,1-16	22	120, 121, 122	Genesis 11,1-9 Matthew 25,31-end
8	76, 79	Baruch 2 Matthew 20,17-28	23	113	Deuteronomy 30,11-15 3 John 1,5-8
9	89 v. 19-29	1 Samuel 1,20-28 Matthew 2,13-18	24	123, 124 125, 126	Genesis 11,27 - 12,9 Matthew 26,1-16
10	80, 82	Genesis 1,1-19 Matthew 21,1-17	25	66, 147 v. 13-end	Ezekiel 3,22-end Philippians 3,1-14
11	87	Genesis 1,20 - 2,3 Matthew 21,18-32	26	119 v. 153-end	Genesis 14 Matthew 26,17-36
12	119 v. 105-128	Genesis 2,4-end Matthew 21,33-end	27	143, 146	Genesis 15 Matthew 26,37-56
13	90, 92	Genesis 3 Matthew 22,1-14	28	142, 144	Genesis 16 Matthew 26,57-end
14	88	Genesis 4 Matthew 22,15-33	29	147	Genesis 17,1-22 Matthew 27,1-10
15	96, 97, 100	Genesis 6,1-10 Matthew 22,34-end	30	71	Micah 6,1-8 1 Corinthians 6,12-end
16	145	Isaiah 49,1-7 Acts 16,11-15	31	1, 2, 3	Genesis 18,1-15 Matthew 27,11-26
17	98, 99, 101	Genesis 6,11 - 7,10 Matthew 24,1-14			

Each reading ends with these words:

V. This is the word of the Lord.

R. Thanks be to God.

BENEDICTUS – *One of the following antiphons is used:*

Ant: He gave Himself to deliver His people, and to get Himself an everlasting Name. Alleluia.

Blessed be the Lord the God of Israel, *
 who has come to his people and set them free.
He has raised up for us a mighty Saviour, *
 born of the house of his servant David.
Through his holy prophets God promised of old *
 to save us from our enemies, from the hands of all that hate us,
To show mercy to our ancestors, *
 and to remember his holy covenant.
This was the oath God swore to our father Abraham: *
 to set us free from the hands of our enemies,
Free to worship him without fear, *
 holy and righteous in his sight all the days of our life.
And you, child, shall be called the prophet of the Most High, *
 for you will go before the Lord to prepare his way,
To give his people knowledge of salvation *
 by the forgiveness of all their sins.
In the tender compassion of our God *
 the dawn from on high shall break upon us,
To shine on those who dwell in darkness and the shadow of death, *
 and to guide our feet into the way of peace.
Glory be to the Father, and to the Son, *
 and to the Holy Spirit.
As it was in the beginning, is now, and ever shall be, *
 world without end. Amen.

Ant: He gave Himself to deliver His people, and to get Himself an everlasting Name. Alleluia.

V. Let us pray. – *Intercessions* are offered for the Church, for the Sovereign (the world), for those in need, and for the dead. Then follows the Collect:

O God, you have appointed your Only-begotten Son to be the Saviour of mankind, and have commanded that His Name should be called Jesus; mercifully grant that we who here on earth worship that most Holy Name may be made glad in heaven by His Presence. Through the same Jesus Christ our Lord. **R.** Amen.

V. Let us pray with confidence as our Saviour has taught us:

Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name; thy kingdom come; thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread. And forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive those who trespass against us. And lead us not into temptation; but deliver us from evil. For thine is the kingdom, the power and the glory, for ever and ever. Amen.

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

V. Let us bless the Lord. R. Thanks be to God.

V. And may the souls of the faithful departed, through the mercy of God, rest in peace.

R. Amen.

Morning Prayer ends with the final Antiphon of Our Lady:

Mother of Christ, hear thou thy people's cry - Star of the deep and Portal of the sky! - Mother of Him who thee from nothing made. - Sinking we strive and call to thee for aid: - O, by what joy which Gabriel brought to thee, - Thou Virgin first and last, let us thy mercy see.

V. After childbirth thou didst remain a virgin.

R. Intercede for us, O Mother of God.

V. Let us pray. O God, who, by the fruitful virginity of blessed Mary, hast bestowed upon mankind the reward of eternal salvation: grant, we beseech thee, that we may experience her intercession, through whom we have been made worthy to receive the author of life: our Lord Jesus Christ thy Son.

R. Amen.

EVENING PRAYER

V. The Angel of the Lord brought tidings to Mary.

R. And she conceived by the Holy Ghost.

V. Hail Mary, full of grace, the Lord is with thee. Blessed art thou amongst women and blessed is the fruit of thy womb, Jesus.

R. Holy Mary, Mother of God, pray for us sinners now, and at the hour of our death. Amen.

V. Behold the handmaid of the Lord.

R. Be it unto me according to thy word.

V. Hail Mary... R. Holy Mary...

V. And the Word was made flesh.

R. And dwelt amongst us.

V. Hail Mary... R. Holy Mary...

V. Pray for us, O holy Mother of God.

R. That we may be made worthy of the promises of Christ.

V. Let us pray. We beseech thee, O Lord, pour thy grace into our hearts, that as we have known the Incarnation of thy Son Jesus Christ by the message of an angel, so by his Cross and Passion we may be brought unto the glory of his Resurrection; through the same Christ our Lord. R. Amen.

V. O God, make speed to save me.

R. O Lord, make haste to help me.

V. Glory be to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit.

R. As it was in the beginning, is now, and ever shall be, world without end. Amen. Alleluia!

HYMN

Jesu, the very thought of thee
With sweetness fills my breast;
But sweeter far thy face to see,
And in thy presence rest.

O Hope of every contrite heart,
O Joy of all the meek,
To those who fall, how kind thou art!
How good to those who seek!

Nor voice can sing, nor heart can frame,
Nor can the memory find,
A sweeter sound than thy blest Name,
O Saviour of mankind!

But what to those who find? Ah! this
Nor tongue nor pen can show:
The love of Jesus, what it is
None but his loved ones know.

Jesu, our only joy be thou,
As thou our prize wilt be;
Jesu, be thou our glory now,
And through eternity. Amen.

The appointed Psalm(s) and Reading(s) follow:

1	Psalm 115	Deuteronomy 30 Acts 3,1-16	4	85, 87	Isaiah 61 John 2,1-12
2	135	Exodus 3,7-15 Mark 16,15-18	5	96, 97	Isaiah 49,1-13 John 4,7-26
3	2, 110	Isaiah 60,13-end John 1,43-end	6	98, 100	Isaiah 60,1-9 John 2,1-11

7	69	Isaiah 63,7-end 1 John 3	20	114, 116, 117	Amos 9 1 Corinthians 7,25-end
8	36	Isaiah 61 Titus 2,11-14 & 3,4-7	21	130, 131 137	Hosea 1 1 Corinthians 8
9	46, 47	Genesis 21,1-3 Luke 2,22-24 & 39-40	22	118	Hosea 2 1 Corinthians 9,1-14
10	85, 86	Amos 1 1 Corinthians 1,1-17	23	33	Numbers 9,15-end 1 Corinthians 7,17-24
11	89 v. 19-end	Amos 2 1 Corinthians 1,18-end	24	149	Hosea 3 1 Corinthians 9,15-end
12	91, 93	Amos 3 1 Corinthians 2	25	119 v. 41-56	Ecclesiasticus 39,1-10 Colossians 1,24 - 2,7
13	94	Amos 4 1 Corinthians 3	26	136	Hosea 4 1 Corinthians 10
14	102	Amos 5,1-17 1 Corinthians 4	27	138, 140, 141	Hosea 5 & 6 1 Corinthians 11,1-16
15	104	Amos 5,18-end 1 Corinthians 5	28	145	Hosea 7 1 Corinthians 11,17-end
16	96	1 Samuel 3,1-20 Ephesians 4,1-16	29	148, 149, 150	Hosea 8 1 Corinthians 12,1-11
17	105	Amos 6 1 Corinthians 6,1-11	30	34	1 Chronicles 29,6-19 Acts 7,44-50
18	107	Amos 7 1 Corinthians 6,12-end	31	4, 7	Hosea 9 1 Corinthians 12,12-end
19	119 v. 129-152	Amos 8 1 Corinthians 7,1-24			

Each reading ends with these words:

V. This is the word of the Lord.

R. Thanks be to God.

MAGNIFICAT

Ant: You shall call his Name Jesus, for he shall save his people from their sins, alleluia.

My soul proclaims the greatness of the Lord,+
my spirit rejoices in God my Saviour;*
 he has looked with favour on his lowly servant.
From this day all generations will call me blessed;+
the Almighty has done great things for me*
 and holy is his name.
He has mercy on those who fear him,*
 from generation to generation.
He has shown strength with his arm*
 and has scattered the proud in their conceit,
Casting down the mighty from their thrones*
 and lifting up the lowly.
He has filled the hungry with good things*
 and sent the rich away empty.
He has come to the aid of his servant Israel,*
 to remember his promise of mercy,
The promise made to our ancestors,*
 to Abraham and his children for ever.
Glory be to the Father, and to the Son, *
 and to the Holy Spirit.
As it was in the beginning, is now, and ever shall be,
 world without end. Amen.

Ant: You shall call his Name Jesus, for he shall save his people from their sins, alleluia.

V. Let us pray. – ***Intercessions** are offered for the Church, for the Sovereign (world), for those in need, our Benefactors, and for the dead. Then the Collect is said:*

O God, you have appointed your Only-begotten Son to be the Saviour of mankind, and have commanded that His Name should be called Jesus; mercifully grant that we who here on earth worship that most Holy Name may be made glad in heaven by His Presence. Through the same Jesus Christ our Lord. **R.** Amen.

V. Let us pray with confidence as our Saviour has taught us:

Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name; thy kingdom come; thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread. And forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive those who trespass against us. And

lead us not into temptation; but deliver us from evil. For thine is the kingdom, the power and the glory, for ever and ever. Amen.

All: The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit, be with us all evermore. Amen.

V. Let us bless the Lord. **R.** Thanks be to God.

V. And may the souls of the faithful departed, through the mercy of God, rest in peace.

R. Amen.

Optional private prayer to be said after Evening Prayer: To the Most Holy and undivided Trinity, to our Lord Jesus Christ Crucified, to the fruitful Virginity of the most blessed and most glorious Mary, always a Virgin, and to the holiness of all the Saints be ascribed everlasting praise, honour, and glory, by all creatures, and to us be granted the forgiveness of all our sins, world without end. Amen.

Litanies of the Most Holy Name of Jesus

*To be used in times of temptation, in joy or in sorrow;
and to be meditated upon for an increase of faith, hope, and love.*

Jesus, splendour of the Father.	Jesus, zealous lover of souls.
Jesus, brightness of eternal light.	Jesus, our God.
Jesus, King of glory.	Jesus, our refuge.
Jesus, sun of justice.	Jesus, father of the poor.
Jesus, Son of the Virgin Mary.	Jesus, treasure of the faithful.
Jesus, most amiable.	Jesus, good Shepherd.
Jesus, most admirable.	Jesus, true light.
Jesus, the mighty God.	Jesus, eternal wisdom.
Jesus, Father of the world to come.	Jesus, infinite goodness.
Jesus, angel of great counsel.	Jesus, our way and our life.
Jesus, most powerful.	Jesus, joy of Angels.
Jesus, most patient.	Jesus, King of the Patriarchs.
Jesus, most obedient.	Jesus, Master of the Apostles.
Jesus, meek and humble of heart.	Jesus, teacher of the Evangelists.
Jesus, lover of chastity.	Jesus, strength of Martyrs.
Jesus, lover of us.	Jesus, light of Confessors.
Jesus, God of peace.	Jesus, purity of Virgins.
Jesus, author of life.	Jesus, crown of Saints.
Jesus, example of virtues.	

THE BLESSING OF HOUSE IN EPIPHANY-TIDE

The whole family, or a member of it says: Bless, O Lord, almighty God this home that it be the shelter of health, chastity, self-conquest, humility, goodness, mildness, obedience to your commandments, and thanksgiving to God the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. May blessing remain for all time upon this dwelling and them that live herein. Through Christ our Lord. Amen.

After each prayer the appropriate room is sprinkled with Holy Water. At the entrance: O God, protect our going out and our coming in; let us share the hospitality of this home with all who visit us, that those who enter here may know your love and peace. Through Christ our Lord. Amen.

In the sitting room: O God, give your blessings to all who share this room, that we may be knit together in companionship, in peace and charity. Through Christ our Lord. Amen.

In the kitchen: O God, you fill the hungry with good things. Send your blessing on us, as we work in this kitchen, and make us ever thankful for our daily bread. Through Christ our Lord. Amen.

In the dining room: Blessed are you, Lord of heaven and earth, for you give us food and drink to sustain our lives and make our hearts glad. Help us to be grateful for all your mercies, and mindful of the needs of others. Through Christ our Lord. Amen.

In the bedrooms: Protect us, Lord, as we stay awake; watch over us as we sleep, that awake we may keep watch with Christ, and asleep, we may rest in his peace. Through the same Christ our Lord. Amen.

In the garden/on the terrace: Blessed are you, Lord of heaven and earth. You formed us in wisdom and love. Refresh us in body and in spirit, and keep us in good health that we might serve you. Through Christ our Lord. Amen.

They all say together the Lord's Prayer and an appointed person writes the following above the entrance door (or next to it) with the blessed chalk (Christus Mansionem Benedicat = May Christ bless this house):

20 + C + M + B + 22



From the Book of Common Prayer

1st Sunday after Epiphany: *LORD, we beseech thee mercifully to receive the prayers of thy people which call upon thee; and grant that they may both perceive and know what things they ought to do, and also may have grace and power faithfully to fulfil the same; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.*

Having prayed since the Feast of the Epiphany to be given the grace to contemplate the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ in heaven, a few days later the Church makes two further and inter-connected petitions of her heavenly Father, the Lord our God, in the name of her Saviour and Mediator, Jesus Christ our Lord.

The first is that God will receive in mercy and compassion the desires, vows and prayers of his people who supplicate, with bended knee, before him. However, the Church does not ask God to answer them as asked, but rather to receive them and then in the judgment of his perfect wisdom and mercy to respond to them for the true good of his people. For, if God gave to his people merely what they desired and asked for, he would not be a merciful God, since we often desire and ask for that which is not for our short-term or long-term good!

The force of the verb “grant” in prayer is that of “give and supply for no other is able to do so.” Of God the Church asks that she will be inspired by the Holy Ghost to recognize and see what is her duty according to the divine will, and that, further, she will have the will and strength to perform that duty in its totality.

In relating to God, we need to know him, to perceive by his inspiration what is his will and then knowing the will, to perform and do the same. It is so easy for us to assume that our own best human wisdom and insights are in fact God's will for us and his Church. Such an assumption is best avoided and in its place there should be a humble recognition that we need to know from God what is his purpose and plan, and then we need his help to fulfil the same!

The Gospel provides us with an example of the developing consecration of Jesus to the Father's will and his growing sense of being uniquely the Father's Son. Thus he is the One to whom we go in order to know and come to the same Father. Because of the Gospel lesson, this Sunday is called “A Feast of the Holy Family”.

The Rev'd Dr Peter Toon (+2009)

How Jesus' foreskin became one of Christianity's most-coveted relics — and then disappeared

It's a relic deemed so taboo, the Vatican threatened excommunication to anyone who spoke of it. But for nearly 1,000 years before that, the 'holy foreskin' of Jesus Christ was widely considered to be the holiest of relics.

Originally published on April 27, 2021

By Nicola Luksic

“I usually provide a one-minute introduction and warn them that what I'm working on, it's kind of strange,” University of Alberta PhD student James White said. “And the typical reaction is usually laughter or kind of a response of 'Really? This existed? This happened?’”

“The holy foreskin is both an object and an idea,” White explained to CBC Radio's *IDEAS*. “The idea is that Jesus, as a Jewish boy, was circumcised when he was eight days old, like Jewish boys are. And in the Middle Ages, people developed this idea that his foreskin might still exist on Earth. And they developed a devotion to it.”

And it wasn't considered a strange devotion in the minds of Christians for nearly 1,000 years.

“I think studying the holy foreskin is a nice ego check for all of us,” said White. “People 700 years in the future are going to think we're pretty strange, too. We're not the ultimate modern, evolved human beings that we sometimes think we are.” He says contemporary obsessions with celebrity objects could be seen as bizarre to people outside our culture. For example, Judy Garland's ruby slippers from *The Wizard of Oz* now have an estimated worth of up to 3 million US dollars.

First mention of Jesus' circumcision

The first mention of Jesus' circumcision can be found in the Book of Luke 2,21. “You know, what probably happened was some clever relic collectors were thumbing through the Bible. When they got to the Book of Luke, they read the part about Christ being circumcised on his eighth day,” said David Farley, author of *An Irreverent Curiosity: In Search of the Church's Strangest Relic and Italy's Oddest Town*.

“And one of them had a lightbulb moment and thought, ‘Whoa, we could really make a heavenly sum if we, you know, told monks and priests and so on that we have a piece of Christ's flesh for sale!’ Not surprisingly, the relic

had the miraculous power of duplication, and depending on what sources you read, there were a dozen or almost two dozen places around Europe, mostly in France for some reason, that claimed they actually had the holy foreskin.”

Relic culture

Throughout the history of Catholicism, relics — be they an alleged piece of the holy cross or the toe or finger of a saint — have been considered key to communing with the divine. Such holy relics were believed to withstand natural decay and were considered “incorruptible.”

“And, of course, this is not just a saint, this is Jesus’ body,” said White, referring to the holy foreskin. “He has super-incorruptibility.”

One of those alleged foreskin relics arrived in Rome around 799 AD when King Charlemagne presented it as a gift to Pope Leo III (The Emperor, in his turn, had received it from an Angel while he was praying in the Basilica of the Holy Sepulchre in Jerusalem). It remained in the papal Sancta Sanctorum reliquary (the Chapel opposite the Lateran Basilica, with the Holy Steps in it) until the sacking of Rome in 1527. The invasion left half the population dead and many sacred relics were destroyed or stolen.

The holy foreskin, along with a piece of the holy cross, was said to have been discovered about 30 years later in the village of Calcata, just north of Rome.

“It’d be like if some A-list celebrity moved to your neighbourhood,” said Farley. “It meant a lot [to the villagers]. And as the story goes, according to historical documents, the pope at the time eventually ruled that fate has made this very important relic find its home in this village of Calcata, so it shall remain there.”

The church that housed the holy foreskin is called Chiesa del SS. Nome di Gesù — or the Church of the Holy Name, which is a reference to Jesus’ circumcision and naming day. Every January 1, the local priest would lead a procession around the village with the holy relic held high.

Under pressure to banish Catholic practices that could be seen as culturally backward, the Vatican issued a decree in 1900 threatening excommunication to anyone who wrote about the holy foreskin, but it allowed the village of Calcata to continue its yearly procession.

In 1983, just a few weeks prior to the January 1 Feast of the Holy Circumcision, the local priest went to check on the relic but it was missing. “People [in the village] were really upset,” said Farley, who spent a year in Calcata trying to solve the mystery of its disappearance. Some suspected the local priest had given it back to the Vatican. Others believe it was stolen by

Satanists or by the Vatican. Another theory is that it was stolen and sold on the black market. The mystery was never solved.

All other relics of holy foreskin had disappeared during the Reformation and the French Revolution.

The relic and its meaning

“I actually don’t care whether or not this foreskin existed,” said White. “What matters to me is, why did people believe in it? What purpose did it serve for them? What did they get out of believing in it? What meaning did they attach to it?”



Miri Rubin, a professor of medieval and early modern history at Queen Mary University of London, says the worship of the holy foreskin made complete sense to people of that era, as Christians were committed to understanding God on Earth in fully human form.

Rubin is the author of a number of books on medieval Christianity including *Corpus Christi: The Eucharist in Late Medieval Culture*. She explains that a focus on such a relic would have made Jesus seem all the more human.

“It also builds on the pathos of the child,” she said. For people in medieval times, she said, the vulnerability of the naked Christ child in human form made him relatable.

She points out that vials of what was supposed to be the breast milk of the Virgin Mary were also regarded as prized and valuable relics, and a few churches around Italy claimed to possess at least one. And the value placed on such relics is not dissimilar to some contemporary cultural obsessions, she said. “It’s about desire, it’s about longing, it’s about scarcity,” she said.

The relic of the Holy Foreskin was not only about “business” - in the Middle Ages it served to confute heretics who denied the true humanity of Jesus. 1500 years ago the priority of the Church was to defend the idea that God had become flesh: and relics were proofs, tangible evidences of the permanence of the Sacred in our flesh. Today the battle is on the opposite front: the Church tries to save the Sacred from becoming something measurable, observable, even replicable. So some relics still make sense; others are barely tolerated; and yet others are now embarrassing, and in fact do tend to disappear...

Feast of the month: St. Anthony Abbot

17th January

Patron saint of butchers, gravediggers, domestic animals, he is also invoked against skin diseases. He is always depicted with a bell, a T-shaped cross, fire, and a pig (or boar).

In a nutshell ...

Anthony was born around 251, the son of wealthy Christian parents who died in his youth, leaving a large inheritance. One day in church, he heard Jesus' words to the rich young man that he should sell all he had and give to the poor (Matthew 19,21). Anthony felt the words were spoken to him personally, and he obeyed them. He withdrew into the desert, where for twenty years he lived in complete solitude.

During those years, Anthony experienced terrible temptations as he "wrestled" with the devil. He came out of those trials victoriously – not because of his own willpower, but because of his unconditional surrender to Jesus Christ. He emerged from his solitude healthy, balanced, and full of wisdom. People flocked to him for healing, comfort, and direction. He died in 356, at the age of 105.

A night in a tomb

One day Saint Anthony, then aged 35, decided to spend the night alone in an abandoned tomb. A great multitude of demons came and started beating him, wounding him all over. He lay on the ground as if dead. The claws of the demons prevented him from getting up. According to the hermit the suffering caused by this demonic torture was comparable to no other. The next day, by the Providence of God, a friend came to visit him and carried him on his shoulders to the nearest village for treatment. Anthony came to himself and begged his friend to bring him back to the tomb. Upon arriving there, Saint Anthony exclaimed: "Here is Anthony. I do not flee your beatings nor pain, nor torture; nothing can separate me from the love of God."

St. Athanasius wrote: "The demons made such a racket that the whole place was shaken, knocking over the four walls of the tomb; they came in droves, taking the form of all kinds of monstrous beasts and hideous reptiles. And the whole place was filled with lions, bears, leopards, bulls, wolves, asps, scorpions. The lions roared, ready to attack; bulls seemed to threaten him with their horns; snakes advanced, crawling on the ground, seeking a place of attack, and wolves prowled around him. They all were

making a terrible noise. Groaning in pain, St. Anthony faced the demons, laughing: ‘If you had any power, only one of you would be enough to kill me; but the Lord has taken away your strength, so you want to frighten me by your number. The proof of your powerlessness is that you are reduced to taking the form of senseless animals. If you have any power against me, come on, attack me! But if you cannot do anything, why torment yourselves unnecessarily? My faith in God is my defence against you.’

“But all of a sudden a bright light illuminated the tomb; at that moment, the demons vanished. The pains ceased. When he realized that God was coming to his aid, he asked: ‘Where were you, Lord? Why did you not stop this suffering earlier?’ God answered him, ‘Anthony, I was present at your side. But I waited, observing your fight. And since you have resisted so bravely, I will now always be at your side, and I will make your name famous throughout the world.’ Having heard the words of the Lord, the monk stood up and prayed. He then received such strength that he felt in his body an even greater vigour than before.”

What? Why? ...?

Instead of a “proper” explanation, here are two passages from the Bible that will help us understand the story of the tomb better if we carefully meditate on them. They reveal the true nature of sin, temptation, evil spirits:

“Put on the full armour of God, so that you can take your stand against the devil’s schemes. For our struggle is not against flesh and blood but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the powers of this dark world and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms” (Ephesians 6,11-12).

“Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour” (1 Peter 5,8).

Reflection

In an age that smiles at the notion of devils and angels, a person known for having power over evil spirits must at least make us pause. And in a day when people speak of life as a “rat race,” one who devotes a whole life to solitude and prayer points to an essential of the Christian life in all ages. Anthony’s hermit life reminds us of the absoluteness of our break with sin and the totality of our commitment to Christ. Even in God’s good world, there is another world whose false values constantly tempt us.

It is customary to bless domestic animals on St. Anthony’s feast: *“May these animals, Lord, receive your blessing. Keep them sound in body, and through the intercession of Saint Anthony may they be freed from every evil.”*

The possible connections with pigs

The first explanation is that the pig represents evil that St. Anthony had to overcome as he fought the temptations of the world, the flesh, and the devil. Pigs, for obvious reasons, are associated with the ground and the earth. Thus, the idea is that some artists wanted to depict how St. Anthony defeated the earthly temptations by including a pig to represent the worldly sins.

Another related explanation is that the pig represents the demonic. As St. Athanasius records in his biography, St. Anthony experienced many attacks from the devil which sometimes came in the form of wild animals perhaps even wild pigs. And the image of wild pigs brings to mind the story in the Gospels where Jesus permitted the demons to enter the pigs who then promptly drowned themselves. (Luke 8,32-33)

A third possible association with pigs is related to skin disease. St. Anthony was known to be an intercessor for people who were suffering from various skin diseases. The reason for that was probably because of the excellent health which he maintained throughout the course of his life in spite of his ascetic lifestyle.

Skin diseases were often treated using pork fat because it would reduce the inflammation and itching. In order to make the connection between St. Anthony and his patronage for sufferers of skin diseases, the artists might have included a pig with the saint.

A later explanation is related to an order that was founded centuries after his death: the Hospitallers of St. Anthony who took the saint for their patron. The order was founded around 1095 by Gaston of Dauphiné who started the ministry of giving aid to the poor in thanksgiving from his own miraculous cure of a disease known as St. Anthony's Fire. The disease which is now known as ergotism was of epidemic proportions and responsible for the deaths of many in Europe over the centuries.

The order was supported in part by pigs. First, the order was allowed to raise pigs. Second, people would donate a pig to the order, raise the pig themselves, and give it to the order on the feast of St. Anthony which is the 17th of January.

Finally, there is the most appealing explanation (at least for pigs) which is that the saint healed a wild pig and through that action befriended the animal who remained with him in the desert. Of course, St. Anthony was a vegetarian so the pig would not ever have to worry about becoming his dinner.

The Psalms

Psalm 14: *The fool says: "There is no God..."*

(Commentaries from various sources edited together.)

In Psalm 14, David is meditating on the lack of belief in and obedience to God. Atheism indeed can be either intellectual (I do not believe), theoretical or it can be practical (I do not obey or listen to). David notes the evil of both kinds of atheism and God's final dealing with it.

Right in verse 1 we find a very special form of atheism. The word used by the Psalm (*Elohim*) can mean both the one and true God or any false god. So in verse 1 the fool is denying the possibility of anything supernatural - according these fools there is nothing more to our existence, to our world beyond what we see and experience with our senses. While the Psalm calls them *fool*, our society encourages and praises their views. Atheism - ever more and more present in media, in academic life, in science, in politics ... just everywhere - is seen by our world as something to be proud of.

Now, the word *fool* does not mean *stupid*. These people are not necessarily intellectually incapable. People who make this claim can solve math problems. They can speak eloquently. They can engineer buildings and industrial equipment. Intellectually, they can be all there - yet, they look at the creation all around them, and they just cannot or simply will not put it together - that there must have been an awesome and powerful Being who made all of this. But why are these people so blind to God whose existence - according to the teaching of the Church (cf. I Vatican Council) - can be recognised from nature?

Once more, we must examine more closely the word *fool*. As mentioned above, it does not mean *stupid*. The Hebrew word "nabal" has a moral meaning. Indeed, in 1 Samuel 25 the person who "blasphemes" king David (the anointed go God) and curses him is called Nabal - and the Scripture says about him: "*for as his name is, so is he: Nabal*" (1 Samuel 25,25). The Psalm says about these fools: "*They are corrupt, they have done abominable works.*"

In Psalm 14 then King David does not consider atheists in general but rather those who deny God's existence *because* they are morally corrupt. Or so they want to be. It is much easier to deny a God than to change our ways. To acknowledge the existence of God means to accept a moral code, to accept divine law, God as Judge, etc. Often it is much easier to deny it altogether.

We must pause for a moment and ask ourselves: what do *we* do when we are faced with the same temptation? We may not be tempted to deny

God's existence outright but we may be tempted - without realising it - to substitute God with a god of our own creation. "Oh, God is so good - he won't mind if I don't go to church *every* Sunday..." "Come on, it's only gossip... God has more serious things to worry about!" "I don't need the Church, I can talk to God directly..." "Well, Jesus/the Bible/the Gospels are products of their own times with the limits of those times." Instead of fully accepting the revealed, absolute Truth and changing our ways, we attempt to transform God into our own likeness. Is not the Psalm right in calling us *fools*...?!

This moral understanding of *fool* is also suggested by the fact that David not only found *what* the fool said to be significant; *where* he said it is also important: "in his heart". It is very much possible indeed for one to *say in his mind* that there is a God, yet deny it in his heart and life. One may believe in God in theory, yet be a *practical atheist* in the way he lives.

Equally, when the Psalm says about God that he wonders if there is anyone who seeks him - the Psalm does not mean it in an intellectual sense. While I am sure God delights in theology (after all he endowed us with intellect), the Psalm means a moral seeking of God. God does not wonder if we are any smart enough to figure Him out but if there is a *moral* and *spiritual* judgment in us: if we seek to understand His heart and plan, if we seek Him for righteousness sake.

So... do we? Is it a constant preoccupation, a constant desire and effort of ours to *seek* God - to discover his loving-kindness, to penetrate his Heart, to understand (impossible as it may be for us) his plans and ways? Do we obey him out of fear or out of love? Do we want to make him "proud" and delight in us? Is he - his plans, his desires, his love - important for us?

For the purposes of this article it would be too long to examine the whole Psalm - there is one more verse I want to consider. At first, it may seem very strange (and more importantly, untrue) what the Psalm says about those who deny God's existence (either intellectually or practically): "*There is none who does good, no, not one.*"

Are we saying, is the Psalm saying that those who either in their minds or in their hearts deny God's existence *never* do *anything* good...?? Well, it very much depends on what we mean by "good". Even the most determined and most convinced atheist do things which are good in the natural order. But what about the supernatural order? "Good" in the supernatural order is called *merit* - and no one who denies or neglects God's existence is capable of good deeds in the supernatural order, is capable of merits leading to salvation. As the whole topic of merit is important and, I hope, interesting, let us discuss it in a separate article.

On the Holy Mass

The Roman Canon (8)

We beg you, O God, be pleased to make this offering wholly blessed, approved, ratified, making it reasonable and acceptable, so that it may become for us the Body and Blood of your most dearly beloved Son, our Lord Jesus Christ.

When we try to penetrate the meaning of prayers said during the Mass, it is important to remember that the Holy Mass is a double sacrifice. On the one hand it is the one and only Sacrifice of the Cross made present on our Altars and as such it is always pleasing and acceptable to the Father.

On the other hand, the Mass is also the Church's sacrifice. Our sacrifice. When we come into God's presence we do not come with empty hands - Christ gave us his own Sacrifice, under the appearances of consecrated bread and wine, to make it ours and to offer it, and ourselves with it, to the Father. In this sense, and in this sense only, the Mass is not a perfect Sacrifice because its value partly comes from our inner disposition. This is why we ask God, many times during the Eucharist, to look upon favourably and to accept the sacrifice we present on the Altar. Not Christ's but our sacrifice needs God's blessing and acceptance.

So this short prayer asks five things of God: that he would make our sacrifice blessed, approved, ratified, reasonable, and acceptable.

The verb used - to beg (*quaesumus*) - indicates that we are asking something only God can do! The text is steeped in humility. But what are we asking God to do exactly? Well, some of these five words are the most difficult ones to translate into any language and they are a reflection of the grave Roman mind and are filled with a very legalistic taste.

Blessed - this is rather easy: we ask God to make what we are doing at the Mass a source of blessing for us. Well... is it not so anyway? I mean, after all, we are talking about the Mass, Communion, prayer... is it not *automatically* a blessing for us? It is not. Being present at Mass, being in church, saying the prayers, or even receiving Holy Communion is neither good nor bad in itself. We know from St. Paul (later so beautifully explained by St. Thomas Aquinas in his *Lauda Sion*) that for example an unworthy reception of Christ's Body and Blood is for our judgement and damnation - see: 1 Cor 11,27-32. We know how external rites, ceremonies, and prayers performed without a contrite, humble, and honest heart are not pleasing to God - see: Isaiah 1; Matthew 7,21; etc.

So every time, just before the consecration, we humbly ask, we beg, we beseech God that he would give us his grace for a humble, pure, holy life, for a loving and devoted heart - so that what we are about to do in his presence, may become a source of blessing and may lead us to eternal life.

Approved - is the most used translation in English for the second adjective (*adscriptam*). If you google the original expression, Internet will mostly propose legal and juridical dictionaries to consult - and quite rightly so! "Approved" in this context is a legal term and most dictionaries define it as" *"In the civil law: added, annexed, or bound by or in writing; enrolled, registered: united, joined, annexed, bound to, generally"*.

In other words: we are asking God that what we are about to perform may be acknowledged, approved and accepted according to the law. His law. Because God, for some reason, delights in bringing order into worship by giving laws regarding prayers, ceremonies, liturgical space, etc. Just read the Book of Leviticus - 27 chapters containing almost exclusively laws about sacrifices, rituals, ritual purity, festivals, the tabernacle.

The Church too has always had clear liturgical laws and norms - some so ancient and universal that they cannot be purely human inventions. Sacredness, order, objectivity are maintained and safeguarded through these laws. Worship should not change with the mood of the celebrant just as he should not even be the focus of attention. Parts of the Mass and prayers should not be "made up" or invented, ever changing - a worship is more fruitful if, because of its unchanging nature, we learn it by heart and so interiorise it more easily. When we come to Mass, we should be able to know with certainty what to expect.

Too often we heard news about the Koran or Winnie-the-Pooh being read at Mass... Too often the "creativity" of those leading worship makes every Sunday a new and unknown challenge... Too often we think worship is ours to change and to shape it as we wish.

While there are different rites and "stiles" in the Church - low & high, more Catholic or more Protestant, traditional or modern - which gives the possibility to worship God in a way that is meaningful for a community, at the end of the day our choices are limited, and we are but unworthy servants performing the sacred rites of worship, thanksgiving, and atonement following the rules of the Church, rules deeply rooted in the Divine Revelation.

Thus "*approved*" is a plead for the gift of humility and obedience in things sacred. Liturgy belongs to God and we are simply invited guests and chosen partakers there.

(To be continued.)

Merit (1)

St. Thomas Aquinas (+1274), called the *Angelic Doctor*, was and remains one of the greatest theologians of the Church. His deep love of God, intense prayer-life, profound knowledge of the Bible and the Church Fathers gave his theological works a rare insight and wisdom.

One day a Dominican friar, Br. Dominic of Caserta, a sacristan, concealed himself in his priory chapel in Naples. While there, he stealthily observed St. Thomas Aquinas in prayer before the crucifix, in tears. Suddenly, Br. Dominic heard the voice of Christ from the crucifix calling out to Br. Thomas: “You have written well of me, Thomas. What reward will you receive from me for your labor?”

One can certainly imagine Br. Dominic waiting with bated breath for an answer from the man often regarded as the greatest theologian. A saintly man, certainly he would not ask for wealth or power for himself. Perhaps inspiration for excellent argumentation with which to confute the heretics? Favourable reception of his work within the Church (the subject of great controversy, even after his death)? How about simply an increase in virtue? Doubtless, when Jesus speaks audibly from the cross, he really means it. So what does Friar Thomas ask? His response wasted no words: *Domine, non nisi Te*, that is “*Lord, nothing except you.*”

Let’s see then what St. Thomas, this great saint and theologian, teaches about merit.

The whole topic - merit, justification, grace, charity - may seem very abstract or even a useless intellectual exercise for bored theologians. But this could not be farther from the truth. The whole theological exploration of merit and justification and grace tries to answer the question which is there in the Gospels: “***What Shall I Do That I May Inherit Eternal Life?***”

Learning together about these things then can easily become the most important adventure of our Christian life. We will explore what the Bible teaches about the way leading to eternal life, leading to that union with God for which we all have been created. Union that we are called to foretaste already here on earth, union that God himself desires. But before we can explore the idea of merit, we must absolutely talk about charity or love.

St. Thomas on love and on other virtues

According to St. Thomas, charity (or love) is the form, mover, mother, and root of all virtues. To understand better what he meant we

should think of our body and soul. The soul is the form of our body - that is, we are who we are because of our soul. It is the soul that makes our body alive. Without soul our body would simply be a lifeless piece of flesh, dead matter. Indeed, when someone dies and their immortal soul leaves their mortal body, the body we bury is not the person but an empty shell, a mere reminder of the person to whom it belonged.

Equally, charity (love) is the soul of any and every virtue, of any and every good deed. Whatever good we do - feeding the poor, praying, visiting the sick, alms, fasting, attending to the needs of others, etc. - unless we are moved to do it by love, all these good deeds remain dead, like lifeless bodies.

St. Thomas' teaching is, of course, deeply rooted in revelation. He simply used the more technical language of theology to express a truth already present in the Bible and later in the writings of the Church Fathers about the role that charity plays in the supernatural moral life.

St. Paul on charity

St. Paul, writing to the Colossians, exhorts them to seek charity above all things, for it is the bond of perfection. In another place he prays that the Ephesians may be strengthened by the Holy Spirit in such wise that, rooted and founded in charity, they may understand the very charity of Christ. Thus the interior life of the soul appears to Paul as rooted in charity, fed and sustained by charity as a vine is fed by its root and a tower is sustained by its foundation. In the Epistle to the Romans the Apostle teaches that all the law is recapitulated in the one precept of fraternal charity. Finally, in the celebrated Corinthian letter St. Paul writes: "*And though I bestow all my goods to feed the poor, and though I give my body to be burned, and have not charity, it profiteth me nothing.*" (1 Corinthians 13,3)

For St. Paul, without charity even the most heroic acts avail nothing for the eternal life we seek. Every virtue and every meritorious act, every truly, *supernaturally* good act depends upon charity.

St. John and the Gospels on charity

St. John, too, stresses constantly the deep connection between moral life (true goodness) and charity: we know, he writes, that we have passed from the death of sin to life because we love the brethren and, he adds later, he who loves God keeps His commandments.

Finally the words of Our Lord himself make evident the intimate link between charity and all other virtues. Following upon the commandment to

love God and the neighbour, there is added in St. Matthew, “On these two commandments depend the whole law and the prophets.”

The Church Fathers on charity

Great Fathers and theologians of the first centuries - like St. Ignatius of Antioch, St. Clement of Rome, St. Polycarp - call charity in their writings the mother and nurse of virtues, the soul and life of faith, the queen of virtues, she who ordains all virtues to eternal life. St. Augustine and St. Jerome agree that without charity all the other virtues are not even to be reputed virtues. St. Leo the Great tells us that without charity the branches of good works are dry and dead.

The excellence of charity

It is not at all difficult to see why charity (or love) has this eminent place. Charity involves a union with God which is unique and is impossible to reach in any other way. Not even through faith or hope. It is only of charity that the Bible says: “*God is love*” (1 John 4,8). It is somewhat shocking to read about faith: “*Thou believest that there is one God; thou doest well: the devils also believe, and tremble*” (James 2,19). Faith makes known our last end - God that is; hope urges us to tend to Him, but only charity unites us with Him.

So, once again, as love or charity involves a unique union with God, without it nothing we do can be *good* in the supernatural order - or in other words: without love (charity) we cannot inherit the kingdom.

All this does not mean charity is enough - other virtues (modesty, prudence, wisdom, goodness, generosity, kindness, etc.) are very much important. Charity or love in itself is not a substitute to any virtue.

Also, all this does not mean that goodness, kindness, wisdom, etc. are not good without charity. However, only charity can “transform” them into *merit*. We could say, charity is like the General of an army: while he is in need of all his soldiers (other virtues), only he can command, unite, and lead them to achieve their common goal. An army without its leader is a weak one, not fit anymore for its very purpose.

We can understand now why Psalm 14 says that those who deny God’s existence (or act like it) “*none of them does good, no, not one*” - if God is love (cf. St. John), and only love can transform our acts into something supernaturally good (cf. St. Paul) that will merit eternal life for us, then those who willingly and knowingly exclude God from their life, also exclude true, supernatural charity and deprive themselves of the possibility of eternal life.

To be continued.

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A priest is always available for Confession, spiritual direction, or for a simple chat half an hour before every Service, or at any other time by appointment!