



HIGH TIDE

February 2021

PARISH MAGAZINE
SAINT PAUL'S, WEYMOUTH



This Magazine contains: *Letter from the Vicar - articles from Frs Bruce & Tony, and from Jeanne - On the Mass - Fasting - Psalm 5 - and more.*

You can detach pages 21-36 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 proofreading.*

*The next Magazine will be published on **Sunday 28th February**. Please, send all
articles, information, news you wish to publish by Sunday 21st February.*

From the Vicar

Dearly Beloved,

It will be Septuagesima Sunday when this Parish Magazine will reach most of you. Septuagesima signals the beginning of our pre-lenten preparation. Fasting is not yet started, prayers are not yet those of Lent, and even days like Shrove Tuesday (*cover photo*) are encouraged - but the Gloria and Alleluia are already dropped from the Liturgy, and Altar and clergy dress in purple. Not in the deep-blue purple of Advent, colour of that Sacred Night when Christ was born, but in the penitential purple of Lent.

Septuagesima is the gentle call of the Holy Mother Church to her children: Lent is approaching, prepare yourselves! It could be compared to when a mother, towards the end of play-time, calls her children home: to study, to help around the house, or simply to prepare for the evening. She will still let them play for a little more, but they already know: it is time to start leaving behind the time of blissful play and joy, and to attend to their equally important, more “severe” duties.

In the 1970s Septuagesima was scrapped from most Anglican and Catholic books - only the Orthodox Church, and some “old” liturgies resisted, like the English Missal or the Book of Common Prayer. For most Christians Lent became simply a period of preparation for Easter. And why should a period of preparation have its own period of preparation??

Reducing Lent to a simple preparation for Easter meant that fasting, forms of penitence, almsgiving, increased prayer were all slowly dropped and forgotten too. Even from the pulpits sometime. For most Christians Lent means little to no change in their spiritual life.

However, Lent is not simply a time of preparation for Easter, but is a proper liturgical season of its own right. While the power and dominion of satan was definitely destroyed by Christ on Good Friday, sin is still part of our life, temptation is experienced by us all, and we are all too well aware of the weakness of our heart, will, and mind. All this calls for penitence, prayer, repentance, fasting, and works of charity.

The holy season of Lent is a special time of grace. By fasting we recognise our sinfulness and we acknowledge God as our Supreme Lord and Judge. Almsgiving reminds us that very often we are equipped rather poorly with Christian charity. Finding more time for prayer prompts us to ponder ardently our true and final goal: life eternal in God's blessed presence. Fasting, prayer, and alms obtain for us special graces (1 Peter 5,5); deliver us from death and cover the multitude of our sins (Tobias 12,9); and make the devil flee from us (James 4,7).

This Lent will be very different. Probably we will have to spend it in lockdown. I encourage you all - and myself! - to use this pandemic for our spiritual growth. Most of us have more time than usual - so if we do not create a daily prayer pattern now, if we do not start reading the Holy Scripture now, if we do not join in the daily prayer of the Church through Morning and Evening prayer now, then perhaps we will never do!

We share Israel's experience: they struggled to keep God's Law, to stay faithful to him, to make always the right choice, to grow in love, faith, and trust. They were lost, but they called on God. And God promised that he would hear them - and us! - in the time of his favour, he would give help in the day of salvation (Isaiah 49,8). It is to us, Christians, that St. Paul writes: "I tell you, *now* is the time of God's favour, *now* is the day of salvation" (2 Corinthians 6,2).

Lent is a holy, important, "serious" season for Christians. It needs planning, and this planning is what Septuagesima-tide is for. Let us listen to the calling, warning, loving voice of the Holy Mother Church that reaches us through the rich liturgical seasons, and let us start planning our Lent.

This Parish Magazine is a bit "lengthy" (there are many news too, just to keep you in the loop) in the hope that each of you will find in it something to help you to have a fruitful, holy Lent! Let us use well Septuagesima and Lent - through preparation, prayer, fasting, and alms. Let these Holy Seasons truly be the promised "*now*" of God's favour, of God's salvation for all of us.

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

Fr. Gregory

Notices

Happy birthday...



Congratulations and all good wishes to *Shelagh Hansford* who celebrates her 80th birthday on Sunday 7th February. She would have liked to have been at our usual Mass and coffee afterwards where we could have celebrated with her. We hope she and Tony have as good a day as possible.

Lady Chapel window

You will be all pleased to know that the repair of the stained glass window in the Lady Chapel is almost finished. The window was smashed in October 2019. We immediately applied for a faculty to carry out the repair. Said faculty was granted in August 2020. The window and its frame were removed in mid-November 2020 by Fr. Andrew Johnson, self-supporting Priest and Master glazier, and were taken to his workshop in Exeter. The cost of these works (£3,600) was covered by our insurance with the exception of our excess of £250.

Bells and building works

An equally long process of petitions for faculty and for other various permissions is finally near to its end. At the time of writing this Magazine, I have not yet had final news from the Diocese but it would seem that by the beginning of February all permissions and faculties will be in place to repair the bells, the roof, and some of the windows, and to carry out other miscellaneous works.

The cost of planned works amount to ca. £90,000 + VAT, plus ca. £16,000 for professional fees. The works are inevitable, and delaying them would further damage the fabric of the church. The bells will be automatised, so they will call us all to worship and to prayer daily without the need of somebody tolling them.

We have most of the money necessary to carry out these works, thanks partly to the generous legacy of Fr. Gordon, and partly to years of fundraising efforts during Fr. Richard's incumbency. We have also applied for various grants so hopefully we will not have to spend everything we have in the Fabric account.

The start of the work depends on the COVID situation, but the plan is to put up the scaffolding during the week after Easter.

Hungarian Nuns

Many thanks to all those who sent donations to the monastery of contemplative Nuns in Hungary. We have collected £459. They have sent a wonderful thank-you message and promised to pray for their Benefactors.

PCC meetings

Apart from unforeseen, eventual extra meetings, the PCC will meet on the following dates this year: 24 February, 28 April, 30 June, 29 September, 24 November. You can find the minutes of past meetings on the Parish website, and you can approach any member if you want the PCC to discuss your ideas, observations, questions, or complaints.

Remembrance Garden

At present, it is difficult to see how the traffic on Abbotsbury Road could ever decrease. This makes it almost impossible to spend time in prayer, peace and reflection in the area surrounding the Lady Chapel where some ashes were buried in the past. For this reason, the PCC has agreed to petition the Diocese for a faculty (permission) to create a proper Remembrance Garden in the area behind the Baptistery (close to the rails separating the area from the Parish Hall courtyard) where cremated ashes can be buried once the Garden is ready.

All those on the Electoral Roll, and all residents in the Parish, will have the right of burial, and their names will be entered in a Book of Remembrance to be kept in the church. Details of the Garden are under review by the PCC, and planning permission for change of use has been submitted to Dorset Council. It is my hope that the Garden of Remembrance will be open this year.

PCC & its Sub-Committees

The Parochial Church Council (PCC) (relatively recent invention in the long history of the Church of England) is the key decision making body of a Church of England parish.

It has the responsibility, along with the Incumbent to promote the mission of God in its parish. Legally, the PCC is responsible for the finances of the parish. It also has ultimate responsibility for the care and maintenance of all church buildings and their contents. Although these responsibilities are executed by the churchwardens, all PCC members must share in the oversight. The PCC may also make representations to the bishop on matters that affect the welfare of the parish. However, its most important role is to co-operate with the Incumbent in promoting in the parish the whole mission of the Church: pastoral, evangelistic, social, and ecumenical.

Given its wide responsibilities (pastoral, evangelistic, social, ecumenical, and financial), the PCC on its own clearly cannot do everything that is needed in the parish. It therefore has a number of sub-committees, each dealing with a particular aspect of parish life. These committees are formally responsible to the PCC, reporting back to it regularly and seeking its approval before making major changes or incurring significant costs. The PCC should also provide strategic direction to the committees so they are reasonably joined up and all pulling in the same direction.

Here is a list of our Sub-Committees with the names of PCC members on each committee. The Churchwardens are on every Sub-Committee. *(Please, note that there are other members from the Congregation too on each committee!)*

With any ideas, concerns, or questions you can always approach the Vicar or the Churchwardens, or directly the competent Sub-Committees. PCC members do not necessarily chair any of the Committees, but they are there to give voice to you!

Also, you are very much encouraged to join one or more Sub-Committees, according to your gifts and inclinations, to help St. Paul's to fulfil its mission, and to grow in numbers.

| | PCC MEMBERS | ROLE |
|--|-------------------------------------|---|
| Standing Committee chaired by the Vicar | Gill Cox Susan Wray | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • preparing PCC meetings • ordinary tasks & business between meetings • following up PCC decisions • dealing with urgent matters • Annual Parochial Church Meeting |
| Social Justice | Gill Cox Susan Wray | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • link with the Westham Benevolent Fund • Safe Sleep • link with Christians Against Poverty • outreach (education, poverty, etc.) |
| Fabric & Gardens | Shelagh Hansford June Hornby | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • maintenance of the building and gardens |
| School | Sue Biles Ann Isbell Rob Pask | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • link with Governors & Beechcroft • Harvest, Easter, Xmas for Beechcroft • tightening of links between school & Parish • creating relationships with Conifers |
| Worship | Liz Evans Chris Waight | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • oversight of Sidesmen, Readers, Servers, rotas, etc. • Music (choir, organists, children, etc.) • maintenance & cleaning of vestments, the church, Sacristy, etc. • Home Communion |
| SPOT | David Harrison | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • oversight of rotas for organising & sorting donations, etc. • help SPOT & the Shop Manager • link between SPOT & the Parish |
| Fundraising | Katherine Harrison June Hornby | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • fundraising & Parish events • publicity • Art (exhibitions, concerts, etc.) |
| Mission | Gill Cox Liz Evans | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sunday School • home visits & home groups • link with other churches • mission events & new members • young people • public witness |

Parish Finances

2019 & 2020

Before presenting you with the Parish and Parish Hall finances for 2019 and 2020, I want to thank you all for your great financial (and other) support towards St. Paul's.

Because of the COVID lockdown, we have not yet been able to introduce me, as new Vicar, to our Bank, so I still have no access to our accounts. I only say this to let you know that I have no idea who gives how much... However, our Treasurer, Katherine, told me that many of you have already responded - and very generously so - to my letter about your giving. Thank you!

Our income (rounded up):

| INCOME | | |
|---------------------------------------|-------------------|-------------------|
| | 2019 | 2020 |
| Bank Interest | 1,211 | 1,128 |
| Fundraising | 7,717 | 4,120 |
| Collection, Coffee | 11,147 | 8,148 |
| Donations | 757 | 5,531 |
| Gift Aid | 6,284 | 6,483 |
| Legacy | 29,545 | 0 |
| Munch Club & other like candles, etc. | 1,784 | 946 |
| Planned giving | 17,188 | 17,110 |
| Trustees | 1,800 | 11,800 |
| Weddings & Funerals | 3,039 | 2,341 |
| TOTAL INCOME | £81,685.13 | £57,918.99 |

While our income was considerably lower in 2020 than it was in 2019, we must not take into account any legacy. Legacies are not an income we can (or indeed we want to!) count on. So, our income in 2019 without legacy was 52,140.13. Compared to this, 2020 was an extremely good year considering COVID - and this success is yours and of the Trustees.

Our expenses (rounded up):

| EXPENSES | | |
|---|-------------------|-------------------|
| | 2019 | 2020 |
| Various | 2,534 | 1,287 |
| Altar, Sacristy, Clergy, Music | 4,953 | 1,497 |
| Service & Hymn books | 325 | 1,185 |
| PC, Office, Printing, Postage, & similar | 7,021 | 5,423 |
| Insurance | 4,297 | 4,363 |
| Deanery share | 41,879 | 42,826 |
| Professional fees | 1,000 | 14,942 |
| Repairs & Maintenance | 2,843 | 2,780 |
| Utilities | 2,792 | 2,860 |
| TOTAL EXPENSE | £67,822.51 | £77,162.73 |

Though our expenses have increased, it is worth noting that some increased expenses (such as utilities) are expected. We also purchased hymn books in 2020 which is, of course, a one-off expense, and should help to save on office expenses (paper and printing). Finally, the professional fee covers all the fees that were due to the Architect for all the paperwork and expenses for the upcoming building works.

If we do not consider these expenses, we managed to save almost £7,000 in expenses in respect of 2019. I must explicitly thank our Organists who, during lockdown, have generously refused to accept any fees!

I think we can agree that the Parish finances show a double aspect. If we do not consider one-off expenses and incomes like professional fees and legacies, the Parish has good, healthy finances which, from a purely human point of view, give every reasonable hope for a long and happy future. It shows the generosity and resourcefulness of our Congregation.

On the other hand, professional fees and legacies are part of the reality, and this reality shows a *profit of £13,862.62 for 2019 and a loss of 19,243.74 for 2020*. This means the PCC will have to project very carefully for the next few years.

The Parish Hall, managed by the Trustees for the benefit of the Parish and the wider neighbourhood, is part of the St. Paul's family. It exists to help, sustain, and promote the religious life and missionary efforts of the Parish. Their finances are as follows:

| INCOME | | |
|----------------------|-------------------|-------------------|
| | 2019 | 2020 |
| Ordinary income | 32,348 | 17,061 |
| COVID-related | 0 | 10,134 |
| TOTAL INCOME | £32,348 | £27,195 |
| EXPENSES | | |
| Ordinary expenses | 10,714 | 9,943 |
| Maintenance | 26,470 | 8,270 |
| Parish | 1,800 | 11,800 |
| TOTAL EXPENSE | £38,984.49 | £30,013.73 |

The Parish Hall, as evident from these numbers, offers a steady, healthy income for St. Paul's (Church & Hall). What seems a year of loss (2019), was the year when the Trustees payed for the new heating system and dishwasher, and 2020 has showed that even with COVID the Hall is an important source of income. Indeed, it was able to contribute to the deanery share by £10,000.

Many thanks to the Trustees for their diligent work, and to our Treasurer for her resourcefulness in obtaining all the available grants.

Looking at the Church and the Hall jointly (without the sums that were simply moved from the Hall into the Parish account):

| INCOME | | |
|----------------------|----------------------------|---------------------------|
| | 2019 | 2020 |
| Parish | 79,885.13 | 46,118.99 |
| Hall | 32,348 | 27,195 |
| TOTAL INCOME | £112,233.13 | £73,313.99 |
| EXPENSES | | |
| Parish | 67,822.51 | 77,162.73 |
| Hall | 37,184.49 | 18,213.73 |
| TOTAL EXPENSE | £105,007 | £95,376.46 |
| TOTAL | Profit of £7,226.13 | Loss of £22,062.47 |

The Parish and the Hall *together* had a strong 2019, even with the great expense of the new heating system and dishwasher, and this gives much hope for the after-COVID years.

2020, on the other hand, was difficult. However, the loss without the expenses for the upcoming works (Architect's fees) are £7,120.47. Considering that we paid our deanery share in full, we are still doing much better than many parishes, and it shows that St. Paul's is a strong Parish with much vitality. Now we only have to find enough confidence to open up to the "outside world" and find new members!

Fundraising for Cancer Research

Maddie Gerhardt writes:

Hello, Maddie Gerhardt here! I would like to let everyone know that I am doing a sponsored fundraising event to raise money for Cancer Research UK as my Grampy has recently been diagnosed.

I will be doing a 10 mile run in Weymouth on the 4th of February which is World Cancer Day!

A *Go Fund Me* page has been set up to collect donations which go straight to cancer research. There are a few ways for you to donate. You can email me (madeleinegerhardt@gmail.com) and I will reply with a link to the fundraising page.

On the other hand, if cash suits you better, please put it in an envelope clearly stating that its for 'Maddie's fundraiser' and also your name and then pop it through Father Gregory's letter box or my letter box (11 Essex Road).

Thank you so much to everybody who has donated and already supported me. We have raised £295 already! I hope that you are all safe and well.

Best wishes,
Maddie

Christmas 2020

Fr Bruce and Kathy write:

Kathy and I thank all those who kindly sent us Christmas cards this year. It was a joy to receive them all and they are decorating our home reminding us of good friends that we have but cannot at present meet much.

A week or so before Christmas our son and daughter-in-law sent us a parcel which contained among other things a present that we were to open immediately. I may have written in the past about some of the unusual presents he has conjured up for us including a blackcurrant picker and a log making device. This year he did not disappoint. The present we opened was a snowflake projector. You may have seen them

or similar devices. A pattern of snowflakes is projected onto the wall. Currently we have it inside on a wall and the ceiling but when we go out to the hot tub in the dark we set it up in the garden and light up the back of our house. When we thanked them for it he said that he had wanted to get us one for some time.

Of course it is something that we could have done without but it is given in love and the snowflakes make a difference and remind us of them both.

Kathy and Father Bruce

Small things

(I wrote this piece before this latest lockdown. I think it is particularly hard for younger people who have so much before them in life and so much to do now. None of us can change the lockdown but we can make a difference to those around us by doing small acts of love and care and by praying faithfully and regularly.)

Before Christmas Kathy and I were irritated by our kitchen tap dripping all the time. We tried various techniques for turning it off but it stubbornly continued to drip and slowly became worse. We decided there was only one way forward and that was to call in the plumber. It took him a couple of days to come and when he did arrive it was fixed in twenty minutes. The ceramic discs inside needed replacing which was not a big job. It seemed like bliss to have the tap turn off. It was only a small thing, but while it was there it seemed more significant.

Earlier in the year the back door wouldn't close properly. It was only a question of getting a screwdriver and adjusting the striking plate in the door frame and all was well, again. It took me two minutes at the most. A more extreme illustration of small things easily fixed. Small things that can make a big difference.

There are a couple of sayings that are in the same vein. A stitch in time saves nine. Doing jobs when they are small saves them becoming major works. This is particularly applicable to all buildings, especially where water is involved. Another saying is look after the pennies and the pounds will look after themselves.

I particularly remember the parable Jesus told about small and large things because it was in the Gospel for Trinity 4 and the subject

of my first sermon as a curate in Liverpool. After the story of two blind men trying to lead each other and ending up in the ditch Jesus moves on to the mote and the beam. That is about not judging or comparing others with self and attending to ones own faults. But it is on this theme of small things too.

It is so often a small thing done by one person for another that has a huge effect in lifting a burden or cheering someone up. Kindnesses are usually small in themselves but are like the bricks in a wall – they build up to something big. This month of February is the shortest in the year. Maybe we can use it to concentrate on doing small things for others and letting others concern themselves with the biggest issues of the time. A short telephone call can make a huge difference to someone who lives alone.



There is a phrase, Small is beautiful. It comes from an economist who wrote a significant book saying that the most important things in national and international finances and technologies are the small things done by many people rather than big things done by governments. They are more empowering and it is a better stance than the bigger the

better. It is both true and important.

With love and prayers from Kathy and Father Bruce

Pause for thought?

Fr Tony writes:

Seeking inspiration for a period of meditation recently I happened on this prayer. I have found it thought provoking and returned to it many times. I thought some of you might also find it a helpful source for meditation as I have.

I am no longer my own, but thine.

Put me to what thou wilt, rank me with whom thou wilt.

Put me to doing, put me to suffering *
Let me be employed for thee, or laid aside for thee.
Exalted for thee or laid aside for thee.
Let me be full, let me be empty.
Let me have all things, let me have nothing.
I freely and heartedly yield all things to thy pleasure and disposal. And
now, O glorious and blessed God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit, Thou art
mine, and I am thine. So be it.
And the covenant which I have made on earth,
Let it be ratified in Heaven.

(In this prayer the word “suffering” is used in the sense of “patiently enduring” - the opposite of “doing”. We are not inviting God to inflict pain on us.)*

In these days when many of us are just a little “fed up” I thought I would offer you a couple of numerous tales. Well, I think they are funny, you may not. After all you know what my sense of humour is like! They may make you laugh, or make you shout out “*Oh no*” and ask “*why does he inflict such pain on us?*” Respond as you feel appropriate. (Socially distanced of course!)

Two men enlist in the army in 1914 and find themselves in the trenches. Mail from home is delivered and the two men go and collect theirs, both having letters from their wives. Once opened, the men sit down to read them and the one notices that the other’s letter is just a sheet of blank paper. He remarks on this to the other who replies “I’m not surprised, we haven’t been talking to each other for weeks!”

A man looking after himself whilst his wife was visiting relatives went to the butchers. The butcher offered him steak with the words “It’s as tender as your wife’s heart.” “In that case” said the man, “I’ll have a pound of sausages...”

Husband to wife: “Shall I hold your hand dear?” Wife to husband: “No, it’s ok, It’s not heavy.”

Last one, promise. A newly married man was telling his friend how lucky he was that he was married to an angel. “Trust you to have all the luck!” his friend replied, “mine isn’t even dead yet.”

Keep safe. Keep smiling. Fr. T

On Fasting

How to fast & The Spiritual Benefits of Fasting

1 - Why should we fast?

Fasting is prescribed both in the Old and the New Testament, it is sanctified and recommended by Our Lord's own example, and by the immemorial Tradition of the Church. Clement XIII wrote in 1759: "*The holy season of Lent approaches. This holy fast was recommended by the testimony of the laws and the prophets, consecrated by the Lord Jesus Christ, and handed on by the apostles. The Holy Church has always preserved it so that by the mortification of the flesh and the humiliation of the spirit, we might be better prepared to approach the mysteries of the Lord's passion and the paschal sacraments. Likewise through fasting we might rise again in the resurrection of Him whose passion and death we joined after we put off the old man.*

Penance for the Christian man is not satisfied by withdrawing from sin, by detesting a past life badly lived, or by the sacramental confession of these same sins. Rather, penance also demands that we satisfy divine justice with fasting, almsgiving, prayer, and other works of the spiritual life. Let the faithful easily turn their attention during this most holy time of year to lessening the intemperance of the body by fasting. In this way the soul might understand how it should prepare itself to recall the holy mysteries of the passion, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ."

2 - What are the spiritual benefits of fasting?

1. Fasting quiets our inner "self." - This is the main thing we are called to do as Christians—deny ourselves and focus on God and others. Fasting teaches us to not seek immediate gratification.

2. Through fasting, we gain power over physical desires, pride, temptation. - We are meant to control our physical and spiritual passions (pride, desire, lust, greed, etc.), and fasting is a practice in exactly that. On a *natural* level: if we can master our hunger, we can master more easily our anger, lust, pride, and so on. On a *supernatural* level: satan is defenceless against prayer supported by fasting and almsgiving.

3. Fasting helps us grow in gratitude. - It's hard to be grateful for food when we are constantly eating it and never truly experience

hunger. We don't even really enjoy food when we are eating often and frequently. Fasting teaches us to appreciate food, but also many other blessings and pleasures in our lives.

4. *When you fast, you can “offer it up.”* - When Jesus went into the desert to pray, he fasted too. Prayer and fasting go hand in hand. We can offer up our fasting for ourself, for our marriage, for a friend, for the Church, or for some special intention. It's powerful! “*God resists the proud, but gives grace to the humble.*” (1 Peter 5,5)

5. *Through fasting, we gain strength to do hard things.* - The practice of fasting teaches us to accept suffering that comes our way and be patient in it, because we know it will not last forever. It's a discipline that teaches us to trust in God for our strength.

6. *Fasting empties us and prepares us to receive God.* - When we empty ourselves, we become prepared to receive God's grace, strength, love, and presence. Physical hunger is a physical manifestation of a spiritual hunger and longing for God. Fasting helps us to see this and practice being receptive to God in our “emptiness.”

7. *Fasting helps us to practice charity.* - By tempering our passions, destroying our pride, obtaining graces, making us appreciate God's gifts, fasting makes us more ready to see the needs of others and to practice Christian charity - virtue without which we count as dead and nothing (1 Corinthians 13).

3 - How should we fast?

1. *Starting with the basics* – The first step in fasting is obeying the law of the Church: fasting on Ash Wednesday and Good Friday, abstaining from meat on Fridays, and preferably observing the Eucharistic fast (do not eat or drink one hour before communion).

Fasting two days a year and abstaining from meat on Fridays is *incredibly* easy. In the “old days”, fasting was required *every weekday* in Lent. And there was once even a time when that fasting required abstinence from all dairy products. There were a ton of other fasts and days of abstinence throughout the liturgical year as well. I would say that we have it easier than any other period in church history. So let's

start with the basics and obey the law of the Church without grumbling or complaining.

2. Adding more – We should never be satisfied with the bare minimum. We should seek to constantly pursue a deeper conversion. St. Francis de Sales gives some good advice in this regard: *“If you are able to fast, you will do well to observe some days beyond what are ordered by the Church, for besides the ordinary effect of fasting in raising the mind, subduing the flesh, confirming goodness, and obtaining a heavenly reward, it is also a great matter to be able to control greediness, and to keep the sensual appetites and the whole body subject to the law of the Spirit; and although we may be able to do but little, the enemy nevertheless stands more in awe of those whom he knows can fast.”*

Here are some ideas:

- Skip one meal extra a week, like breakfast or lunch (unless you have a medical condition, like diabetes, that would make it dangerous). In addition to Fridays, Wednesdays are traditional days of fasting, so that might be a good day to start with.
- Deny yourself something you really like on set days.
- To renounce alcohol.
- Don't eat between meals. This sounds easy, but try it. You'll find it's quite hard since most of us snack frequently and don't even realise it.
- Include things besides food. For example, fast from technology, computer, Netflix, Facebook, gossip, etc. one day a week.
- Drink only water.

Start small, watch out for your physical and mental health, and preferably ask for guidance and advice from a spiritual companion (confessor, priest, nun, experienced Christian friend, etc.)

3. Fasting from sin – Bodily fasting is meaningless unless it is joined with a spiritual fast from sin. St. Basil gives the following exhortation regarding fasting: *“Let us fast an acceptable and very pleasing fast to the Lord. True fast is the estrangement from evil, temperance of tongue, abstinence from anger, separation from desires, slander, falsehood and perjury. Privation of these is true fasting.”*

4. Prayer – Fasting is not simply a matter of will power. Grace is absolutely necessary. Fasting without prayer is difficult, fruitless, and even spiritually dangerous.

5. *We must beware of pride* – With any kind of self-discipline, penance, or fasting comes a temptation to pride. We face the danger of believing that we are superior to others because we fast, or thinking that fasting is an end in itself. But fasting itself is never the goal, nor does it make us perfect or more spiritual than others. Rather, fasting is an aid, a training tool in our ascent toward perfection, which is found in a pure, self-giving love of God and true charity towards our neighbour. “*Be on your guard when you begin to mortify your body by abstinence and fasting,*” says St. Jerome, “*lest you imagine yourself to be perfect and a saint; for perfection does not consist in this virtue. It is only a help; a disposition; a means though a fitting one, for the attainment of true perfection.*”

If we neglect fasting, our spiritual life will always be mediocre. We will be weak in the combat against our passions, we will easily succumb to temptation, and we will never truly overcome our inherent selfishness and self-indulgence.

As Christians, our desire should be to strengthen ourselves and be the best that we can be, for God’s greater glory in whose image we have been created, and for the sanctification of our immortal soul. Jesus is the perfect image, reflection of God. Imitating him, and his fasting, we too will reflect God more perfectly. It is our vocation to train ourselves to be strong in the spiritual warfare, so we can resist the temptations of the evil one who wants to destroy our likeness to God - and there is no better way to begin this spiritual training than through the practice of fasting.



ORDER OF MORNING AND EVENING PRAYER
AT ST. PAUL'S WEYMOUTH

&

LITURGICAL CALENDAR FOR FEBRUARY

WITH PRAYER INTENTIONS

& ANNIVERSARIES

Calendar for February 2021

| | | |
|-----|-----------------|-------------------------------------|
| MON | 1 st | St. Ignatius of Antioch, Bp & Mart. |
| TUE | 2 nd | PURIFICATION OF OUR LADY |
| WED | 3 rd | <i>St. Blaise Bp. & Mart.</i> |
| THU | 4 th | St. Andrew Corsini Bishop |
| FRI | 5 th | St. Agatha Virgin & Martyr |
| SAT | 6 th | St. Titus Bishop |

SUN 7th SEXAGESIMA SUNDAY

| | | |
|-----|------------------|---------------------------------|
| MON | 8 th | St. John of Matha |
| TUE | 9 th | St. Cyril of Alexandria, Bishop |
| WED | 10 th | St. Scholastica Virgin |
| THU | 11 th | OUR LADY OF LOURDES |
| FRI | 12 th | The Seven Holy Founders |
| SAT | 13 th | Of Our Lady |

SUN 14th QUINQUAGESIMA SUNDAY

MON 15th *Sts. Faustinus & Jovita Martyrs*

TUE 16th

WED 17th ASH WEDNESDAY

THU 18th *(St. Simeon Bp. & Mart.)*

FRI 19th

SAT 20th

SUN 21st 1ST SUNDAY OF LENT

MON 22nd St. Peter's Chair at Antioch

TUE 23rd *(St. Peter Damian Bishop)*

WED 24th ST. MATTHIAS AP. (Ember Day)

THU 25th

FRI 26th Ember Day

SAT 27th Ember Day *(St. Gabriel of Our Lady)*

SUN 28th 2ND SUNDAY OF LENT

Daily Intentions



Anniversaries of death

We pray for...

- 1st Our Bishops Nicholas & Jonathan - *Jack Freegard*
- 2nd End of pandemic - *May Biles, Neil Pollock pr, Edward Webber, Vera Heller*
- 3rd Cancer patients - *Dot Thorne*
- 4th Priests & Vocations
- 5th Dying - *Amelia Woods*
- 6th Shrine of Walsingham

- 7th Our Parish
- 8th Front line workers - *Mike Hetherington*
- 9th Who lost their faith - *Leonard Paddock, Pam Groves, Maureen Riggs*
- 10th Families
- 11th Sick - *Hilda Dix*
- 12th Religious vocations - *Elizabeth Woolveridge*
- 13th Our Cell of O.L.W. - *Den Phillips*

- 14th Our Parish - *Thomas Bibby, Win Marshall, Charlie Cooper*
- 15th Persecuted Christians
- 16th Ourselves - *Joan Hodge, Bob de Queben, Caroline Stewart*
- 17th Grace of true penitence - *Ivy Curtis, Steve Warner*
- 18th Elderly
- 19th Beechcroft
- 20th Homeless, deprived - *Leslie Queben pr*

- 21st Our Parish
- 22nd Unity of the Church - *Stephen Elliott, William Gentle, Gordon Vincent pr*
- 23rd NHS staff - *Sandra Ryder*
- 24th Teachers - *Mary Adlam*
- 25th Civil servants
- 26th Our Benefactors, living & departed - *Francis Miles*
- 27th The Royal Family - *Bill Frecker, Jack Williams*

- 28th Our Parish

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. Praise to you, O Christ, King of eternal glory!

V. God is the great Lord, O come, let us adore Him. 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. God is the great Lord, O come, let us adore Him.

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 come, let us adore Him.

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. God is the great Lord, O come, let us adore Him.

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 come, let us adore Him.

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. God is the great Lord, O come, let us adore Him.

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. God is the great Lord, O come, let us adore Him.

One of the following HYMNS is said:

Until 16 Feb: Now, from the slumbers of the night arising,
Chant we the holy psalmody of David,
Hymns to our Master, with a voice concordant,
Sweetly intoning.

So may our Monarch pitifully hear us,
That we may merit with his saints to enter
Mansions eternal, therewithal possessing
Joy beatific.

This be our portion, God forever blessed,
 Father eternal, Son, and Holy Spirit,
 Whose is the glory, which through all creation
 Ever resoundeth. Amen.

* * *

From 17 February:

The fast, as taught by holy lore,
 We keep in solemn course once more:
 The fast to all men known, and bound
 In forty days of yearly round.

The law and seers that were of old
 In diverse ways this Lent foretold,
 Which Christ, all seasons' King and Guide,
 In after ages sanctified.

More sparing therefore let us make
 The words we speak, the food we take,
 Our sleep and mirth, and closer barred
 Be every sense in holy guard.

Avoid the evil thoughts that roll
 Like waters o'er the heedless soul;
 Nor let the foe occasion find
 Our souls in slavery to bind.

In prayer together let us fall,
 And cry for mercy, one and all,
 And weep before the Judge's feet,
 And his avenging wrath entreat.

Thy grace have we offended sore,
 By sins, O God, which we deplore;
 But pour upon us from on high,
 O pardoning One, thy clemency.

Remember thou, though frail we be,
 That yet thine handiwork are we;
 Nor let the honour of thy name
 Be by another put to shame.

Forgive the sin that we have wrought;
 Increase the good that we have sought:
 That we at length, our wanderings o'er,
 May please thee here and evermore.

Grant O thou Blessed Trinity,
 Grant, O Essential Unity,
 That this our fast of forty days
 May work our profit and thy praise. Amen.

The appointed Psalm and Reading(s) follow:

| | | | | | |
|---|----------------|--|---|---------------|--|
| 1 | Ps. 1, 2, 3 | Hosea 9 1 Corinthians 12,12-end | 4 | 14, 15 | Hosea 11,12 - end of 12 1 Corinthians 14,20-end |
| 2 | 48, 146 | Exodus 13,1-16 Romans 12,1-5 | 5 | 17, 19 | Hosea 13,1-14 1 Corinthians 16,1-9 |
| 3 | 119 v. 1-32 | Hosea 11,1-11 1 Corinthians 14,1-19 | 6 | 20, 21, 23 | Hosea 14 1 Corinthians 16,10-end |

| | | | | | |
|----|---------------|---|----|------------------------|--|
| 7 | 29, 67 | Deuteronomy 8,1-10 Matthew 6,25-end | 18 | 56, 57, 63 | Jeremiah 2,14-32 John 4,1-26 |
| 8 | 27, 30 | Ecclesiastes 7,1-14 John 19,1-16 | 19 | 51, 54 | Jeremiah 3,6-22 John 4,27-42 |
| 9 | 32, 36 | Ecclesiastes 7,15-end John 19,17-30 | 20 | 68 | Jeremiah 4,1-18 John 4,43-end |
| 10 | 34 | Ecclesiastes 8 John 19,31-end | 21 | 77 | Exodus 34,1-10 Romans 10,8b-13 |
| 11 | 37 | Ecclesiastes 9 John 20,1-10 | 22 | 71 | Jeremiah 4,19-end John 5,1-18 |
| 12 | 31 | Ecclesiastes 11,1-8 John 20,11-18 | 23 | 73 | Jeremiah 5,1-19 John 5,19-29 |
| 13 | 41, 42, 43 | Ecclesiastes 11,9-end of 12 John 20,19-end | 24 | 16, 147 | 1 Samuel 2,27-35 Acts 2,37-end |
| 14 | 27, 150 | Exodus 24,12-end 2 Corinthians 3,12-end | 25 | 78 v. 1-39 | Jeremiah 6,9-21 John 6,1-15 |
| 15 | 44 | Jeremiah 1 John 3,1-21 | 26 | 55 | Jeremiah 6,22-end John 6,16-27 |
| 16 | 48, 52 | Jeremiah 2,1-13 John 3,22-end | 27 | 76, 79 | Jeremiah 7,1-20 John 6,27-40 |
| 17 | 38 | Daniel 9,3-6 & 17-19 1 Timothy 6,6-19 | 28 | 105 v. 1-6 & 37-end | Isaiah 51,1-11 Galatians 3,1-9 & 23-end |

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:*

Until 16 February: Behold, we go up to Jerusalem, and all things that are written by the Prophets concerning the Son of man shall be accomplished.

From 17 February: When you fast, be not, as the hypocrites, of a sad countenance.

On the Feast/Days of Our Lady: Your Feast, O Virgin Mother of God, is joy to the whole world, for out of you rose the Sun of righteousness, even Christ our God.

After the Antiphon follows the Canticle:

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.

Until 16 February: Behold, we go up to Jerusalem, and all things that are written by the Prophets concerning the Son of man shall be accomplished.

From 17 February: When you fast, be not, as the hypocrites, of a sad countenance.

On the Feast/Days of Our Lady: Your Feast, O Virgin Mother of God, is joy to the whole world, for out of you rose the Sun of righteousness, even Christ our God.

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 one of the Collects:*

Until 16 February: O Lord, you have taught us that without love, all our deeds are worth nothing: Send your Holy Spirit and pour into our hearts that most excellent gift of charity, the true bond of peace and of all virtues, without which whoever lives is counted dead before you; grant this for the sake of your Son Jesus Christ, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever. **R.** Amen.

From 17 February: O Lord Jesus Christ, you fasted for our sake even while you never lacked in your holiness; grant that we may piously undertake the venerable solemnities of fasting and persevere in the same with unfailing devotion. Who lives and reigns with God the Father, in the unity of the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever. **R.** Amen.

Feasts/Days of Our Lady: Grant, we beseech you Almighty God, that your faithful people, who rejoice in the Feast of the Blessed Virgin Mary, may by her Motherly prayers be freed from all ills here on earth, and attain to everlasting joy in heaven. Through Christ our Lord. **R.** Amen.

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

All: 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:

Hail, O Queen of heaven, enthroned! Hail, by Angels Mistress owned!
Root of Jesse, Gate of morn, Whence the world's true Light was born:
Glorious Virgin, joy to thee, Loveliest whom in heaven they see:
Fairest thou, where all are fair, Plead with Christ our sins to spare.

V. Allow me to praise thee, O holy Virgin.

R. Give me strength against thine enemies.

V. Let us pray. Grant, O merciful God, to our weak natures thy protection, that we who commemorate the holy Mother of God may, by the help of her intercession, arise from our iniquities. Through the same Christ our Lord. 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. Praise to you, O Christ, King of eternal glory!

V. That this evening may be holy, good and peaceful, let us pray with one heart and mind. (*A moment of silence is kept.*) As our evening prayer rises before you, O God, so may your mercy come down upon us to cleanse our hearts and set us free to sing your praise now and for ever.

R. Amen.

One of the following HYMNS is said.

Until 16 February:

O blest Creator of the light,
Who mak'st the day with radiance bright,
And o'er the forming world didst call
The light from chaos first of all.

Whose wisdom joined in meet array
The morn and eve, and named them day:
Night comes with all its darkling fears;
Regard Thy people's prayers and tears.

Lest, sunk in sin, and whelmed with strife,
They lose the gift of endless life;
While thinking but the thoughts of time,
They weave new chains of woe and crime.

But grant them grace that they may strain
The heavenly gate and prize to gain:
Each harmful lure aside to cast,
And purge away each error past.

O Father, that we ask be done,
Through Jesus Christ, Thine only Son;
Who, with the Holy Ghost and Thee,
Doth live and reign eternally. Amen.

From 17 February:

O kind Creator, bow thine ear
To mark the cry, to know the tear
Before thy throne of mercy spent
In this thy holy fast of Lent.

Our hearts are open, Lord, to thee:
Thou knowest our infirmity;
Pour out on all who seek thy face
Abundance of thy pardoning grace.

Our sins are many, this we know;
Spare us, good Lord, thy mercy show;
And for the honour of thy name
Our fainting souls to life reclaim.

Give us the self-control that springs
From discipline of outward things,
That fasting inward secretly
The soul may purely dwell with thee.

We pray thee, Holy Trinity,
One God, unchanging Unity,
That we from this our abstinence
May reap the fruits of penitence. Amen.

The appointed Psalm and Reading(s) follow:

| | | | | | |
|---|---------------|--|----|-----------------|---------------------------------------|
| 1 | Psalms 118 | 1 Samuel 1,19b-end Hebrews 4,11-end | 10 | 119 v. 33-56 | Genesis 31,25-32,2 Titus 1 |
| 2 | 122, 132 | Haggai 2,1-9 John 2,18-22 | 11 | 39, 40 | Genesis 32,3-30 Titus 2 |
| 3 | 11, 12, 13 | Genesis 19,1-3 & 12-29 Matthew 27,45-56 | 12 | 35 | Genesis 33,1-17 Titus 3 |
| 4 | 18 | Genesis 21,1-21 Matthew 27,57-end | 13 | 45, 46 | Genesis 35 Philemon |
| 5 | 22 | Genesis 22,1-19 Matthew 28,1-15 | 14 | 2 | 1 Kings 19,1-16 2 Peter 1,16-end |
| 6 | 24, 25 | Genesis 23 Matthew 28,16-end | 15 | 47, 49 | Genesis 37,1-11 Galatians 1 |
| 7 | 65 | Genesis 2,4b-end Luke 8,22-35 | 16 | 50 | Genesis 37,12-end Galatians 2,1-10 |
| 8 | 26, 28, 29 | Genesis 29,31-30,24 2 Timothy 4,1-8 | 17 | 51 | Isaiah 1,10-18 Luke 15,11-end |
| 9 | 33 | Genesis 31,1-24 2 Timothy 4,9-end | 18 | 61, 62, 64 | Genesis 39 Galatians 2,11-end |

| | | | | | |
|----|-----------------|---|----|-----------------|---|
| 19 | 38 | Genesis 40 Galatians 3,1-14 | 24 | 80 | 1 Samuel 16,1-13a Matthew 7,15-27 |
| 20 | 65, 66 | Genesis 41,1-24 Galatians 3,15-22 | 25 | 78 v. 40-end | Genesis 42,18-28 Galatians 5,2-15 |
| 21 | 119 v. 17-32 | Genesis 2,15-17 & 3,1-7 Luke 13,31-end | 26 | 69 | Genesis 42,29-end Galatians 5,16-end |
| 22 | 72, 75 | Genesis 41,25-45 Galatians 3,23 - 4,7 | 27 | 81, 84 | Genesis 43,1-15 Galatians 6 |
| 23 | 74 | Genesis 41,46 - 42,5 Galatians 4,8-20 | 28 | 135 | Genesis 12,1-9 Hebrews 11,1-3 & 8-16 |

Each reading ends with these words:

V. This is the word of the Lord.

R. Thanks be to God.

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

Until 16 February: Lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust destroys.

From 17 February: Behold, now is the accepted time, behold, now is the day of salvation; in these days therefore let us commend ourselves in much patience, in fasting, and in love unfeigned.

On the Feast/Days of Our Lady: Your Feast, O Virgin Mother of God, is joy to the whole world, for out of you rose the Sun of righteousness, even Christ our God.

After the Antiphon follows the Canticle:

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.

Until 16 February: Lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust destroys.

From 17 February: Behold, now is the accepted time, behold, now is the day of salvation; in these days therefore let us commend ourselves in much patience, in fasting, and in love unfeigned.

On the Feast/Days of Our Lady: Your Feast, O Virgin Mother of God, is joy to the whole world, for out of you rose the Sun of righteousness, even Christ our God.

V. Let us pray. – *Intercessions are offered for the Church, for the Sovereign (world), for those in need, and for the dead. Then one of the following Collects is said:*

Until 16 February: O Lord, you have taught us that without love, all our deeds are worth nothing: Send your Holy Spirit and pour into our hearts that most excellent gift of charity, the true bond of peace and of all virtues, without which whoever lives is counted dead before you; grant this for the sake of your Son Jesus Christ, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever. **R.** Amen.

From 17 February: O Lord Jesus Christ, you fasted for our sake even while you never lacked in your holiness; grant that we may piously undertake the venerable solemnities of fasting and persevere in the

same with unfailing devotion. Who lives and reigns with God the Father, in the unity of the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever. **R.** Amen.

Feasts/Days of Our Lady: Grant, we beseech you Almighty God, that your faithful people, who rejoice in the Feast of the Blessed Virgin Mary, may by her Motherly prayers be freed from all ills here on earth, and attain to everlasting joy in heaven. Through Christ our Lord. **R.** Amen.

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

All: 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.

From the Book of Common Prayer

Quinquagesima Sunday: *O LORD, who hast taught us that all our doings without charity are nothing worth: Send thy Holy Ghost, and pour into our hearts that most excellent gift of charity, the very bond of peace and of all virtues, without which whosoever liveth is counted dead before thee: Grant this for thine only Son Jesus Christ's sake. Amen*

This Collect is closely related to St Paul's hymn of charity. The opening words recall the third verse. "*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.*" And these words also point back to the opening of the Collect for Sexagesima, "*O Lord God who seest that we put not our trust in anything that we do...*" When we trust in what we actually do, that is in our good intentions and deeds, they break down under us as we lean upon them for "*without charity they are worth nothing*".

As we approach Lent, when we are called to engage in both personal asceticism and good works in order to please our Lord in preparation for Easter, we need this solemn reminder - that unless what we do for others is inspired by faith and charity it will not be acceptable in the kingdom of heaven or pleasing to our God.

Thus it is most clear that we need the presence of the Holy Ghost in our souls with his gifts of love and charity. The gift of divine love and charity becomes for us the bond that brings peace to the soul and peace between the brethren. From it also spring the virtues or the doings of charity - the almsgiving, the endurances, the labours and the serving and evangelising. These which are "our doing" need to proceed from, be united in, and be surrounded by divine love.

The last part of the Collect presents a very strong assertion, yet one taken from Holy Scripture. Without the love of God in our hearts we are as dead persons before God. "*He that loveth not his brother abideth in death*" (1 John 3:14). "*Though I have all faith and have not charity, I am nothing*" (1 Corinthians 13:2).

What an excellent prayer to use in the week that includes Ash Wednesday & the beginning of the 40 days of Lent.

The Revd Dr Peter Toon (+2009)

“Little Sacraments” - On the use of Holy Water

We all know what Holy Water is, and we use it often in church, however sometimes we are less ready to use it in everyday life. Holy Water is water blessed by a priest, and it receives its power through the prayer and authority of the Church, in the Name of Jesus.

The rite of blessing said over water by a priest to make it holy contains prayers of exorcism. It can banish demons, heal the sick, and send unwarranted grace upon us—yet most of the time we cross ourselves with this water without even thinking about how holy it really is. Let's see in this article the effects of Holy Water.

How old is the practice of using Holy Water? - Traditionally, we have placed fonts of Holy Water near the entrances of our Churches. This placement and usage corresponds actually to Old Testament Jewish practices of purification (cf. Leviticus chapters 12-15). A person also purified himself with water before entering the Temple precincts, offering prayer and sacrifice, and eating. In the Courtyard of the Priests (the area before the actual Temple building) there was the Laver, an immense bronze basin filled with water. Here the priests purified their hands and feet before offering sacrifices at the nearby altar, bathed before entering the Temple itself, and also drew water for other purifications prescribed in Jewish rituals.

As for its ***Christian use***, it is attested by the Apostolic Constitutions (written around 375), and we also have the Prayer Book of a certain Serapion, Bishop of Thmuis, with a blessing for water: *“We bless these creatures in the Name of Jesus Christ, Thy only Son; we invoke upon this water and this oil the Name of Him Who suffered, Who was crucified, Who arose from the dead, and Who sits at the right of the Uncreated. Grant unto these creatures the power to heal; may all fevers, every evil spirit, and all maladies be put to flight by him who either drinks these beverages or is anointed with them, and may they be a remedy in the Name of Jesus Christ, Thy only Son.”*

Magic? - This short prayer from the 4th century shows that Holy Water (and other blessed objects) were not regarded as magic, or miraculous, but simply as objects blessed in God's Name, for the spiritual and physical well-being of His creatures.

Here is a somewhat long, but very good writing, on Holy Water from a German Carmelite monk, Fr. Hermann Fischer, from the 1930s.

“Doubtless you are acquainted with the miracle of mercy which Jesus performed at the pool of Bethsaida. *If not, read it first: John 5,1-15*. Jesus did not need to wait until the water moved; He did not need to help the sick man to the miraculous pond. In an earnest, sublime voice He spoke: “Take up thy bed and walk.” And St. John, an eyewitness, relates: “Immediately the man was made whole: and he took up his bed and walked.” What happiness it was for this man to be perfectly well again after such a long illness! But when later Jesus met him again, He said to him: “Thou art made whole: sin no more, lest some worst thing happen to thee.”

This beautiful story of the Gospel contains much food for wholesome thought. Let us first consider the means by which God sends us His aid. From this miracle which our Saviour worked we see that God can help man in all his needs directly, without employing any means. He requires no medicines to heal the body, no Sacraments to save the soul. The omnipotent words of Jesus restored strength and activity to the man’s palsied body and at the same time healed his soul.

But God seldom helps us so directly, so miraculously as in this case; usually He offers us His aid, in an ordinary way, through the mediation of His consecrated servants, the priests, and through the mediation of grace; that is the Sacraments, the Sacramentals and prayers. We have a beautiful example of such divine aid in the healing water of the pool of Bethsaida. The water was stirred by a mysterious power, and then it possessed the virtue of healing all infirmities. How did this happen? Whence did it derive this wonderful power to heal? St. John tells us: “An angel of the Lord descended at certain times into the pond; and the water was moved. And he that went down first to the pond, after the motion of the water, was made whole.” Thus, an angel was sent by God to bless the water. Through the angel God’s power was imparted to the water which thus became an instrument of divine aid.

There is another holy water, one which is nearer to us and which possesses even greater healing power, I mean the holy water of the Church. The miraculous water at Bethsaida was only to be found in one

place in the world and it possessed the power of healing at certain times only. Its effects were confined to healing the body, and that only in the case of the few who were fortunate in descending into the pond when the water was moved by the angel. But the water which God also causes to be blessed and given the power of imparting grace, through the priest, is to be found in every church: it can be taken thence to the home, and in this way we have it with its virtue by us always. It retains its power to heal and helps not only the body, but protects and helps yet more our souls, in life and in death, for time and eternity. Let us then try to give an account of this precious holy water. But first we shall consider a little the power to bless which has been bestowed on the Church which offers us this holy water in God's Name.

The Power of the Church - During His life on earth the Saviour sent forth His apostles and disciples "and gave them power and authority over all devils, and to cure diseases." Thus the Saviour, while He was still on earth, allowed His disciples to share, to some extent, in His divine power of bestowing grace. But when He took leave of the world He gave them His full power to save and to heal: "As the Father has sent Me, so I send you."

This is the great divine authorisation of the priesthood. In the Name of Jesus, the priest shall and can break the power of evil spirits, that they may not harm us. He shall and can place us under the protection and blessing of God in all places and in all conditions of life.

The apostles and their immediate successors and assistants, by numerous miracles, soon revealed that God was with them. In the Acts of the Apostles (chapter 3) we are told that Peter healed a cripple at the Golden gate. A few pages farther on we find, in the same book, frequent instances of such miracles, the apostles being mediators of the divine aid and divine grace: "By the hands of the apostles were many signs and wonders wrought among the people. . . . They brought forth the sick into the streets, and laid them on beds and couches that, when Peter came, his shadow, at the least, might overshadow any of them, and they might be delivered of their infirmities. And there came also together to Jerusalem a multitude out of the neighbouring cities, bringing sick persons, and such as were troubled with unclean spirits; who were all healed." (Acts 5). And the following particular instance is

related of St. Paul, the great apostle of the Gentiles: “And God wrought by the hand of Paul more than common miracles. So that there were even brought from his body to the sick, handkerchiefs and aprons, and the diseases departed from them, and the wicked spirits went out of them” (Acts 19). Thus we see that even the shadow, handkerchiefs and aprons of the apostles were mediators of divine assistance.

But it was not the actual vocation of the apostles and their successors, the bishops and priests, to perform miracles and heal the human body. They were called rather to save souls, to make men holy, to bring them nearer to God and unite them to Him for all Eternity. This distinction is very important.

In what does this supernatural power consist? By administering the seven Sacraments, priests introduce souls into a wonderful world of grace. By holy Baptism man is born again, a child of God; the Sacrament of Confirmation seals his affiliation with God; the most Blessed Eucharist is his daily bread; the Sacrament of Penance renews or strengthens his affiliation with God; Marriage consecrates the family of God’s children; by Extreme Unction they are blessed at the hour of death. How wonderful are the gifts which the Church is empowered to bestow, through her priests!

Yet her power of imparting grace is not here exhausted. The Church, to reach every aspect of our daily life, offers us exorcisms, consecrations, blessings, through which all that is harmful, especially the influence of the evil spirits, is warded off from us, and all that may help us rendered good and beneficial. To this end the Church uses the power bestowed upon her by Christ and follows the example He gave when He laid His hands on the little children and blessed them; when, looking up to Heaven, He blessed the loaves and fishes for the hungry multitudes. In the same way the Church blesses mothers and children, food and drink, dwellings, clothing, pasture and corn, domestic animals, barns, stables, workshops, machines and innumerable other things. She consecrates her churches and all that is intended for God’s service; she consecrates cemeteries and blesses the graves of our dear ones, oil, candles, herbs, palms, crucifixes, rosaries, scapulars, medals, and especially holy water for the manifold, pious use of body and soul.

Thus the Church, following Christ's example and commandment, surrounds her faithful children with innumerable spiritual helps and the divine protection.

Blessing of the water and salt - Holy water is composed of two elements, water and salt. Very beautiful are the prayers, and deeply significant the ceremonies with which the priest converts both into a mediation of divine grace; the evil spirits are exorcised so that the water may be efficacious in warding off their evil influence; and it is consecrated so that it may become a mediator of divine grace.

The priest, wearing a purple stole, blesses the holy water in the following manner:

Our help in the Name of the Lord, Who made heaven and earth. I exorcise thee, creature of salt, by the living + God, by the true + God, by the holy + God, by that God who ordered thee to be put by Elisha the prophet into the water, that the barrenness of the water might be healed; that thou mayest become exorcised salt for the salvation of those that believe; and that thou mayest be for the healing of soul and body to all those receiving thee, and that there may be banished from the place in which thou hast been sprinkled every kind of hallucination and wickedness, or wile of devilish deceit, and every unclean spirit, adjured in the name of Him who will come to judge the living and the dead, and the world by fire. Amen.

LET US PRAY. *O Almighty and eternal God, we humbly implore Thine infinite mercy, that this creature of salt which Thou hast bestowed for the use of mankind may be blessed + and sanctified + through Thy mercy, that it may make for health of mind and body to all who partake of it; and that what ever is touched or sprinkled with it may be freed from all uncleanness, and from the assaults of the evil spirit. Through Our Lord Jesus Christ Thy Son, who liveth and reigneth with Thee for ever and ever. Amen.*

I exorcise thee, creature of water, in the Name of God + the Father Almighty, and in the name of Jesus + Christ His Son our Lord, and in the power of the Holy + Spirit, that thou mayest be made exorcised water for the banishment of every power of the enemy, and that thou mayest be able to uproot and cast out that enemy himself, together with his rebel angels: by the power of the same Jesus Christ Our Lord, Who will come to judge the living and the dead, and the world by fire. Amen.

LET US PRAY. O God, who for the salvation of mankind has appointed water to be the foundation of Thy greatest Sacraments, graciously bear our prayers, and fill this element, which has in manifold ways been purified, with Thy power and blessing + so that this creature of Thine, for use in Thy mysteries, may be endowed with divine grace to drive away devils and to cast out diseases; that whatever in the houses or possessions of the faithful may be sprinkled by this water may be freed from everything unclean and delivered from what is hurtful. Let no spirit of pestilence or baleful breath abide therein; let all the snares of the enemy who lieth in wait be driven forth; and let everything that threatens the safety or peace of the dwellers therein be banished by the sprinkling of this water; so that the health which they seek by calling upon Thy holy Name may be guarded from all assault. Through Our Lord etc.

O God, the giver of invincible strength, and King of irresistible power, ever wonderful in triumph, who holdest in check the power of the enemy, who overcomest the fury of raging enemies, who by Thy might gainest the victory over all their guile; we humbly pray and beseech Thee, O Lord, to look upon this Thy creation of salt and water, to bless it in Thy mercy and hallow it with the dew of Thy loving kindness: that wherever it be sprinkled and Thy holy Name shall be invoked in prayer, every assault of the unclean spirit may be baffled, all fear of the venomous serpent cast out, and the presence of the Holy Spirit everywhere vouchsafed to us who entreat Thy mercy. Through Our Lord etc.



These are the sublime prayers and ceremonies with which the Priest in obedience to the holy Church blesses the holy water for the pious use of the faithful.

The Profound and Beautiful Significance of Holy Water - The Saviour taught by means of parables

in order to render the divine truths clearer and more easily understood by His audience. He used the same method for the Sacraments. Thus the washing in Baptism is symbolic of cleansing the soul of original sin; the anointing with Chrism at Confirmation is symbolic of fortifying the

soul to fight for the Faith; the bread under the form of which the Blessed Eucharist is received is a symbol of food for the soul, and so on. In the same way holy water is a beautiful, profound symbol of its significance and its effects on body and soul.

Pure water is clear and transparent. In it the heavens are reflected, the light of the sun, and the light of the stars. Similarly our souls should radiate purity that in them may be clearly reflected the heavens of faith, the sun of divine charity, and the starlight of the Christian virtues.

Water cleanses and purifies. Holy water reminds us that our souls have been washed and made pure by the water of holy Baptism, and thereby we have been received into the community of the children of God. Every time we sign our foreheads with holy water, we are reminded of our holy baptismal vows and of the obligation then undertaken, to keep our souls pure. So too holy water is a constant exhortation to purge our hearts from sin by penance and reparation. For this reason pious Christians when taking holy water, pray: "Thou shalt sprinkle me with hyssop, O Lord, and I shall be cleansed; Thou shalt wash me, and I shall be made whiter than snow."

Water quenches our thirst and refreshes us, it revives and fructifies the earth, falling from the heavens as rain or dew, Holy water is a symbol of the dew of divine grace which refreshes our souls and fructifies our work, so that it becomes a service of God.

Water cools the hot air and extinguishes fire. Holy water should remind us that we must cool the ardour of our passions and extinguish the fire of inordinate desires.

The salt which is mixed with the water during the blessing bears a threefold symbolic meaning. In the first place, salt preserves from corruption. Our souls should be preserved from the corruption of sin, especially grievous sin and kept fresh and pure throughout our lives as children of God. Again, salt has always been regarded as a symbol of wisdom. But Christian wisdom leads to a wholesome fear of God and thence to a love of God. Finally, salt imparts an agreeable taste to food to which it is added; and so, too, virtue makes our souls pleasing to God.

Finally, the many signs of the cross which the priest makes over the elements when blessing the holy water and mixing the salt with it

show us that all the graces and help which we receive from God have been merited for us by the Sacrifice made by Jesus Christ on the Cross and flow to us from this source.

Effects of Holy Water - If we would know the effects of using holy water and its advantages, we need only to read the prayers said by the priest during the blessing, according to which we are offered the following helps:

1. Protection against the evil spirit, the devil. We cannot fail to be impressed by the urgent supplication of the Church, during the blessing of holy water, for protection from the infernal enemy, from his cunning and wickedness. Satan brought on man sin and its sad consequences, and he never ceases to harm him when he can. As he once made use of the fruit of the tree in Paradise to rob our first parents of God's friendship, he continues to use for our destruction the creatures intended for our use. Therefore the Church, by exorcising, prays to God that the devil and his evil influence may give way before holy water and everything with which it is sprinkled.

2. Well-being of the Body. The Church prays that holy water may protect us from illness, especially infectious diseases.

3. Holy water brings us help and grace for the sanctification of our souls. This is the first aim of all supernatural means of grace. When we sprinkle ourselves devoutly with holy water, grace is given to us so that we can grow in faith and all other Christian virtues.

4. Pardon for venial sins.

5. By using holy water we obtain the assistance of the Holy Ghost, for the Church prays that through the power of holy water, the Holy Ghost may be always present by us. The evil spirit will be expelled; but the divine Spirit, will enter our hearts and our dwellings when we sanctify them by using holy water.

6. God's blessing is imparted on objects and places sprinkled with Holy Water so that we may use them to God's greater glory and the sanctification of our soul.

It is through the power of the prayers of the Church that holy water possesses the effects enumerated above. Prayer, above all the prayer of the Church, can obtain the divine assistance even for one

utterly undeserving. But holy water is not magic. It should be used with prayer and devotion.

The Church wishes that Christians should take holy water to their homes and keep it for private use. In this way the Christian family is enabled to experience the operation of holy water in their souls as often as desired.

The Holy Church is your spiritual mother. Through the Sacrament of holy Baptism she has given you new birth; she nourishes your soul with the Word of God, Christian doctrine, the Sacraments and numerous other means of grace; she leads you with a sure hand along the path of life, remains faithfully by you in every situation that occurs, helping you and comforting you at death, and after death she is solicitous for your eternal happiness. In this light you should look upon holy water: yet another help on your Christian journey!

Then see to it that you always have holy water in your home. Teach your children, with words and example, always to take holy water before going to sleep, and to sprinkle their beds with a few drops; also to bless themselves with it when they rise in the morning and before going to school. Bless your children yourself with holy water. When anyone is ill, they should be encouraged often to bless themselves with it. Once a year, you should sprinkle all the rooms in the house with holy water. Similarly with workshops, stables and barns, machines and cowsheds, garden and fields. Do not think this is a desecration. As we are permitted to pray for all these material things, so too we may invoke God's protection on them through the sacramentals of the Church. Nor need you have any scruple blessing your pets and animals with it. The whole creation is intended for man's use, to serve his welfare, corporal and spiritual, temporal and eternal. And to this end the Church pronounces her blessing given in God's Name.

Holy Water is always available here, at St. Paul's, and you are most welcome to take home some for your use. We all use it each time we enter the church, or candles, palm crosses, ash for Ash Wednesday, and other objects are blessed. Why should we be "shy" to use it at home, before prayer, in the morning, during temptation, to ask God's protection and blessing on all we use in our everyday life?!

Feast of the month: Candlemas

2 February

This Feast is called in various ways: “*Purification of Our Lady*”, or “*Presentation of Jesus in the Temple*”, or simply “*Candlemas*”, and is - or used to be, at least - the last day of Christmastide. Yes, Christmastide! For centuries the Church did not know the nonsense of *dry January* - instead, she invited her children to celebrate Christmas for 40 days after the penitential season of Advent, before the arrival of the even more serious Lent.

Dom Prosper Guéranger writes about this Feast:

“The Forty Days of Mary’s Purification are now completed, and she must go up to the Temple, there to offer to God her Child Jesus. Before following the Son and His Mother in this Their mysterious journey, let us spend our last few moments at Bethlehem, in lovingly pondering over the mysteries at which we are going to assist.

The Law commanded that a woman who had given birth to a son should not approach the Tabernacle for the term of forty days; after which time she was to offer a sacrifice for her purification. She was to offer up a lamb as a holocaust, and a turtle or dove as a sin-offering. But if she was poor, and could not provide a lamb, she was to offer in its stead a second turtle or dove.

By another ordinance, every first-born son was to be considered as belonging to God, and was to be redeemed by five sicles, each sicle weighing, according to the standard of the Temple, twenty obols. The *Obol* was about three halfpence of English money.

Mary was a Daughter of Israel - she had given birth to Jesus - He was her First-born Son. Could such a Mother and such a Son be included in the laws we have just quoted? Was it becoming that Mary should observe them?

If she considered the spirit of these legal enactments, and why God required the ceremony of Purification, it was evident that she was not bound to them. She was the chaste Spouse of the Holy Ghost, a Virgin in conceiving and a Virgin in giving birth to her Son. Moreover, when she reflected upon her Child being the Creator and Sovereign Lord of all things, how could she suppose that He was to be submitted

to the humiliation of being ransomed as a slave, whose life and person are not his own?

And yet the Holy Ghost revealed to Mary that she must comply with both these laws. She, the holy Mother of God, must go to the Temple like other Hebrew mothers. He that is the Son of God and Son of Man must be treated in all things as though He were a servant, and be ransomed in common with the poorest Jewish boy.

The Son of God was only to be made known to the world by gradual revelations. For 30 years He led a hidden life in the insignificant village of Nazareth; and during all that time men took Him to be *the Son of Joseph* (St. Luke 3, 23). The earth possessed its God and its Saviour, and men, with a few exceptions, knew it not. The Shepherds of Bethlehem knew it; but they were not told, as were afterwards the Fishermen of Genesareth, to go and preach the Word to the furthest parts of the world. The Magi, too, knew it; they came to Jerusalem and spoke of it, and the City was in a commotion; but all was soon forgotten, and the Three Kings went back quietly to the East.

The same Divine plan which had required that Mary should be espoused to St. Joseph, in order that Her fruitful Virginity might not seem strange in the eyes of the people, now obliged her to come, like other Israelite mothers, to offer the sacrifice of Purification for the birth of the Son, Whom she had conceived by the operation of the Holy Ghost, but Who was to be presented in the Temple as the Son of Mary, the Spouse of Joseph.

The Divine Will was dear to Mary in this as in every circumstance of her life. She obeyed the Law. Her God and her Son submitted to the ransom as humbly as the poorest Hebrew would have to do. The Mother and the Child both humbled Themselves in the Purification, and man's pride received, on that day, one of the greatest lessons ever given it.

What a journey was this of Mary and Joseph, from Bethlehem to Jerusalem! The Divine Babe is in His Mother's arms; she had Him on her heart the whole way. Men look at this Mother as she passes along the road with her sweet Jesus; some are struck with her appearance, others pass her by as not worth a look; but of the whole crowd, there was not one that knew he had been so close to the God Who had come to save him.

St. Joseph is carrying the humble offering, which the Mother is to give to the Priest. They are too poor to buy a lamb.

At length the Holy Family enters Jerusalem. Whilst Mary, the Living Ark of the Covenant, is ascending the steps which lead up to the Temple, carrying Jesus in Her arms, let us be attentive to the mystery; one of the most celebrated of the prophecies is about to be accomplished in this Infant.

This edifice is not the magnificent Temple of Solomon, which was destroyed by fire during the Jewish captivity. It is the second Temple, which was built after the return from Babylon, and is not comparable to the first in beauty. Before the century is out, it also is to be destroyed; and Our Saviour will soon tell the Jews that not a stone shall remain upon a stone that shall not be thrown down (Luke 21,6). Now the Prophet Aggeus, in order to console the Jews, who had returned from exile and were grieving that they were unable to raise a House to the Lord equal to that built by Solomon, addressed these words to them, which mark the time of the coming of the Messiah: *Take courage! for thus saith the Lord of Hosts: Yet one little while, and I will move the heaven, and the earth, and the sea, and the dry land. And I will move all nations; and the Desired of all nations shall come; and I will fill this House with glory. Great shall be the glory of this House, more than the first; and in this place I will give Peace, saith the Lord of Hosts* (Aggeus 2, 4-10).

The hour is come for the fulfilment of this prophecy. The Emmanuel has left Bethlehem; He has come among the people; He is about to take possession of His Temple, and the mere fact of His entering it will at once give it a *glory*, which is far above that of its predecessor. The blood of oxen and goats will, for a few years more, flow on its altar; but the Infant, Who holds in His veins the Blood that is to redeem the world, is at this moment standing near that very altar. Amidst the Priests who are there, and amidst the crowd of Israelites, who are moving to and fro in the sacred building, there are a few faithful ones, who are in expectation of the Deliverer, and they know that the time of His manifestation is at hand; but there is not one among them who knows that at this very moment the Messiah has entered the House of God.

But this great event could not be accomplished without a prodigy being wrought by the Eternal God as a welcome to His Son.

The Shepherds had been summoned by the Angel, and the Magi had been called by the Star, when Jesus was born in Bethlehem; this time it is the Holy Ghost Himself Who sends a witness to the Infant, now in the great Temple.

There was then living in Jerusalem an old man whose life was well-nigh spent. His name was Simeon; his heart had longed unceasingly for the Messiah, and at last his hope was recompensed. As Mary and Joseph were ascending the steps of the Temple, Simeon felt within himself the strong impulse of the Spirit of God: he leaves his house and walks towards the Temple; the ardor of his desire makes him forget the feebleness of his age. He reaches the porch, and there, amidst the many mothers who had come to present their children, his inspired gaze recognises the Virgin of whom he had so often read in Isaias, and he presses through the crowd to the Child She is holding in Her arms.

Mary, guided by the same Divine Spirit, welcomes the saintly old man, and puts into his trembling arms the dear object of Her love, the Salvation of the world. Happy Simeon! figure of the ancient world, grown old in its expectation, and near its end. He cannot keep silence; he must sing a Canticle; he must give testimony: *Now, O Lord, Thou dost dismiss Thy servant in Peace, because my eyes have seen Thy Salvation.*

Immediately there comes, attracted to the spot by the same Holy Ghost, the holy Anna, Phanuel's daughter, noted for her piety and venerated by the people. Simeon and Anna, the representatives of the Old Testament, unite their voices, and celebrate the happy coming of the Child Who is to renew the face of the earth.

Simeon gives back to Mary the Child she is going to offer to the Lord. The two doves are presented to the Priest, who sacrifices them on the Altar; the price for the ransom is paid; the whole law is satisfied; and after having paid homage to Her Creator in this sacred place, where She spent Her early years, Mary, with Jesus pressed to Her bosom, and Her faithful Joseph by Her side, leaves the Temple. Such is the mystery of this fortieth day, which closes the holy Season of Christmas. Many are of the opinion that this Feast was instituted by the Apostles themselves. This much is certain, that it was a long-established Feast even in the 5th century."

On the Holy Mass

The Roman Canon (2)

If we inquire about the meaning of the word *canon*, we discover that first it indicates a *rule* (how things are supposed to be done); then it also means a compulsory *offering* (such as taxes or tithes) of what we have. And this is exactly the spirit of this Eucharistic prayer:

- we come into God's presence as unworthy servants, doing only our duty (Luke 17,10);
- though only servants, our Master fills us with his gifts (Luke 12,37);
- we both use these gifts to the spiritual and physical wellbeing of ourselves and others, and offer them back to God;
- and we do all this in the way the Church instructs us to do because nothing in the Mass is ours: it is God's gift and work, it is Jesus' perfect sacrifice and offering.

No wonder then that the Canon starts with words of humble petition and even begging. As unworthy servants and humble beggars we stand in God's presence, and we have nothing to offer unless gifts previously given to us by him (James 1,17). "*God resists the proud*" (1 Peter 5,5; James 4,6) so we must approach in humility.

This spirit of humility is expressed even before the first words of the Canon are spoken: indeed, the priest, before saying anything, opens and raises his hands in pleading prayer towards the Cross, and then bows down profoundly over the Altar, and kisses it with holy fear and immense gratitude. Then, and only then, he opens his mouth:

Therefore, most merciful Father, we humbly beg and entreat you, through Jesus Christ your Son, Our Lord, to accept and bless these + gifts, these + offerings, these holy and spotless + Sacrifices.

What an unusual opening: ***therefore***. Nothing has been said yet, so what does the adverb *therefore* refer to? It refers to the previous prayer: Holy, Holy Holy Lord!

A brief look at the Old Testament's pages is sufficient to have at least some understanding of what God's holiness means. The Holy Scripture uses the word *fear* at least 300 times in reference to the holy God. Nature (mountains, the earth), Israel, Moses, prophets, nations

and their kings, and even Cherubs and Seraphs veil their faces, tremble with fear, humbly prostrate in the presence of the living God. *Who can stand in his presence? Who can dwell in his sacred Tabernacle?* - are ever-present questions in the books of the Scripture. "*Woe to me, for mine eyes have seen the King, the Lord of hosts!*" - Cries out Isaiah (6,5). And yet, here we are: unworthy servants not only approaching the holy God whom angels, prophets, patriarchs feared and trembled, but addressing him.

It was through fear and judgement that God's infinite holiness showed itself in the Old Testament. Now, the same holiness is made manifest in Christ: through love and mercy. Still, we should never forget in whose presence we are during the Mass... and this little word, *therefore*, is a constant reminder of it.

Indeed, since now we are beloved children and heirs (Romans 8,17), with great boldness we can call God our Father. Most merciful Father - because "*his mercies are new every morning*" (Lamentation 3,22). Are our filial love and gratitude, too?

"***Most merciful Father***" was also one of the titles of the Roman Emperor from whom multitude of nations and peoples and lands expected peace, justice, and well-being. All in vain, of course. The very first Christians, probably when St. Peter was still in Rome, took this title from the sons of this world and their master, and boldly gave it to God. The Father of Jesus Christ is ***the most merciful Father*** from whom peace, justice, and well-being comes for every nation and people and land. And it comes through the Eucharist, the only perfect Sacrifice of Jesus Christ (Romans 5,1-2). We come to Mass with the same feelings. In need and search of peace, justice, mercy, love, forgiveness, spiritual and physical well-being.

But will we find what we are looking for? Will we not be deluded in our search and expectation? The Holy Church, prefigured by the Blessed Virgin Mary, treasures up, and ponders in her heart (Luke 2,19) the words of her Divine Master: "*And whatsoever ye shall ask in my name, that will I do*" (John 14,13).

Confident in such promise, once the Church has addressed "the most merciful Father" through the priest, she hastes to make him add the words: "***through Jesus Christ your Son, Our Lord***". How could ever such prayer be not accepted and listened to? Perhaps not in a way

we imagined or hoped for, but whatever we ask in the Mass will be given to us. *“God that spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all, how shall he not with him also freely give us all things?”* (Romans 8,32).

Surely, then, the Church ponders very carefully what should be the very first thing she asks of God! **To accept and bless** the gifts, offerings, the holy and spotless sacrifices presented on the Altar. How so?? Do not these gifts and offerings come from God himself? Are we not offering up what is his already in so many ways? Is this holy and spotless sacrifice not the only pleasing and acceptable Sacrifice of Christ? Why then *“waste”* a petition on their acceptance and blessing?

As human beings, we rely on our senses, so the external aspect of things is important. For example, smell and presentation is part of what makes a dish “nice”. Decoration and coziness is as essential to a true home as are steady foundations and strong walls. The same is true about worship - and God knows it well. Indeed, entire books and chapters of the Old Testament contain hundreds and thousands of ritual laws and prescriptions. The Church too has clear rules about worship, uses vestments, smells, music, decoration. The Sacraments itself are visible signs of invisible grace. It is important how things *are presented*.

Yet, stopping at exteriority is one of the gravest mistakes Israel made. Ceaseless is God’s warning through the prophets, that while Israel must obey the external ritual laws, turn sacrifice and true worship consists in contrite heart (Ps 51), obedience and innocence (Is 1), social justice and true conversion (Is 58), forgiveness and charity (Mt 5,23-24).

So the real meaning of the first petition of the Mass is, that as we offer on the Altar the already blessed and accepted gifts and sacrifice of Jesus Christ, faithfully observing rules and rituals, wearing our Sunday best, kindly smiling at everyone - while we do all this, may we also approach the Altar with feelings of penitence over our sins, with contrite heart, living in obedience and innocence, fighting for social justice, praying for our own true conversion, forgiving sincerely others humbly and with fervent charity). *“And whatsoever ye shall ask in my name, that will I do”*. We can rest assured that Mass imparts us the grace of all of the above - it is up to us to collaborate with this grace so that Christ’s sacrifice may be ours too, and may our offering, and ourselves, be blessed and acceptable in the sight of the most holy, most merciful God.

The Psalms - Psalm 5

A morning prayer

Introduction & Structure - The authorship of Psalm 5 is traditionally assigned to king David. It is a reflection of how the righteous man prays for deliverance not only for freedom from suffering, but to allow himself to be able to serve God without distraction. Psalm 5 is within the genre of the morning prayer and of the lament Psalms. The Psalm indeed opens with a lament, and continues with praise and requests that God punish evildoers. The psalmist describes the throat of the wicked as an open sepulchre. Finally, the Psalm ends with a blessing extended to all those who trust in God.

Background - What is the object of this Psalm's lament? At first sight it is quite vague and common: wicked people. But in this Psalm, a certain part of the body of the wicked is repeatedly mentioned: their mouth, throat, and tongue. While in Psalm three David's enemies used "sticks and stones" to attack him, here they are using their mouth and tongue, they are using *words*.

Its actuality - Can we identify with David? Have we ever experienced what it's like to have "wicked men" use their words to try to hurt us? Have we ever had to endure lies about us? Or denigration? Does our church know what it's like to have "wicked men" try to divide it through their gossip and slander? Well, then this psalm applies to us. It's a psalm to emulate and pray personally when we are facing these kinds of problems.

Verses 1-3 - We want God to hear our prayers. But not only. Words sometimes cannot express what is in our heart, on our mind. Indeed, David says: Lord, consider also my *meditation* (in other translations: my groaning, my sighing, or my *musings*). So, this meditation is an utterance that cannot be understood by the human ear. But sometimes that's how our prayers are. Sometimes we can articulate our concerns to God (or others). But sometimes our problems overwhelm us in such a way that they are too much for words. But not for God. He

listens to our words, but he also understands our deepest thoughts, troubles, sighs.

God is called “King” - and kings have a duty towards the well-being and safety of their subjects. The certainty and boldness of faith: since God is our King, he must act, he must deliver! It makes you think of a court room setting. And so David, early in the morning, comes into God’s presence and pleads his case before the only One who can ultimately do anything about it.

Verses 4-6 - David knows that God can’t be tempted with evil (James 1,13). Not only he has no pleasure in evil, but evil won’t even be able to appear in front of him. David uses a pictorial word in verse 4: “sojourn” – like a brief stay. Evil can’t even visit God. He’s that holy.

Verse 5, too, has a very interesting expression: the “foolish”. The word in Hebrew is *halal* – as in “Hallelujah: Praise the Lord”. These foolish folk are praising *themselves*. They are *boastful*.

The following verses describe in strong words the true repulsion that God has towards sin: *hate, destroy, abhor*. Can we imagine how immense the love of God is for us if, notwithstanding he is repulsed by sin so much, he still decided to dwell among us, sinners! God is repulsed by sin - at the same time, God is merciful to all who trust in him and turn from their evil deeds.

Verses 7-8 - David, in contrast to *them*, will enter God’s house. Why? Because David never sinned? No. Because of the multitude of God’s mercy towards those who repent. David can come right in – experience the protection of a home, the warmth, the comfort of a home – but only because of God’s love, mercy, and forgiveness. And even though David is a welcomed guest in God’s home, he’s not taking that privilege lightly. He enters in reverence and in fear of displeasing this great, loving, holy God.

Be all these verses a mirror for us - the foolish and boastful, he who hurts and “kills” with his mouth, the non-repenting sinner will never enter into God’s presence. Only he who repents of his sins, uses his tongue and words rightly and so worships God in holy fear will find mercy, protection, love, forgiveness, will find a true *home* in God’s temple and palace.

Verse 9 - David gives a pretty terrifying picture of the dangers sinful tongue and words constitute. David says: They flatter with their tongue. Literally, they make their tongue *smooth*. Now, tongues are connected to and proceed from the throat. Well, David next pictures the throats of these wicked men – the throats that give voice to the words that they use to destroy the righteous – as open *graves*. And finally, the inward parts – their belly is *destruction*, calamity, ruin.

The poetic language of the Psalms give us this image: the righteous are walking along the path of life. They're unsuspecting and suddenly they slip on the smooth tongue of the wicked and into the open grave. And like dead men, the righteous fall into those graves and meet their destruction. What effect the words, tongue, mouth of the wicked have on the righteous!

God save *us* from ever using *our* words in this way - and God save us from the dangers of flattering, lying, unclean, hateful, uncharitable words or gossip.

Verse 10 - So in light of this happening, David returns to his petition for deliverance. As opposed to David entering God's house in the multitude of God's mercy, David asks that these men be cast out in the multitude of their transgressions. After all, a King can banish his subjects for their rebellion. And that's what it comes down to in David's mind. The sin of these men are not against men only. These wicked men – by slandering and lying and doing all sorts of other evil with their tongue – are rebelling against God himself who abhors and is repulsed by sin.

Verses 11-12 - The psalm ends on a happy note. God will ultimately destroy evil and defend us from our enemies - even the greatest ones: sin, evil, and death. He's not going to let anything touch us. And we praise him for this – the blessing and protection that only He can provide.

So all those who trust in the Lord and love his Name should “*rejoice*”, “*shout for joy*”, and “*be joyful*”. Three expressions for joy in one verse to say that this joy is perfect, full, and is for ever. This is what those who use their tongue and words rightly expect - or, even when they don't, they truly repent and with God's help change their ways.

February: National Heart Month

Sent by Jeanne James

Everyone has a heart. And it's important that we understand how to keep it healthy and stay informed about the risks of heart related conditions. Your chances of developing a heart condition depend on a number of factors. The more adverse factors you have the higher your risk.

Family history can play a significant role but so too can issues like high cholesterol, smoking and high blood pressure..

It might seem daunting. But just a small change in diet and exercise can have a huge impact on your cardiovascular health. Doing more of your own cooking, cutting out processed foods and keeping to an exercise routine could significantly reduce the risk of heart disease.

Here are some quick tips to look after your heart:

- Eat a balanced diet
- Watch your weight
- Keep physically active
- Stop smoking & moderate your alcohol intake
- Manage your stress
- Get enough sleep

This national heart month why not take action and get a check up on your blood pressure and cholesterol readings? This can give you a better understanding of your overall heart health and your GP will give you some simple ways to improve and help you to create a more heart-friendly lifestyle. Visit: www.bhf.org.uk

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