



# HIGH TIDE

*February 2022*

PARISH MAGAZINE  
SAINT PAUL'S, WEYMOUTH



This Magazine contains: *Letter from the Vicar - Notices & News - Articles from Fr Bruce & Kathy, Katherine Harrison, June Hornby, Jeanne James - Apparition of Our Lady at Lourdes - Septuagesima - and more*

*You can detach pages 19-30 and use it for Morning & Evening Prayer*

# Index

Letter from the Vicar	3
News & Notices	5
<i>Katherine Harrison</i> : Gardening tasks in February	5
<i>Fr Bruce &amp; Kathy Dixon</i> : The importance of...	6
<i>June Hornby</i> : St. Paul's Dedication 2022	8
<i>Michael P. Foley</i> : Septuagesima - The Time that the Land Forgot	9
<i>Jeanne James</i> : One Pan Winter Warmer	15
Merit (2)	16
Calendar, Intentions, & Anniversaries	20
Morning & Evening Prayer	22
From the Book of Common Prayer	31
Feast of the month: Apparition of Our Lady at Lourdes	32
Three miracles from Lourdes	36
The Psalms (15)	42
On the Holy Mass: The Roman Canon (9)	46
Contacts	48

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

*The next Magazine will be published on **Sunday 27<sup>th</sup> February**. Please, send all  
articles, information, news you wish to be published by Sunday 20<sup>th</sup> February.*

## From the Vicar

Dearly Beloved,

I always start editing and writing the Parish Magazine with a great sigh as it normally takes me almost a week to finish it. A bit less if there are more contributions from you all. This said, I must quickly add that the sigh is not due to the workload the Magazine means but to the uncertainty whether or not it is worth it.

We all have different gifts, different interests, different perspectives and I do realise that mine dominate the Parish Magazine. The things I am passionate about - theology, doctrine, saints, liturgy - are also the only things I know something about so evidently, they will feature in every issue of High Tide. I could, of course, write about gardening, cooking, baking, or household tips - but then probably you would all end up with devastated gardens, malnourished, with possible food poisoning, surrounded by holes burnt into your carpets and sofas by home-made cleaning tips. Or not as you would quickly learn not to even read my gardening, cleaning, or cooking tips.

As you clearly see, all this leaves me with little choices but to transform the Parish Magazine into a channel of theological education and you all into the probably theologically most well-informed congregation in ~~Salisbury Diocese; in the whole Church of England; in the world.~~

The two basic questions then are: *is it too much?* and *is it interesting?*

As for the latter - well, it is certainly for me. To make it interesting for you I do need your help, your contribution. Write a few words about your interests, hobbies, experiences and share it with others. They do not have to be long articles. Our congregation is made up of so many shapes and colours and that makes it just wonderful - why should not our Parish Magazine reflect the same variedness (*the word surprisingly does exist; I have looked it up*). So, please, do consider contributing to High Tide.

As for the former - is it too much? - I am reminded of a story from the Desert Fathers. A young monk at the very beginning of his monastic life goes to see an Abbot, famous for his wisdom, and asks for his guidance and teaching. The Abbot, who seemingly could not be bothered less, simply gives an old willow basket to the young monk and asks him to bring some water in it from the near-by river. Though a bit shocked, the young monk does oblige but by the time he reaches the Abbot all the water is gone. As he shows his empty basket to the Abbot, the Abbot looks at him somewhat indignant and asks the young monk again to bring some water in the basket. The request and unsuccessful attempt of carrying water in a willow basket is repeated a

few times in sequence until the young monk really gets fed up and bursts out: "Father, it is just impossible to carry water in a woven willow basket!" The Abbot looks tenderly at the young monk as says: "Of course it is. But look at the basket: how shiny and clean it has become!"

I really want to see my teaching, governing, sanctifying role in the Parish in these terms and I hope you do too. The same liturgy is repeated day after day, basically the same sermons are preached week after week, and the same seasons are observed year after year. Much of it flows away. Sometimes by the end of the service we have already forgotten the readings. By the end of the day the sermon preached is all gone. And who of us remembers the tender texts and rituals of Advent for example? But it is far from being in vain all this ever-repeating, over-flowing richness of rituals, prayers, texts, and teaching. Even if they all simply seem to "flow through" us, they gently but constantly, drop by drop, wash us clean.

The same goes for the articles of the Magazine. Are they too much? I believe often they are. What will be remembered from the fifty-or-so articles on the Mass, from the hundred-and-fifty articles on the Psalms, from the various articles on merit and on grace and on purgatory and so on and so forth?! Not much I guess. Yet, it is not in vain. Being continuously exposed to Christian doctrine and to the mysteries of our faith is exactly the same as the constant exposure to rituals, worship, ceremonies, colours and seasons, prayers and sermons, smells and bells. All that remains are but little drops - but give them enough time and they will do the work. And this is how we, Christians, grow in love, in our faith, in hope - this is indeed the only way! -: slowly but constantly.

So my second encouragement (the first was, remember, to write articles for High Tide!) is to "*give it a generous try.*" And by "it" I mean all of it! Read the Parish Magazine patiently - and then come to church more often, come to the mid-week feasts (Candlemas is close, the blessing of throats), to Morning and Evening Prayer too. Come especially in the beautiful seasons of Septuagesima (we will bury the Alleluia!), Lent (Stations!), Holy Week (the most amazing and moving ceremonies). Come and as Isaiah says: "*with joy shall ye draw water out of the wells of salvation*" (12,3). And this water, this living water of salvation will wash, clean, refresh, and sanctify our souls. *Septuagesima* (meaning 70) and Lent (also called *Quadragesima* meaning 40) are drawing near, reminding us of Israel's 70 years of exile in Babylon and 40 years in the desert. They only survived because they drank from the water flowing from the rock. "*And that Rock was Christ*" (1 Cor 10,4).

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

Fr. Gregory

## News - Events - Notices

**Candlemas** - is a Principal Feast in the Church of England and church attendance is expected just as on Sunday. There will be two services: 10am and 6pm both with blessing of candles. Feel free to bring your own candles if you want them to be blessed.

**Blessing of throats** - On the day of St. Blaise (3 February) and on the following Sunday, after the Mass you are invited to receive the Blessing of the Throat. More about it in the February 2020 Parish Magazine which you can find online (<http://www.stpaulsweymouth.org>).

**Fleet Holy Trinity** - After meeting the Archdeacon of Sherborne, the PCC has voted in favour of the proposed merge of the Parish of Holy Trinity Fleet with St. Paul's. The new Benefice will be created sometime during the summer. The two churches will keep their own, separate PCCs and finances - however, we all look forward to a prayerful and close collaboration.

### What to do in your garden in the month of February

*Katherine Harrison writes:*

- Prune back clematis. Cut the stems back to 30cm from the base. Remember “*if it flowers before June do not prune*”. So prune only late-summer flowering clematis.
- Always use really sharp tools for pruning. Cleaner cuts will cause less damage to the plant. Sharp tools are safer to use. Don't paint over pruning wounds, as this could seal a potential disease.
- Always cut back to something. Do not snip at random but make the cut just above a bud or a leaf or the joint of another stem.
- Pot up containers with hardy spring bedding, like primroses, wallflowers and forget-me-nots.
- Cut back ivy, Virginia creepers and other climbers if they have outgrown their space.
- Sow broad beans for an early crop.
- Prepare your vegetable beds for sowing by weeding thoroughly.
- Sow cress in a small seed tray on a windowsill for picking in a few weeks to add to your sandwiches.
- Sort out and clean up canes, plant supports ready for use in the spring.
- Sprinkle slow-release fertiliser around the base of roses.
- And if you have time, hunt out overwintering snails huddled in empty pots and hidden corners to reduce population.

## The Importance of...

*Fr Bruce and Kathy Dixon write:*

There are many places where we are offered good suggestions to make life more simple. Both our lives and our homes are arenas for uncluttering. We do not have to look back very far in time to see how radically our lives have changed. We may judge that whilst many new things are good, not all of them are, or maybe they are not totally advantageous.

These last two years have seen a marked reduction in our social lives and we are trying hard now to redress that as best we may. So we were delighted in December to be able to join our family in Jersey for Christmas. But coming home was not uneventful. We had to change our ferry crossing with the stormy weather or we would have delayed our journey home by more than a week.

When we did get home we discovered that our domestic boiler would not work. The plumber quickly diagnosed that our boiler really needed replacing which was quickly installed in January. While we were waiting for the new boiler we were hampered with very limited heating and smaller amounts than usual of hot water. It took us back to our childhood days when home heating was with coal fires. There was no heating upstairs and downstairs fires had to be lit every day for warmth. Dressing and undressing was done rapidly and at times I remember ice on the inside of my bedroom window.

With modern heating systems we have left behind the fire lighting skills and the chill in the home. But when our heating was off after Christmas we really missed it. The day the new boiler came on it was like stepping forward seventy years or like flipping from mid-winter to blazing July. We realised how dependant we have become on our conveniences and how much we take them for granted. Yet, truth be told, we could manage, as we used to, without them.

Look at the things around you and the activities of each day. So many of them are good, but not essential. We could do very well without many of them. There are however people and parts of our lives that we could and should describe as essential. Rejoice that they are there for us and with us and value them above other things.

With love and prayers from Kathy and Father Bruce.



And now for some nostalgia...

Back in the days of tanners and bobs,  
When Mothers had patience and Fathers had jobs.  
When football team families wore hand me down shoes,  
And T.V. gave only two channels to choose.

Back in the days of three penny bits,  
when schools employed nurses to search for your nits.  
When snowballs were harmless; ice slides were permitted  
and all of your jumpers were warm and hand knitted.

Back in the days of hot ginger beers,  
when children remained so for more than six years.  
When children respected what older folks said,  
and pot was a thing you kept under your bed.

Back in the days of Listen with Mother,  
when neighbours were friendly and talked to each other.  
When cars were so rare you could play in the street.  
When Doctors made house calls and Police walked the beat.

Back in the days of Milligan's Goons,  
when butter was butter and songs all had tunes.  
It was dumplings for dinner and trifle for tea,  
and your annual break was a day by the sea.

Back in the days of Dixon's Dock Green,  
Crackerjack pens and Lyons ice cream.  
When children could freely wear National Health glasses,  
and teachers all stood at the FRONT of their classes.

Back in the days of rocking and reeling,  
when mobiles were things that you hung from the ceiling.  
When woodwork and pottery got taught in schools,  
and everyone dreamed of a win on the pools.

Back in the days when I was a lad,  
I can't help but smile for the fun that I had.  
Hopscotch and roller skates; snowballs to lob.  
Back in the days of tanners and bobs.

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## St. Paul's Dedication 2022

*June Hornby writes:*

Whilst brainstorming over ideas to raise the profile of St. Paul's in Westham, it was thought it would be an idea to show the riches of our worship in St Pauls. Since the arrival of Fr. Gregory, he has found various artefacts which have been hidden away for many years (for example - the large Bible used at Evensong, the gong at Sunday Mass to name just two).

I think it would be a good idea to invite the people of Westham to see the treasures which our church has acquired over the years since the inception of Fr. Sidney Lambert. We could also show some of the robes worn by our Priests.

Perhaps also show celebrations which have been held at the Church over the years i.e. photos of Weddings, Parties, Fetes and anything else you might think of.

I am a relatively new member of the Church, but when I have been on the PCC I have heard of various clubs Girls, Boys, Mothers Union, etc. and I think it would be a nice idea to celebrate it with the people of Westham with photographs etc.

What do you think? Please get in touch with your ideas - and if you have photos, articles, memories to share. Thank you.



# Septuagesima: The Time that the Land Forgot

By Michael P. Foley

*(The following article appeared in the Winter 2011 issue of The Latin Mass magazine on pages 42-46 and on the New Liturgical Movement blog.)*

When we go to Mass, be it in the new form or the old, we generally react to what is immediately transpiring before us, be it for the better or for the worse. We respond to the reverence or irreverence, piety or impiety, beauty or ugliness of the words and deeds we see and hear. These reactions are what remain fixed in our memories and go on to inform our liturgical opinions.

Harder to discern is the effect that a calendar has on our souls, since not every feast or Sunday comes with vivid memories in the making. A case in point is the liturgical season of pre-Lent or Septuagesima, an easily overlooked interlude between the Time after Epiphany and Lent. While the liturgies of Septuagesima are fairly low key, the impact that this small season has had on individuals and even on Western civilization is entirely disproportionate to its size. Septuagesima consists of three of some of the most interesting and influential weeks of the liturgical year.

## ***Pre-Lent***

Septuagesimatide, or pre-Lent, is the name given to the three consecutive Sundays preceding Ash Wednesday. It is named after the first of these, Septuagesima Sunday, which occurs roughly seventy days before Easter (*septuagesima* is Latin for “seventieth”). Sexagesima (“sixtieth”) Sunday comes next, followed by Quinquagesima (“fiftieth”) Sunday on the Sunday before Ash Wednesday. In order to effect a gradual transition between the joy of Christmastide and the stringency of Lent, the season of Septuagesima takes on some of the sobriety of the latter but without its harshness. At Mass the Gloria is suppressed and the Gradual replaced with a Tract. Flowers on the altar are forbidden, and violet is the liturgical colour of the vestments.

Each Sunday of Septuagesima-tide also focuses on a different Old Testament figure as a way of leading us up to the Paschal mystery of Good Friday and Easter. Septuagesima Sunday recalls Adam, Sexagesima Sunday Noah, and Quinquagesima Sunday Abraham. (This pattern is continued into Lent: the Second Sunday of Lent recalls Jacob, the Third Sunday Joseph, and the Fourth Sunday Moses.) The purpose of this instruction is to help the faithful see the reasons for the scandal of the Cross, the culmination of Lent. The Matin readings on Adam give us the doctrine of original sin, the passages

on the Flood highlight the wickedness of mankind, and the sacrifices of Abraham and Melchisedech foreshadow the sacrifice of Christ on the Cross.

The Sundays of Septuagesima were also shaped by a series of calamities besieging the city of Rome in the sixth century. The theme of misery and desolation in the Introit of Septuagesima Sunday, for instance, comes from these troubled times. Septuagesima was a well-established liturgical season in the Western rite by 541 A.D.

### ***Laying to Rest the Alleluia***

Perhaps the most peculiar mark of Septuagesima's liturgies is the suppression of the word "Alleluia." Why deprive ourselves of this glorious word, especially when it is so powerful? St. Paul of the Cross, for instance, advised members of his order to cry out "Alleluia" when assaulted by the devil, for "*the devil is afraid of the Alleluia; it is a word that comes from Paradise.*"

St. Paul's reasoning about Paradise gives us a clue into the answer we seek. "Alleluia," which in Hebrew means "Praise be to the Lord," is traditionally known as the "song of the Lord." It is what St. John heard in Heaven during his vision of the Apocalypse. It is the joyous cry of those who are truly home.

But Septuagesima and Lent are periods not of homecoming but of pilgrimage and exile. Indeed, just as the forty days of Lent commemorate the forty years of the Hebrews wandering in the wilderness and the forty days of Jesus fasting in the desert, Septuagesima recalls the roughly seventy years of the Babylonian Exile (605-538 BC), that period, second in importance only to the Exodus out of Egypt, when the people of Judah were deported to Babylon (see Jeremiah 25,9-12; 29,10). As the haunting Psalm 136(137) attests, God's Chosen People did not deem it fit to sing their joyous songs on foreign soil: "*Upon the rivers of Babylon, there we sat and wept, when we remembered Sion. On the willows in the midst thereof we hung up our harps. For there, they that led us into captivity required of us the words of songs. And they that carried us away, said: 'Sing ye to us a hymn of the songs of Sion.' How shall we sing the song of the Lord in a strange land? If I forget thee, O Jerusalem, let my right hand be forgotten. Let my tongue cleave to my jaws, if I do not remember thee*" (verses 1-6).

The Jews would not sing their native song of joy during their exile, and neither do Christians during theirs. As Bishop William Durandus (1237-1296) puts it: "*We part from the Alleluia as from a beloved friend, whom we embrace many times and kiss on mouth, head, and hand, before we leave him.*" The jubilant "Alleluia" is thus laid to rest for seventy days in the traditional rite until it rises again in the Easter Vigil, and in so doing we recapitulate for our own spiritual benefit a cardinal moment in sacred history.

And when I say “laid to rest,” I mean that literally. Perhaps the most charming para-liturgical custom to come from Septuagesima is the *depositio*, or setting aside (or: burial), of the Alleluia. On the Saturday afternoon before Septuagesima Sunday, medieval communities would stage an elaborate procession with a plaque or banner, often in the shape of a coffin, bearing the word “Alleluia.” The coffin would then be solemnly buried somewhere on church grounds. In parts of France, a straw man inscribed with the word “Alleluia” in gold letters was burned in effigy in the churchyard!

A standard part of these sacred send-offs was the singing of a song entitled *Alleluia, Dulce Carmen*, which artfully links the suppression of the Alleluia with the Babylonian Exile and Psalm 136. Here is J.M. Neale’s translation of the tenth-century hymn:

Alleluia! song of gladness,  
Voice of joy that cannot die;  
Alleluia is the anthem  
Ever dear to choirs on high;  
In the house of God abiding  
Thus they sing eternally.

Alleluia thou resoundest,  
True Jerusalem and free;  
Alleluia joyful mother,  
All thy children sing with thee;  
But by Babylon’s sad waters  
Mourning exiles now are we.

Alleluia cannot always  
Be our song while here below;  
Alleluia our transgressions  
Make us for a while forego;  
For the solemn time is coming  
When our tears for sin must flow.

Therefore in our hymns we pray Thee,  
Grant us blessed Trinity,  
At the last to keep Thine Easter  
In our home beyond the sky;  
There to Thee for ever singing  
Alleluia joyfully.

As the lyrics make clear, Septuagesima can teach us many valuable lessons: that Lent should not be begun abruptly or thoughtlessly but preceded by a period of adjustment; that uttering sacred words is a privilege which should not be taken for granted; that sin puts us in exile from our True Home; and that the Old Testament, with its many significant events, is perpetually relevant to the lives of Christians. Lastly, suppressing the Alleluia seventy days before Easter, and singling this fact out in a special way, heightens our joy when Alleluia triumphantly returns to our lips with the Risen Lord on Easter Sunday.

### *Sexagesima and Quinquagesima*

The second Sunday of Septuagesima-tide, Sexagesima, continues to sound the exilic note of Babylon, but with a touch of joy. Both the Collect and the Epistle commemorate the apostolate of St. Paul, the feast of whose

conversion on January 25 occurs around this time. Quinquagesima, on the other hand, is preoccupied with the impending Great Fast of Lent. Its Epistle from 1 Corinthians 13 on charity is the perfect preface to a season of mortification and almsgiving, for without charity, these noble acts profit us nothing (1 Cor 13,3). Indeed, all of Septuagesima-tide is an ideal primer on how to approach the purgative period of Lent in the right spirit.

### ***Ciao to Chow***

Septuagesima season also marks the time when the faithful begin to fast voluntarily, in anticipation of the mandatory fast of Lent. As early as 465 A.D., St. Maximus, Bishop of Turin, was recommending a fast of devotion before Lent. In the Byzantine rite, the faithful would begin abstaining from meat on the penultimate Sunday before Lent and from dairy products on the Sunday immediately before Lent: hence the Byzantine name for Sexagesima is “Meatfare” Sunday and their name for Quinquagesima “Cheesefare” Sunday. Similarly, in Russia and other Slavic countries the week before Lent is called “Butter Week”; in Poland it is called “Fat Days.”

In the Roman rite, the Sunday to begin abstaining from meat was Quinquagesima, and so it also came to be known as *Dominica Carnevala*, *carnevala* coming from the Latin for “removal” (*levare*) of “meat” (*caro/carnis*). It is from this name that our word “carnival” originates.

And Septuagesima-tide is not just behind the word: it is also behind the activity. Prior to the age of refrigeration, Christians needed to get rid of all the foods they would not be allowed to consume during Lent, which centuries ago was quite a long list; as we mentioned above, not only flesh meat but all dairy products were forbidden. And the closer Lent approached, the more urgently they needed to be consumed. Ironically, the pre-Lenten excesses and glittering pageantry we associate with Mardi Gras in New Orleans or the *carnevals* in Brazil and Venice, Italy can be traced to the voluntary increase of pious asceticism.

### ***Septuagesima Foods***

Pre-Lenten observances also led to the invention or promotion of several food dishes. There are many culinary candidates worthy of mention. Where would Cajun cooking be without Mardi Gras, or “Fat Tuesday”? Northern England traditionally observes Collop Monday two days before Ash Wednesday (a collop is made of sliced meat and eggs fried in butter), while the rest of the country enjoys Shrove Tuesday pancakes the day before Ash Wednesday. In the U.S. before Vatican II, pancake breakfasts sponsored by

American parishes on Quinquagesima Sunday were not uncommon. Thanks to its Polish immigrants, America is also able to hear its arteries harden each year with *paczki*, a rich pastry similar to a jelly donut that is traditionally eaten during Septuagesimatide.

Regardless of their country of origin, all of these foods are the product of the same basic logic, to make good use of all perishable comestibles in one's home before the beginning of Lent.

### ***Shrovetide***

Not all Christian customs of Septuagesima, however, revel in merriment and feasting. While the Latin countries had Carnival, the countries of northern Europe had Shrovetide. The verb "to shrive" is old English for a priest's hearing confession; hence, Shrovetide was a time for the faithful to go to confession and be "shriven" in preparation for Lent. While this period originally encompassed the entire week preceding Lent, it is more common to hear reference to Shrove Sunday, Monday, and Tuesday, the three days prior to Ash Wednesday. Needless to say, this remains an excellent way to prepare for Lent.

Of course, not even the sternest of northern believers could resist every impulse to blow off a little steam. While "to shrive" might refer to sacramental absolution, the Oxford English Dictionary defines "to shrove" as "to keep Shrove-tide; to make merry." Large sporting events were popular during Shrovetide (according to legend, the world's first soccer match took place on a Shrove Tuesday between the Britons and the Romans), and in Ireland getting married during Shrovetide was considered good luck, perhaps because weddings during Lent were forbidden.

As for the southern countries, not everyone was pleased with the rising tide of carnival celebrations that began in the fourteenth century. In 1747 Pope Benedict XIV issued the aptly named *Super Bacchanalibus* in which a plenary indulgence was granted to those who participated in the "Forty Hours of Carnival." This devotion, which was held in those areas prone to indulgence of a different kind, consisted of Exposition and Benediction on Shrove Monday and Tuesday. The purpose of the devotion was to draw the faithful away from "dangerous occasions of sin" and to atone for excesses committed.

### ***Modern Times***

Septuagesima was dropped from the calendar in 1970 (*note: it was dropped both in the modern Roman rite and in the Anglican Common Worship - however,*

both the old Roman rite and the Book of Common Prayer kept it), replaced by “Ordinary Time.” According to Fr. Pierre Jounel, a professor of liturgy at the Catholic Institute of Paris and one of the architects of the new calendar, it was excised because “Nobody knew what it meant or where it came from.”

That’s funny: the literal meaning of *septuagesima* is as close as the nearest Latin dictionary, and most Christians, because of the greater cultural impact of Septuagesima we have just described, had a passable idea of what the season meant. The Von Trapp family describes Septuagesima as a “most necessary time for the individual as well as for families and communities”: their chapter on the season the meaning of which they weren’t supposed to know is entitled, “A Time to Dance.”

Millions of Eastern Orthodox and Eastern Catholic believers also understand it, as they have a similar season based on the same principles. Some Anglicans and Lutherans continue to keep Septuagesima as well. More importantly, with the loss of Septuagesima we have no liturgical preparation for the holy season of Lent, no transition between the glow of Epiphany and the gloom of Ash Wednesday. In the meantime, the cultural observances of Mardi Gras and so forth continue unabated, loosed from their religious moorings.

### ***Conclusion***

In his magnificent *Confessions*, St. Augustine allegorically interprets the creation of the dry land in Genesis 1 as the gathering of the redeemed souls that thirst for God and are plucked from the bitter sea of the infidels. The “land” that Augustine espied was a Church zealous for the nourishment of grace so “that they might bring forth works of mercy unto You, distributing their earthly goods to the poor to acquire heavenly.” How fitting, then, that the *terra firma* that is the Church should not only use Lent as a preparation for Easter, but that she should prepare herself for Lent as well, the season in which she increases her corporal works of mercy - see the Collect for the First Sunday of Lent: “O God, who by the yearly Lenten observance dost purify Thy Church, grant to Thy household that what they strive to obtain from Thee by abstinence, they may achieve by good works.”

Because of the 1970 calendar, Septuagesima is a time that the Land has lamentably forgotten, but let those who keep to the calendar of our ancestors wisely use this season to remember and attune ourselves to the awesome trial that is Lent.

And maybe to shrove it up a bit while we still can.

# One Pan Winter Warmer

*Jeanne James writes:*

Serves 4

Cooking time: 55 mins

Put 4 tbsp of olive oil in a large frying pan. Add 1 chopped onion, 2 large diced carrots, 1 tbsp of fresh finely chopped rosemary and 1 tsp of salt. Cook on high heat for 10 mins. Push veg to one side of the pan.

Place 8 chicken thighs skin side down into the pan and fry for 8 minutes. Turn them over and fry for a further 2 minutes.

Cover with half a bottle of white wine. Bring to the boil, add a chicken stock cube and 1/2 tsp of pepper and stir. Reduce to a medium heat and cook for a further 10 mins. (I usually add any veg lurking in the fridge e.g. a chopped up pepper, a handful of chopped green beans, 1 stick of celery (sliced) and some chopped fennel. Anything you like really).

Turn the chicken again and cook for a further 10 mins. Turn the chicken for the last time and cook for a final 15 mins.

Serve the chicken with the veg on top. I usually have some warm bread with this rather than potatoes.



## Merit (2)

In last month's article we explored the role and importance of charity in our Christian, spiritual life. We saw how the Bible (and the Church) teaches us that only deeds performed with charity (or love) will produce their fruit: merit. Even the greatest, even the most heroic acts avail nothing if there is no charity in us.

We also saw how the virtue of charity - infused into our souls in the moment of Holy Baptism - can be extinguished, killed by repeated, grave sins but can be restored again through repentance and penitence or more securely in the Sacrament of Reconciliation, or Confession.

Let us now turn our attention to the concept of *merit* and let us explore why it is so important in our Christian life.

### *What is merit?*

The first question, of course, is: what is merit? How does it “work”?

Merit is a claim to a reward. No creature by its own power can generate a claim on God. A claim can take place only if God makes a covenant or promise, saying: “If you do this, I will do that” (for example: Exodus 19,5; Exodus 20,12).

These promises are made to those who belong to the covenant offered by God. There were various covenants during the history (made to Adam, Abraham, Noah, Moses), the last and perfect covenant being the New Covenant in Jesus Christ (the Church) and we enter into it through Holy Baptism.

The first two, very important things to remember then, are:

1) It is only God who can initiate our salvation and it is he who freely, without our merits calls us to the sacred fount of Baptism, regenerating us by water and the Holy Spirit.

2) When we talk about merit we do not mean that *we* do something and so God is “constrained” to reward us. In this sense, we cannot buy our way to heaven and we have no claims with God whatsoever. It is the other way around: God in his generosity and love calls us to work with him on our salvation (Philippians 2,12) and promises to “crown” our efforts, to give us an imperishable prize (1 Corinthians 9,24-25). It is **only** because of this promise that we have a proper claim with God. In this sense, and in this sense only, we not only *can* but we *must* “buy our way” to heaven, so to say.

This teaching of the Church is evident for example from the Beatitudes (Matthew 5,1-12) or even more from Jesus' words about the Last Judgement (Matthew 25,31-46) or from verses like Matthew 10,40-42.



It is indeed a doctrine of the Church that by their good works a person in the state of grace really acquires a claim to supernatural reward from God. This is a beautiful and moving doctrine if we consider it carefully. What we are saying is that God, in his free will, has decided to reward with everlasting happiness the good works which we do with the help of his grace. He is the one who sends his grace to “convince us” to do something good. He is the one who sends even more grace to help us to accomplish the good thing he inspired us to. And yet, we are the ones who can claim the reward at the end... “*In crowning their merits you crown your own gifts*” - as St. Augustine put it.

### ***What are the conditions of merit?***

Certain conditions must be present to make supernatural merit (merit that is which “buys our way” to heaven) possible.

a) While it goes without saying, it is good to remind ourselves that obviously the deed we do must be *morally good*, in accordance with God’s law. Its object, its intent, and its circumstances must be good. No one can do a good thing that God will reward with heaven simply by accident. If somehow some money falls out of my pocket into the hat of a person begging on the street - there is no merit because I did not do anything, it simply happened.

b) It must be *done freely*, without any external coercion or internal necessity. Leaving the closest parking space free for my neighbour *only* because I cannot put up anymore with his/her complaints is not meritorious. Going to church simply because I have to otherwise I will not be able to get married there, is not meritorious.

c) It must be *supernatural*, that is performed in the state of grace and done out of supernatural motive. This takes us back to what was said about charity. God is love. God and sin cannot be reconciled. So it is either God or sin that dwells in our hearts. When we commit a grave sin, we extinguish grace and God’s dwelling in us. Whatever good we do in this state, even with the best intention, is not meritorious. We must repent (and Confess) before we can “gain” heaven again with our good deeds.

As for the supernatural motive: only those good deeds can merit heaven which are done out of love for God, either directly or indirectly. For example, feeding the poor only because that is the right, the human thing to do is not yet meritorious in itself. If it is done out of love for God, or to obey the commandment to love our neighbour, or with the intention of “gaining” heaven, etc. than it becomes a meritorious act.

d) Finally, we must be living on earth to merit. It seems obvious again - what it really means is that for those who died, the time and possibility of merit is ended. All good work must be done before we die.

### ***The more the better***

Working out our own “salvation with fear and trembling” (Phil 2,12) is a never-ending process. We can never stop and say: ‘That’s it, I’ve done enough.’ And we cannot do so for three reasons:

1) First because we cannot know if it is true. Have we done all the good we are called to do? Have we made up for all our sins? Can we ever be sure of our salvation? Have we reached that perfection and holiness God is calling us to? It would take a lot of courage and pride to say ‘yes’ to any of these questions.

2) The object of supernatural merit (that is: what we gain) is an increase of grace, eternal life, and an increase of heavenly glory. The famous Chinese tale comes to one’s mind where all those who died queue in front of God with the wooden bowl they carved during their earthly lifetime. Each had been given the same, huge chunk of wood and every good deed carved into it deeper and deeper, forming a proper bowl. They all queue to receive the amazing, fabulous, heavenly rice (it’s a Chinese tale after all) which God measures out with his enormous (infinite, one may say) ladle. The same huge portion to one and all - yet not all can accept the same amount. Those who carved their bowl deeper will have more of the divine delicacy.

This can be applied to the Christian notion of heaven. Both the primary cause and the object of bliss of the redeemed is God himself who “gives himself” equally to all in heaven. Yet, those who prepared themselves more deeply for his presence, will be able to enjoy it more intensively.

3) Even temporal goods like health and friendship can be merited in accordance with God’s wisdom. These graces and goods are also the object of Christian prayer. If our prayer for these temporal goods - in accordance with God’s will - are sustained by good works, they become more pleasing to God.

### ***Merit obtained for others***

Libraries have been filled with books written on the topic of merit so it is impossible to write about all of its aspects. However, there is one more fundamental thing to know about merit - we can merit graces (or temporal goods) for others, and others can do the same for us. But this takes us to the topic of redemptive suffering, indulgences, communion of saints, and the treasury of merit - all of which we will explore in next month’s article.

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

**Anniversaries of death**

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

## Calendar for February 2022

TUE	1 <sup>st</sup>	St. Ignatius of Antioch, Bishop	9am
WED	2 <sup>nd</sup>	<b>CANDLEMAS</b>	10am, 6pm
THU	3 <sup>rd</sup>	<i>St. Blaise Bishop &amp; Martyr</i>	6pm
FRI	4 <sup>th</sup>	St. Andrea Corsini, Bishop	12noon
SAT	5 <sup>th</sup>	St. Agatha Virgin & Martyr	9.30am
SUN	6 <sup>th</sup>	<b>5<sup>TH</sup> SUNDAY AFTER EPIPHANY</b>	10am, 4pm
MON	7 <sup>th</sup>	St. Romuald Abbot	9am
TUE	8 <sup>th</sup>	St. John of Matha	9am
WED	9 <sup>th</sup>	St. Cyril of Alexandria, Bishop	10am
THU	10 <sup>th</sup>	St. Scholastica Virgin	6pm
FRI	11 <sup>th</sup>	<b>Apparition of Our Lady at Lourdes</b>	12noon
SAT	12 <sup>th</sup>	The Seven Holy Founders of the Servites	9.30am
SUN	13 <sup>th</sup>	<b>SEPTUAGESIMA SUNDAY</b>	10am, 4pm
MON	14 <sup>th</sup>	<i>St. Valentine Martyr</i>	9am
TUE	15 <sup>th</sup>	<i>Sts. Faustinus &amp; Jovita, Martyrs</i>	9am
WED	16 <sup>th</sup>	<b>Monthly Requiem</b>	10am
THU	17 <sup>th</sup>	<i>Feria</i>	6pm
FRI	18 <sup>th</sup>	<i>St. Simeon Bishop &amp; Martyr</i>	12noon
SAT	19 <sup>th</sup>	<i>Of Our Lady</i>	9.30am
SUN	20 <sup>th</sup>	<b>SEXAGESIMA SUNDAY</b>	10am, 4pm
MON	21 <sup>st</sup>	<i>Feria</i>	9am
TUE	22 <sup>nd</sup>	St. Peter's Chair at Antioch	9am
WED	23 <sup>rd</sup>	St. Peter Damian Bishop	10am
THU	24 <sup>th</sup>	ST. MATTHIAS APOSTLE	6pm
FRI	25 <sup>th</sup>	<b>Monthly Anointing Mass</b>	12noon
SAT	26 <sup>th</sup>	<i>Of Our Lady</i>	9.30am
SUN	27 <sup>th</sup>	<b>QUINQUAGESIMA SUNDAY</b>	10am, 4pm
MON	28 <sup>th</sup>	<i>Feria</i>	9am

## Daily Intentions



*Anniversaries of death*

*We pray for...*

- 1<sup>st</sup> Persecuted Christians - *Jack Freegard*
- 2<sup>nd</sup> Our Parish - *May Biles, Neil Pollock pr, Edward Webber, Vera Heller*
- 3<sup>rd</sup> Priests & Vocations - *Dot Thorne*
- 4<sup>th</sup> Dying
- 5<sup>th</sup> Shrine of O.L. of Walsingham - *Amelia Woods*
  
- 6<sup>th</sup> Our Parish
- 7<sup>th</sup> Inner peace
- 8<sup>th</sup> Addicts, alcoholics, gamblers - *Mike Hetherington*
- 9<sup>th</sup> Those who have abandoned the Church - *Leonard Paddock, Pam Groves*
- 10<sup>th</sup> Peace and reconciliation in our Families
- 11<sup>th</sup> Our Choir and organists - *Hilda Dix*
- 12<sup>th</sup> Cell of O.L.W. - *Elizabeth Woolveridge*
  
- 13<sup>th</sup> Our Parish - *Den Phillips*
- 14<sup>th</sup> Couples - *Thomas Bibby, Win Marshall, Charlie Cooper*
- 15<sup>th</sup> An increase of our missionary spirit
- 16<sup>th</sup> Departed - *Joan Hodge, Bob de Quehen, Caroline Stewart*
- 17<sup>th</sup> Greater devotion to the Holy Eucharist - *Ivy Curtis, Steve Warner*
- 18<sup>th</sup> Peace - may conflicts and wars cease
- 19<sup>th</sup> Chapter of St. Aldhelm (Servers)
  
- 20<sup>th</sup> Our Parish - *Leslie Quehen pr*
- 21<sup>st</sup> Beechcroft
- 22<sup>nd</sup> Unity of the Church - *Stephen Elliott, William Gentle, Gordon Vincent pr*
- 23<sup>rd</sup> Grace of true conversion - *Sandra Ryder*
- 24<sup>th</sup> The Bishop-elect Fr. Stephen Lake - *Mary Adlam*
- 25<sup>th</sup> Sick
- 26<sup>th</sup> Our PCC - *Francis Miles*
  
- 27<sup>th</sup> Our Parish - *Bill Frecker, Jack Williams*
- 28<sup>th</sup> Our Benefactors (living & departed) - *Toni Adams*

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

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

### MORNING PRAYER

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

R. And she conceived by the Holy Ghost.

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

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

V. Behold the handmaid of the Lord.

R. Be it unto me according to thy word.

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

V. And the Word was made flesh.

R. And dwelt amongst us.

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

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

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

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

V. O Lord, open my lips.

R. And my mouth shall proclaim your praise.

V. O God, make speed to save me.

R. O Lord, make haste to help me.

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

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

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

R. Let us come before the presence of the Lord and make a joyful noise unto him with Psalms.

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. Let us make a joyful noise unto him with Psalms.

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. Let us come before the presence of the Lord and make a joyful noise unto him with Psalms.

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. Let us make a joyful noise unto him with Psalms.

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. Let us come before the presence of the Lord and make a joyful noise unto him with Psalms.

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. Let us come before the presence of the Lord and make a joyful noise unto him with Psalms.

## HYMN

Hail day! whereon the One in Three  
First formed the earth by sure decree,  
The day its Maker rose again,  
And vanquished death, and burst our chain.

Away with sleep and slothful ease  
We raise our hearts and bend our knees,  
And early seek the Lord of all,  
Obedient to the Prophet's call.

O Father of unclouded light!  
Keep us this day as in thy sight,  
In word and deed that we may be  
From ev'ry touch of evil free.

That this our body's mortal frame  
May know no sin, and fear no shame,  
Nor fire hereafter be the end  
Of passions which our bosom rend.

Redeemer of the world, we pray  
That thou wouldst wash our sins away,  
And give us, of thy boundless grace,  
The blessings of the heavenly place.

Most Holy Father, hear our cry,  
Through Jesus Christ our Lord most High  
Who, with the Holy Ghost and thee  
Shall live and reign eternally. Amen.

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

1	Psalms 8	Genesis 18,16-end Matthew 27,27-44	15	48, 52	Genesis 24,29-end 1 Timothy 6,11-end
2	48, 146	Exodus 13,1-16 Romans 12,1-5	16	119 v. 57-80	Genesis 25,7-end 2 Timothy 1
3	14, 15	Genesis 21,1-21 Matthew 27,45-end	17	56, 57, 63	Genesis 27 2 Timothy 2,1-13
4	17, 19	Genesis 22,1-19 Matthew 28,1-15	18	51, 54	Genesis 28 2 Timothy 2,14-end
5	20, 21, 23	Genesis 23 Matthew 28,16-end	19	68	Genesis 29 2 Timothy 3
6	3, 4	Jeremiah 26,1-16 Acts 3,1-10	20	104 v. 1-26	Job 28,1-11 Acts 14,8-17
7	27, 30	Leviticus 19 1 Timothy 1	21	71	Genesis 30,1-24 2 Timothy 4,1-8
8	32, 36	Leviticus 23,1-22 1 Timothy 2	22	73	Genesis 31,1-24 2 Timothy 4,9-end
9	34	Leviticus 23,23-end 1 Timothy 3	23	77	Genesis 31,25-end Titus 1
10	37	Leviticus 24,1-9 1 Timothy 4	24	16, 147	1 Samuel 2,27-35 Acts 2,37-end
11	31	Leviticus 25,1-24 1 Timothy 5,1-16	25	55	Genesis 33,1-17 Titus 2
12	41, 42, 43	Numbers 6,1-5 & 6,21-end 1 Timothy 5,17-end	26	76, 79	Genesis 35 Titus 3
13	7	Jeremiah 30,1-22 Acts 6	27	2	Exodus 33,17-end 1 John 3,1-3
14	44	Genesis 24,1-28 1 Timothy 6,1-10	28	82	Genesis 37,1-11 Philemon

*Each reading ends with these words:*

**V.** This is the word of the Lord.  
**R.** Thanks be to God.



## BENEDICTUS

*Ant:* Behold, we go up to Jerusalem, and all things that are written by the Prophets concerning the Son of man shall be accomplished; for He shall be delivered unto the Gentiles, and shall be mocked and spitted on; and they shall scourge Him, and put Him to death, and the third day He shall rise again.

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

*Ant:* Behold, we go up to Jerusalem, and all things that are written by the Prophets concerning the Son of man shall be accomplished; for He shall be delivered unto the Gentiles, and shall be mocked and spitted on; and they shall scourge Him, and put Him to death, and the third day He shall rise again.

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

O Lord, we beseech You, mercifully hear our prayers; loose us from the chains of our sins and keep us from all adversity. Through Christ our Lord. **R.** Amen.

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

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

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

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

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

*Morning Prayer ends with the final Antiphon of Our Lady:*

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.

### HYMN

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;

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.

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.

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.

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

1	Psalm 118	1 Samuel 1,19-end Hebrews 4,11-end	4	22	Hosea 13 1 Corinthians 16,1-9
2	122, 132	Haggai 2,1-9 John 2,18-22	5	24, 25	Hosea 14 1 Corinthians 16,10-end
3	18	Hosea 12 1 Corinthians 14,20-end	6	1	Hosea 1 Colossians 3,1-22

7	26, 28, 29	1 Chronicles 28,1-10 John 15,1-11	18	38	2 Chronicles 6,22-end John 18,12-27
8	33	1 Chronicles 28,11-end John 15,12-17	19	65, 66	2 Chronicles 7 John 18,28-end
9	119 v. 33-56	1 Chronicles 29,1-9 John 15,18-end	20	147	Genesis 5,32 - 6,15 Matthew 6,25-end
10	39, 40	1 Chronicles 29,10-20 John 16,1-15	21	72, 75	2 Chronicles 9,1-12 John 19,1-16
11	35	1 Chronicles 29,21-end John 16,16-22	22	74	2 Chronicles 10 John 19,17-30
12	45, 46	2 Chronicles 1,1-13 John 16,23-end	23	119 v. 81-104	2 Chronicles 12 John 19,31-end
13	5, 6	Genesis 1,1-26 Galatians 4,8-20	24	80	1 Samuel 16,1-13 Matthew 7,15-27
14	47, 49	2 Chronicles 2,1-16 John 17,1-5	25	69	2 Chronicles 14 John 20,1-18
15	50	2 Chronicles 3 John 17,6-19	26	81, 84	2 Chronicles 15,1-15 John 20,19-end
16	59, 60, 67	2 Chronicles 5 John 17,20-end	27	89 v. 1-18	Genesis 12,1-19 John 12,27-36
17	61, 62, 64	2 Chronicles 6,1-21 John 18,1-11	28	85, 86	Jeremiah 1 John 3,1-21

*Each reading ends with these words:*

**V.** This is the word of the Lord.

**R.** Thanks be to God.

### MAGNIFICAT

*Ant:* Be valiant in battle, fight the ancient serpent and accept the eternal kingdom.

My soul proclaims the greatness of the Lord,+  
my spirit rejoices in God my Saviour;\*  
he has looked with favour on his lowly servant.

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

*Ant:* Be valiant in battle, fight the ancient serpent and accept the eternal kingdom.

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

O Lord, we beseech You, mercifully hear our prayers; loose us from the chains of our sins and keep us from all adversity. Through Christ our Lord. **R.** Amen.

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

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

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

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

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

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

*Some of you have asked for prayers for the departed:*

I commend you, my dear [name] to almighty God, and entrust you to your Creator. May you rest in the arms of the Lord who formed you from the dust of the earth. May holy Mary, the angels, and all the saints welcome you now that you have gone forth from this life. May Christ who was crucified for you, bring you freedom and peace. May Christ who died for you admit you into his garden of paradise. May Christ, the true Shepherd, embrace you as one of his flock. May he forgive all your sins and set you among those he has chosen. May you see your Redeemer face to face and enjoy the vision of God, forever. Amen.

O God, Whose property is always to have mercy and to spare, we humbly beseech Thee for the soul of Thy servant [name], which Thou hast this day commanded to depart out of this world, that Thou wouldst not deliver it into the hands of the enemy, nor forget it unto the end, but wouldst command it to be received by the Holy Angels, and conducted to Paradise, its true home; that as in Thee it hath hoped and believed, it may not suffer the pains of hell, but may take possession of eternal joys. Through Christ our Lord. Amen.

In your hands, O Lord, we humbly entrust our brothers and sisters. In this life you embraced them with your tender love; deliver them now from every evil and bid them eternal rest. Welcome them into paradise, where there will be no sorrow, no weeping or pain, but fullness of peace and joy where you live and reign with God the Father in the unity of the Holy Spirit forever and ever. Amen.

May the angels lead you into paradise; may the martyrs receive you at your arrival and lead you to the holy city Jerusalem. May choirs of angels receive you and with Lazarus, once a poor man, may you have eternal rest.

Saints of God, come to his/her aid! Come to meet him/her, Angels of the Lord! Receive his/her soul and present him/her to God the Most High. May Christ, who called you, take you to Himself; may Angels lead you to Abraham's side.

## From the Book of Common Prayer

**Sexagesimal Sunday:** *O LORD God, who seest that we put not our trust in any thing that we do: Mercifully grant that by thy power we may be defended against all adversity; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.*

This Collect is not a straight translation of the old Latin Collect. It was edited to remove a reference to the Apostle Paul. The petition originally asked, “*Mercifully grant that by the protection of the teacher of the Gentiles we may be fortified against all adversities*”. The Reformers of the 16<sup>th</sup> century did not allow any prayer to the saints thus they changed “*by the protection of the teacher of the Gentiles*” to “*by thy power*”. Yet they retained the Epistle, 2 Corinthians 11,19-31, which contains St Paul’s descriptions of the variety of sufferings he had endured for the Gospel. In this physical and mental pain he could, if he wished, have boasted for the pain was much more than any other apostle or evangelist had experienced, and it was for the sake of Christ. Yet he did not believe that this pain and tribulation was the basis for his acceptance with God. It was part of his willing service of Christ Jesus.

It is a very difficult thing, even for saints, not to put any trust in the things that they do. For most of us it is a natural thing and certainly a temptation to think that there is virtue before God and man in the really good things that we think we do. Especially is this so if what we do brings us persecution or suffering for the sake of the Gospel.

God sees all and everything! To him all hearts are open and all desires known and from him no secrets are hid. He is watchful and persuades us by many means (the example of Paul, the instruction in Scripture and so on) to trust only in him for he alone is the source of all life, power, knowledge and wisdom.

Therefore, we pray that we shall be defended from all adversity be it in the form of testings or temptations, pain or suffering, trial or tribulation, the desires of the flesh or the wiles of the devil. “When I am weak then I am strong” said the Apostle Paul (2 Cor 12,10). Only as we know our own weakness and rest in God’s strength are we making progress towards Christian maturity. In order rightly to approach Lent and benefit from its disciplines, we surely need to learn this lesson.

The Gospel for this week is the Parable of the Sower and the Seed. And the purpose of this is to place before Christians the goal of being so receptive to the word of God in all situations, and at all times, that they, in an honest and good heart, bring forth fruit with patience.

The Rev’d Dr Peter Toon (+2009)

## Feast of the month: Apparition of Our Blessed Lady at Lourdes

11<sup>th</sup> February

*“My bow shall appear in the clouds, and I will remember My covenant with you”* (see Genesis 9,13). The lessons at Matins on February 11<sup>th</sup>, 1858 (Thursday in Sexagesima week) recalled these words, and the world soon learned that on this very day Mary had appeared, more fair than the sign of hope which typified her at the time of the deluge.

### *The original events*

Lourdes in 1858 was an inconspicuous little French town on the Gave de Pau River at the foot of the Pyrenees, with around 4,000 inhabitants. One of them was a former miller named François Soubirous, who had fallen on hard times. He and his wife Louise had six children. The eldest was their daughter Marie-Bernarde, known as Bernadette. Desperately poor, the family lived squashed into one small room. Bernadette spent part of her childhood brought up by an aunt, had little in the way of schooling and was unable to read or write.

After the first apparition, Bernadette went back to the grotto seventeen more times and saw the Lady, though no one else ever did. Her story spread round the town like wildfire. The Lady was generally assumed to be the Virgin Mary and more and more townspeople began to go to the grotto with Bernadette, but there was considerable scepticism, from the parish priest among others.

On February 25<sup>th</sup> the Lady told Bernadette to drink the water of a spring that flowed under her rock. As there seemed to be no spring, Bernadette dug in the ground. Nothing happened, but a day or so afterwards the water started to flow. Bernadette drank it and washed in it and others did the same and the water acquired a reputation for healing properties.

The spring is still flowing at the rate of 32,000 gallons a day, but analysis of the water has found nothing remarkable about it. Early on, some entrepreneurial sorts had hoped to find particular properties in the water which could turn Lourdes into a popular spa destination. But the water was found to be only pure and potable. Faith is the “secret” ingredient. As Bernadette said, *“One must have faith and pray; the water will have no virtue without faith.”*



## ***St. Bernadette never herself used the water to be healed***

Never in good health, St. Bernadette suffered greatly, and with silent good nature, in the final years of her life. She held fast to Our Lady's promise that she wasn't promised "happiness in this world, but in the next."

When she was 22, she joined the Sisters of Charity of Nevers. She was content to be apart from public life, regarding herself as a tool, such as a broom, which had served its purpose and then "the broom placed behind the door once it has been used." The teacher who had been harsh to her in her student years was to be her novice mistress and as harsh to the young sister as she had been to the student. It was not until this nun realised the sanctity with which Bernadette was bearing her final affliction of tuberculosis of the bone that she realised what a truly holy young woman she had been privileged to teach and guide. Despite her agony, Bernadette declined the opportunity to revisit Lourdes in search for a miraculous cure.

### ***The Lady***

On the feast of the Annunciation of the Virgin Mary on March 25<sup>th</sup>, the Lady at last proclaimed her identity. Speaking to Bernadette in the local Lourdes patois, she said "*I am the Immaculate Conception*". The doctrine of the Immaculate Conception had been proclaimed only a few years before, in 1854. Bernadette saw her last apparition on July 16<sup>th</sup>, the feast of Our Lady of Mount Carmel.

This is how Bernadette described the Lady she saw in her vision: "*She has the appearance of a young girl of sixteen or seventeen. She is dressed in a white robe, girdled at the waist with a blue ribbon which flows down all around it. A yoke closes it in graceful pleats at the base of the neck. The sleeves are long and tight-fitting. She wears upon her head a veil which is also white. This veil gives just a glimpse of her hair and then falls down at the back below her waist. Her feet are bare but covered by the last folds of her robe except at the point where a yellow rose shines upon each of them. She holds on her right arm a rosary of white beads with a chain of gold shinning like the two roses on her feet.*"

### ***Scepticism and faith***

Bernadette was rigorously cross-examined by the local police, but stuck to her story. The authorities were sceptical and in 1858 the town mayor had the grotto and the spring barricaded off, allegedly on grounds of hygiene. In 1862, however, after a thorough enquiry by a Church commission, the local bishop decided that the visions were genuine and approved the cult of Our Lady of Lourdes. A church was started the same year. Bernadette spent much

of the rest of her life in the convent of the Sisters of Charity at Lourdes, where she died in 1879 at the age of thirty-five. She was beatified in 1925 and canonised in 1933.

### ***Numbers***

Pilgrims began flocking to Lourdes from all over France and 100,000 people attended the consecration of the church in 1876. The town was to become one of the Christian world's most celebrated pilgrimage centres and the numbers increased to such a degree that a second church was begun in 1883. The centenary year of 1958 brought six million pilgrims to Lourdes and the usual annual figure is said to be five million. Many of them are sick and hoping to be healed. The first cure was reported in 1858 and in 1861 a commission of enquiry pronounced fifteen of a hundred reported cures to be miraculous.

### ***There is independent medical evaluation***

Pope Saint Pius X established the Lourdes Medical Bureau to investigate cases of medical miracles. This Medical Bureau is a medical institution and not under Church supervision. Over 7,000 people have asked to have their cases declared as miraculous cures, yet fewer than 70 been signed off on by both the Church and the Lourdes Medical Bureau as being cures with no scientific explanation. While this does not excuse all other accounts as not miraculous by other standards, it does mean that only seventy cases are scientifically inexplicable.

Because this system for rigorous investigation was established early and openly, verified miracles from Lourdes are considered to be the most reliable and least controversial.

### ***Transforming Love***

If you travel to Lourdes anytime between March and November and stand at the top of the Basilica in the evening, you are likely to see hundreds of pilgrims in procession, praying to Our Lady, united together in singing to her with a resounding 'Ave'. It is an awe-inspiring image to see; no words can describe the impression Lourdes has on its visitors.

To truly experience Lourdes is to experience the love of Christ. Seeing the volunteers serve the disabled is to see Him at work in them. Hundreds of helpers travel to Lourdes all year round to aid the sick and can usually be noticed by the fluorescent vests that they wear, or the numbers painted on their t-shirts and faces!

It is not uncommon to be distracted by the many shops paving the way to the Grotto in Lourdes. However, once you arrive within its gates, you are sure to encounter people from all walks of life, who gather with a single purpose: to pray silently and lovingly together. They pray for themselves and their loved ones and often ask for spiritual and physical healing.

### ***“The Song of Bernadette”***

A variety of authors wrote about St. Bernadette and the apparitions at Lourdes. But 20<sup>th</sup> century cultural popularity of St. Bernadette owes much to “The Song of Bernadette” and the efforts of its author. Franz Werfel, a Jewish German writer found himself in Lourdes while trying to escape to Portugal after France fell to the Nazis. Families who took in Werfel and his wife told them the story of Bernadette and her visions of Our Lady. Werfel vowed that if they should be able to escape, he would write the story of St. Bernadette. True to his promise, his first task when arriving in the United States was to write the beautiful work of historical fiction (which is more historical than fictional), *The Song of Bernadette*. An interesting bit of trivia: the structure of this bestseller is itself a reference to the holy rosary – five sections of ten chapters each. Could be your Lenten reading...

### ***Anglicans in Lourdes***

While Anglicans, privately, as simple Christians, had been prayerfully visiting Lourdes for many time, it was in 2008 that the then Archbishop of Canterbury, Rowan Williams, joined some 600 Anglicans for an official pilgrimage at Lourdes. Seven bishops and some 60 priests joined in a concelebrated Eucharist in the Upper Basilica of the main church. The Anglican group had a warm welcome by shrine officials and the pilgrimage was listed in the special shrine Jubilee programme for 2008. The Archbishop preached at the International Mass, with Cardinal Kaspar of the Vatican’s Pontifical Council for Christian Unity as the celebrant. That day was also the feast day of Our Lady of Walsingham.

(Articles used: Richard Cavendish: *St. Bernadette’s first vision at Lourdes* in History Today, 2008; Natallia Pearmain: *My life was transformed in Lourdes* on ctsbooks, 2021; Ellyn von Huben: *10 things to know about Our Lady of Lourdes and St. Bernadette* on wordonfire.org, 2015)



## The three most famous cases of miraculous healing at Lourdes

*From “Our Lady of the Rosary Library” (oral.org)*

From the time of Blessed Mary’s first apparition to Bernadette Soubirous, the water from the Lourdes Grotto has been a source of miraculous healings both for those who have visited the Grotto and even for those who used the water in remote places.

The following miraculous healings were all examined by independent physicians and details, reports of witnesses, examinations, etc. were meticulously registered.

### *Marie Bailly*

*Marie Bailly* was suffering from acute tuberculous peritonitis and considerable abdominal distension with large hard masses. All physicians on the train she was traveling on half-conscious to Lourdes believed that she would pass away quite quickly after arriving at Lourdes—if not before.

When the train arrived at Lourdes, Marie was taken to the Grotto where three pitchers of water were poured over her distended abdomen. After the first pour, she felt a searing pain. After the second pour, it was lessened. Finally, after the third pour, she experienced a pleasant sensation. Her stomach began to flatten, and her pulse returned to normal. Her physician, Alexis Carrel, was standing behind Marie (along with other physicians), taking notes. He wrote: “The enormously distended and very hard abdomen began to flatten and within 30 minutes it had completely disappeared. No discharge whatsoever was observed from the body.”

Marie then sat up in bed, had dinner (without vomiting), and got out of bed on her own and dressed herself the next day. She then boarded the train, riding on the hard benches, and arrived in Lyons refreshed. Carrel was still interested in her psychological and physical condition, so asked that she be monitored by a psychiatrist and a physician for four months. After her healing, Marie joined the Sisters of Charity—to work with the sick and the poor in a very strenuous life—and died in 1937, 35 years after the miracle, at the age of 58. Her miraculous healing led to the conversion of her atheist physician.

### *John Traynor*

*John Traynor* was a native of Liverpool. His injuries dated from World War I. He took part in the unsuccessful Antwerp expedition of October,

1914, and was hit in the head by shrapnel. He remained unconscious for five weeks. Later, in Egypt, he received a bullet wound in the leg. In the Dardanelles, he distinguished himself in battle but was finally brought down when he was sprayed with machine gun bullets while taking part in a bayonet charge. He was wounded in the head and chest, and one bullet went through his upper right arm and lodged under his collarbone.

As a result of these wounds, Traynor's right arm was paralysed and the muscles atrophied. His legs were partially paralysed, and he was epileptic. By 1916, Traynor had undergone four operations in an attempt to connect the severed muscles of this right arm. All four operations ended in failure. He was given a one hundred percent pension because he was completely and permanently disabled. He spent much time in various hospitals as an epileptic patient. In April, 1920, his skull was operated on in an attempt to remove some of the shrapnel. This operation did not help his epilepsy, and it left a hole about an inch wide in his skull.

He lived on Grafton Street in Liverpool with his wife and children. He was utterly helpless. He had to be lifted from his bed to his wheelchair in the morning and back into bed at night.

In July, 1923, Traynor heard that the Liverpool diocese was organising a pilgrimage to Lourdes. He had always had a great devotion to the Blessed Virgin and determined to join the pilgrimage. He took a gold sovereign which he had been saving for an emergency and used it as the first payment on a ticket. The trip was extremely trying, and Traynor was very sick. Three times, during the journey across France, the directors of the pilgrimage wished to take him off the train and put him in a hospital. Each time there was no hospital where they stopped, and so they had to keep him on board.

At Lourdes, he had several haemorrhages during his six days there and a number of epileptic fits. So bad was his condition that one woman took it upon herself to write to his wife and tell her that there was no hope for him and that he would be buried in Lourdes.

Traynor managed to bathe in the water from the grotto nine times, and he attended all the ceremonies to which the sick are taken. It was only by sheer force of will that he was able to do this. Not only were his own infirmities a serious obstacle but the *brancardiers* and others in attendance were reluctant to take him out for fear he would die on the way. Once he had an epileptic fit as he was going to the *piscines*. When he recovered, the *brancardiers* turned his chair to take him back to the Asile. He protested, but they insisted. They were forced to give in when he seized the wheel with his good hand and would not let the chair budge until it went in the direction of the baths.

On the afternoon of July 25 when he was in the bath, his paralysed legs became suddenly agitated. He tried to get to his feet, but the *brancardiers* prevented him. They dressed him, put him back in his wheel chair, and hurried him to Rosary Square for the Blessing of the Sick. Most of the other sick were already lined up. He was the third last on the outside as one faces the church. Let us hear in Traynor's own words what happened after that. This is the story as he told it to Father Patrick O'Connor:

“The procession came winding its way back, as usual, to the church and at the end walked the Archbishop of Rheims, carrying the Blessed Sacrament. He blessed the two ahead of me, came to me, made the Sign of the Cross with the monstrance and moved on to the next. He had just passed by, when I realised that a great change had taken place in me. My right arm, which had been dead since 1915, was violently agitated. I burst its bandages and blessed myself – for the first time in years.

I had no sudden pain that I can recall and certainly had no vision. I simply realised that something momentous had happened. I attempted to rise from my stretcher, but the *brancardiers* were watching me. I suppose I had a bad name for my obstinacy. They held me down, and a doctor or a nurse gave me a hypo.

The effect of the hypos began to wear off during the night, but I had no full realisation that I was cured. Early in the morning, I heard the bells ringing. At the last stroke I opened my eyes and jumped out of bed. First, I knelt on the floor to finish the rosary I had been saying. Then I dashed for the door, pushed aside the two *brancardiers* and ran out into the passage and the open air. Previously, I had been watching the *brancardiers* and planning to evade them. I may say here that I had not walked since 1915, and my weight was down to 112 pounds.

Dr. Marley was outside the door. When he saw the man over whom he had been watching during the pilgrimage, and whose death he had expected, push two *brancardiers* aside and run out of the ward, he fell back in amazement. Out in the open now, I ran toward the Grotto, which is about two or three hundred yards from the Aisle. This stretch of ground was graveled then, not paved, and I was barefoot. I ran the whole way to the grotto without getting the least mark or cut on my bare feet. The *brancardiers* were running after me, but they could not catch up with me. When they reached the grotto, there I was on my knees, still in my night clothes, praying to our Lady and thanking her. All I knew was that I should thank her and the grotto was the place to do it. The *brancardiers* stood back, afraid to touch me.”

Traynor traveled home in a first-class compartment despite all his protests. As they were going across France, Archbishop Keating of Liverpool

came into his compartment. Traynor knelt to receive his blessing. The Archbishop led him over to the bed, and they both sat down. Looking at Traynor closely, he said, "John, do you realise how ill you have been and that you have been miraculously cured by the Blessed Virgin?" "Suddenly," Traynor later told Father O'Connor, "everything came back to me, the memory of my years of illness and the sufferings of the journey to Lourdes and how ill I had been in Lourdes itself. I began to cry, and the Archbishop began to cry, and we both sat there, crying like two children. After a little talk with him, I felt composed. Now I realized fully what had happened.

Someone suggested to Traynor that he telegraph his wife. Instead of telling her that he had been completely cured he merely said, "Am better – Jack." It seemed that all Liverpool was at the station to greet the cured man upon his return. The police had to clear a passage for him to pass through. The joy of Traynor's family upon his return and their deep gratitude to Our Lady of Lourdes could never be put into words. The cured man went into the coal and hauling business and had no trouble lifting 200-pound sacks of coal. He went back to Lourdes every summer to act as a *brancardier*. He died on the eve of the Feast of the Immaculate Conception in 1943. The cause of his death was in no way related to the wounds which had been cured at Lourdes.

Although the cure took place in 1923, the Medical Bureau waited till 1926 to issue its report. Traynor was examined again, and it was found that his cure was permanent. "His right arm which was like a skeleton has recovered all its muscles. The hole near his temple has completely disappeared. He had a certificate from Dr. McConnell of Liverpool attesting that he had not had an epileptic attack since 1923."

The British War Pension Ministry, however, insisted upon paying Traynor's pension till the end of his life. They had examined him thoroughly and found him incurable. They did not care what the Lourdes Medical Bureau said or what any of the doctors who examined Traynor after his return from Lourdes reported. It did not matter that he was engaged in the most strenuous kind of work. They had pronounced him incurable, and incurable he was. This decision was never revoked.

### *Gabriel Gargam*

Born in 1870 of good Catholic parents, he gave early promise of being a clever student and a fervent Catholic. The promise was not fulfilled in the most important respect for, at 15 years of age, he had already lost his faith. He obtained a position in the postal service and was carrying out his duties as a sorter in December of 1899, when the train on which he was traveling from Bordeaux to Paris collided with another train, running at 50

miles per hour. Gargam was thrown fifty two feet from the train. He lay in the snow, badly injured and unconscious for seven hours. He was paralysed from the waist down. He was barely alive when lifted onto a stretcher. Taken to a hospital, his existence for some time was a living death. After eight months he had wasted away to a mere skeleton, weighing but seventy-eight pounds, although normally a big man. His feet became gangrenous. He could take no solid food and was obliged to take nourishment by a tube. Only once in twenty-four hours could he be fed even that way. He brought suit for damages against the railroad. The Appellate Court confirmed the verdict of the former courts and granted him 6,000 francs annually, and besides, an indemnity of 60,000 francs.

Gargam's condition was pitiable in the extreme. He could not help himself even in the most trifling needs. Two trained nurses were needed day and night to assist him. That was Gabriel Gargam as he was after the accident, and as he would continue to be until death relieved him. About his desperate condition there could be no doubt. The railroad fought the case on every point. There was no room for deception or hearsay. Two courts attested to his condition, and the final payment of the railroad left the case a matter of record. Doctors testified that the man was a hopeless cripple for life, and their testimony was not disputed.

Previous to the accident Gargam had not been to Church for fifteen years. His aunt, who was a nun of the Order of the Sacred Heart, begged him to go to Lourdes. He refused. She continued her appeals to him to place himself in the hands of Our Lady of Lourdes. He was deaf to all her prayers. After continuous pleading of his mother he consented to go to Lourdes. It was now two years since the accident, and not for a moment had he left his bed all that time. He was carried on a stretcher to the train. The exertion caused him to faint, and for a full hour he was unconscious. They were on the point of abandoning the pilgrimage, as it looked as if he would die on the way, but the mother insisted, and the journey was made.

Arrived at Lourdes, he went to confession and received Holy Communion. There was no change in his condition. Later he was carried to the miraculous pool and tenderly placed in its waters – no effect. Rather a bad effect resulted, for the exertion threw him into a swoon and he lay apparently dead. After a time, as he did not revive, they thought him dead. Sorrowfully they wheeled the carriage back to the hotel. On the way back they saw the procession of the Blessed Sacrament approaching. They stood aside to let it pass, having placed a cloth over the face of the man whom they supposed to be dead.



As the priest passed carrying the Sacred Host, he pronounced Benediction over the sorrowful group around the covered body. Soon there was a movement from under the covering. To the amazement of the



bystanders, the body raised itself to a sitting posture. While the family were looking on dumbfounded and the spectators gazed in amazement, Gargam said in a full, strong voice that he wanted to get up. They thought that it was a delirium before death, and tried to soothe him, but he was not to be restrained. He got up and stood erect, walked a few paces and said that he was cured. The multitude looked in wonder, and then fell on their knees and thanked God for this new sign of His power at the Shrine of His Blessed Mother. As Gargam had on him only invalid's clothes, he returned to the carriage and was wheeled back to the hotel. There he was soon dressed, and proceeded to walk about as

if nothing had ever ailed him. For two years hardly any food had passed his lips but now he sat down to the table and ate a hearty meal.

On August 20th, 1901, sixty prominent doctors examined Gargam. Without stating the nature of the cure, they pronounced him entirely cured. Gargam, out of gratitude to God in the Holy Eucharist and His Blessed Mother, consecrated himself to the service of the invalids at Lourdes.

He set up a small business and married a pious lady who aided him in his apostolate for the greater knowledge of Mary Immaculate. For over fifty years he returned annually to Lourdes and worked as a brancardier. His last visit to the Shrine was in August 1952: he died the following March, at the age of eighty-three years.

## The Psalms

### Psalm 15: *Who can dwell on your Holy Hill?*

*(Commentaries from various sources edited together.)*

In this Psalm David meditates about the blameless character of one who knows God. As we examine this prayer we must ask ourselves: Is this representative of me? Do these things characterise me? David begins his meditation with a question: “*Lord, who shall abide in thy tabernacle? who shall dwell in thy holy hill?*”

What we have here is a picture of close fellowship of man with God: abiding in a tabernacle and dwelling in a hill. Being close, that is, with the Lord. The “**Lord’s tabernacle**” physically was a literal tent. It housed the ark of the covenant, an altar, a table, a candlestick, and a number of other things. But it was a place where the Lord would meet with his people. It was a place of *communion* of man with God. And of course, since this psalm is written by David, we’re not talking about the Temple. That hadn’t been built yet. The Tabernacle was the place to go to experience God’s presence. And eventually that tent and then later the Temple would be built on God’s Holy Hill: mount Zion in Jerusalem.

And so David is thinking of people who abide and dwell in God’s holy hill. In other words, those who know the Lord on a personal basis – who feel at home with him, so to speak. And for the rest of Psalm 15 we have the response to this one question

And the response comes in 6 groups of 2 lines each – or 6 couplets. 1) who walks uprightly and works righteousness; 2) who speaks truth and doesn’t slander with his tongue; 3) who doesn’t do evil to or speak evil about his neighbour; 4) who thinks little of the ungodly and highly esteems those who love the Lord; 5) who makes promises that could eventuate in his harm and yet he doesn’t change his promise, even under those circumstances; 6) who doesn’t charge interest when he lends to his own people – especially to the poor among them – and who won’t be bribed to pervert the justice that’s due the innocent.

Both the masculine pronouns (he) and the degree of perfectness and holiness the Psalm describes make it evident that this Psalm - just as all others - is also a prophecy and points to Jesus Christ.

One way, then, to pray this Psalm is to think about the Lord Jesus with feelings of love, gratitude, awe, and thanksgiving. To ponder his most holy humanity, to meditate on his life and teaching, on the example he gave us in himself. He is the perfect image of God and we must work constantly -

with God's grace - to shape ourselves into his likeness more and more. This Psalm offers us a very practical way to grow in our Christ-likeness: to imitate his characteristics stressed by the Psalm itself.

The second way, then, to use this Psalm is to hold it up as a mirror and look into it honestly. How much does my life fit the "description" of perfect Christian? What are my strengths and what are my weaknesses? What is it that I need to work on with particular perseverance?

Let us examine this Psalm in this second sense.

1) The first characteristic (the first of the six couplets) is about one's general character: walking uprightly and working righteousness. Adam walked uprightly before the first sin which made him hide from God. And Noah walked with God (Genesis 6,9) until he disobeyed God after the flood and was found drunk and naked, throwing away his own dignity.

Walking uprightly and working righteousness does not equal to being perfect but it means being sincere and honest. Choosing God over sin, his plans over ours, his friendship over temptation. It means a general attitude, a deeply rooted inclination towards God and his things. It means to love God's word, to love worship and holy places. It means to be attracted to those who are close to God rather than to those who refuse him. It means, if you will, to have a spiritual compass that constantly points towards God - even if, alas, it sways a bit time to time.

2) The second characteristic is about one's speech: to speak the truth (in one's heart) and to not backbite with one's tongue.

The Psalm talks about a habit. A virtue. To *always* tell the truth. Telling the truth is not only about our words - no, it is rooted more deeply. In our heart. Our words simply reflect our heart. We speak the truth because that truth is already present in our heart. We can gain even more insight simply by playing with capital letters: truth and Truth. Jesus says: "*I am the Truth*" (John 14,6) - it is the Lord Jesus then who must dwell in our hearts. Out of the abundance of the heart, the mouth speaks. All we say, do, think must reflect and witness to his divine presence.

It is almost a superfluous repetition to add: those in whose hearts Jesus dwells do not backbite with their tongue. Falsehood, lies, hurtful words, even gossip - are those words and behaviours we would associate with Jesus? Could we ever imagine him lying, idly or maliciously gossiping, saying hurtful or false things?

3) The third couplet shows us how those who wish to dwell in heavenly Sion treat their neighbour. And the Psalm is very simple and

straightforward: they will do no evil. Full stop. Well, I say “full stop” but actually the Psalm quickly reminds us of the fact that while sticks and stones break bones, words hurt too. So, those who want to dwell with God, for now here on earth and then in heaven, do not do any evil to anyone, not with their actions, not with their words. Full stop.

4) The fourth couplet penetrates even deeper in our character. It resonates the proverb: “Birds of a feather flock together.” The company we seek and prefer, the type of people we associate with says a lot about what dwells in our hearts. This, by any means, does not mean that we can be close, intimate friends only with *religious* people. But it means that we should seek and enjoy the company and friendship of people who are genuinely good and generous, who are of pure and chaste words and habits, who encourage us - both by their words and by their own example - to a good and virtuous life.

As for the ungodly who are to be despised... we must clarify something of great importance. To *despise* someone or something is not akin to hatred. Some people may use the word despise as synonym of loathe or hate. It's not, certainly not in the Bible. Actually, the old English word is “contemn”. When someone is charged with contempt of court, it simply means that that person does not respect the authority of the court. They are thinking lightly of it.

Our society will often respect, follow, and acclaim those who are rich, powerful, born “lucky” - regardless their moral conduct, their values, their ways of life. Those in power often can break the rules without consequences. Those rich enough to buy the services of the best lawyers will often go unpunished even for horrendous crimes. Money and fame and success seem to have replaced virtues and morals. And the Psalm says: those who want to dwell with God will not look upon, will not envy, will not admire these people. On the contrary. They will clearly distance themselves from evil and from injustice. In Psalm 37,1 we read: “*do not be envious of wrongdoers.*” As strange an advice as it may seem, it puts its finger exactly on our human nature. How often we are tempted to admire, to follow, or at least to envy those whose life is easy *regardless* how they had managed to make it so.

5) The next couplet shows those who want to dwell *on Mount Sion* from the perspective of others - and it says that they must be trustworthy. True to their oath. “*Who stand by their oath even to their hurt.*” The idea behind this, of course, is that we keep our solemn promises even when it is no longer to our advantage to do so. And we keep it firmly. How often we will see someone's attempts to get out of their promises - by twisting their own

words, by plainly lying, by making (up) excuses, by “explaining” that that is *not* what they had really meant.

6) Finally, the last part of a blameless character is revealed by the way they treat those who are disadvantaged: “*who do not lend money at interest.*” The original context of this verse is the Mosaic Law which prohibited Jews from charging interest on money they lent to their fellow-Israelites.

While we can still follow this law as an advice, in Christian context the verse gains a broader meaning of “interest-free generosity”. Giving without expecting anything in return. Giving not based on personal sympathy, friendship, relations, etc. but purely on need. Giving to those who will never be able (or willing) to pay us back. Donating time, energy - and yes, even money - to help others.

The second half of the verse says: “*who do not take a bribe against the innocent.*” Justice is such a fragile thing – especially when it is sinful men who are trying to uphold it. All it takes is for a witness or two to be influenced against the innocent party in a lawsuit and things can get ugly. How easy it is to pervert justice!

But again, for Christians the verse must have a broader context than simply that of a court room or juridical procedure. The virtue of justice means that we give everyone what is due to them: to God, to our neighbour, to ourselves - and no “bribe”, no advantage, no promise, no personal gain can deter us from doing so. No list of this kind can ever be complete but in a nutshell - we owe God our whole being: all we have, all we are; our love, our obedience, our worship, a life of innocence and goodness. We owe our neighbour, even the “*undeserving*” ones - charity which manifests itself in so many ways: in kindness, forgiveness, generosity, goodness, meekness, help, acceptance. Finally, we owe ourselves taking good care of our immortal soul (prayer, Sacraments, worship), of our mind (learning, discovering, reading, enjoying nature and arts, good companionship, friends), of our body (healthy life-style, enough rest, meaningful activities, a job, harmless pleasures of this wonderful creation), of our environment (peaceful home, cleanness, protected nature). As I said, no such list can be complete and we should dedicate time to discover what else should be on it.

How wonderful this kind of character truly is! We all love that kind of blameless character. And so does God. May we all live - or at least honestly strive to - in such way so that when our days end we may say with St. Paul: “*I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith. Henceforth there is laid up for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, will award to me on that Day, and not only to me but also to all who have loved his appearing.*” (2 Tim 4,7-8)

# On the Holy Mass

## *The Roman Canon (9)*

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

*In last month's article we saw what "reasonable" and "acceptable" means.*

***Ratified*** - also translated as "valid" or "confirmed" and it suggests a confirmatory signature or seal. Similar to "*approved*" we discussed in the previous article but while approved has a more objective connotation, *ratified* is more personal, more subjective. It could be translated as "*We humbly beseech you that you would make it worthy of you, should it please you to do so.*"

Worthy of God... now that's a big one. Impossible, one could say. And while it is impossible indeed to come up with one single thing worthy of God, it does not mean that we do not have a duty to do our best nonetheless. And so, what we are saying to God here, in a nutshell, is this: we offer the best we have, and while we know it is still nothing compared to what you deserve, still accept it as if our offering was really worthy of you...

This is exactly why nothing should be *cheap* in our worship. We use the best of everything: wine, fabric, vestments, vessels. We wash our face, polish our shoes, put on our Sunday best, clean our fingernails. We repent of our sins, try to love everyone, pray for a pure and humble heart. We keep the church clean, the altar cloths spotless, the corporals and purificators immaculate. We sit, stand, walk, talk or keep silence in a way that reflects the sacredness of worship. We even use a more solemn language, distinguished from everyday speech. All that is part of our worship - objects, places, texts, people, us - must try to give its best. After all we are in the presence of the living God surrounded on his throne by Angels and Saints and the souls of all the blessed ones.

***Reasonable*** - This word is not frequently used. In the whole Bible, for example, it appears only three times. A Greek New Testament Dictionary defines it as "*spiritual, pertaining to the soul.*" This word, then, simply indicates that the Sacrifice about to be present on our Altars is a spiritual one - no physical shedding of blood, no death, no tortures of the Cross are there. However, it does not mean that the Sacrifice of the Altar is less real or purely symbolic. It is a real Sacrifice - the one Christ anticipated at the Last Supper

and completed on the Cross - but it is present to us in a spiritual way. Jesus who is present in the consecrated Bread and Wine is the Risen Lord, glorified, unable to suffer or to die anymore - yet, his only and one Sacrifice of the Cross is somehow, spiritually, perpetuated on the Altar in the Holy Mass and is offered again and again to the Father.

**Acceptable** - finally this word reassumes all previous four expressions in one.

The Prayer continues to address and humbly beg God to make the bread and wine prepared become the Body and Blood of Jesus. Three little things are noteworthy here:

1) The language, as mentioned before, is very charismatic and ecstatic in many ways: it uses an almost “flowery excess” at times to call forth a spirit of joyful prayer and humble gratitude. Jesus is referred to as the “*most dearly beloved Son*” and the balance here is beautiful: the language becomes ornate and affectionate avoiding both the danger of becoming excessive, ridiculous or false and the danger of being too cold, too legalistic, or too objective.

2) The almost unnoticeable, little insertion of “*so that*” reminds us that we must never take God’s gifts - not even his sacramental gifts - for granted. While we know that every time a priest pronounces the words over bread and wine the Sacrament becomes present (and this certainty is part of the beauty of our faith) - yet, at the same time, it equally remains God’s sovereign and free act, a true and proper gift for us, eliciting awe and humble gratitude from us.

3) “*For us*” - The words of Christ, pronounced by the priest, will infallibly effect what they state: bread and wine will objectively (though in a way hidden from our senses) become Christ’s Body and Blood. From the moment of consecration, the risen Lord is present on the Altar with his divinity and humanity, with his human Soul and Body, risen and glorified, as he is now in heaven. Receiving that little piece of Bread *can* unite us to him in a unique, intimate way - a union so deep and wonderful that is only possible through Holy Communion. And yet, I wrote “*can*” because consecrated Bread (and Wine) will avail nothing unless by worthy reception we make them **for us** what they objectively already are: the Body and Blood of Christ, the very presence of God. Sins, coldness of heart, deliberate distraction, careless unpreparedness can prevent us from truly being united to, meeting and receiving Christ. As St. Thomas Aquinas says in his prayer: “*Grant, I beg of You, that I may receive not only the Sacrament of the Body and Blood of our Lord, but also its full grace and power. Give me the grace to receive the Body of your only Son in such a manner that I may deserve to be intimately united with His mystical Body.*”

## Vicar

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*The Vicar's day-off is Monday. In case of pastoral emergency, please, try to contact the Assistant Priests, or the Parish Office first.*

*With enquires about Baptisms, Weddings, Banns, or Funerals, please, contact the Vicar.*

## Assistant Priests

**Fr Tony Ball** - tonyball2008@hotmail.co.uk - 07899 027710  
**Fr Bruce Dixon** - bandk2d@hotmail.com - 07535 014239

## Churchwardens

**Anne Mullis** - annemullis566@btinternet.com - 07821 199823  
**Jeanne James** - jeannejames@uwclub.net - 07854 275895

## Parish Office

You can contact the Parish Office by email (stpweymouth@gmail.com) or on 771217 (leave a message with your name and number). Since nobody works in the Parish Office currently, messages are not checked daily. If your enquiry is urgent, please contact the Vicar or the Churchwardens directly.

## Treasurer

**Katherine Harrison** - 01305 771217

## S.P.O.T.

**Pat Perry** - 01305 750951

*With enquires about **hiring the Parish Hall, joining the Munch Club or the Choir**, please, contact the Parish Office.*

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