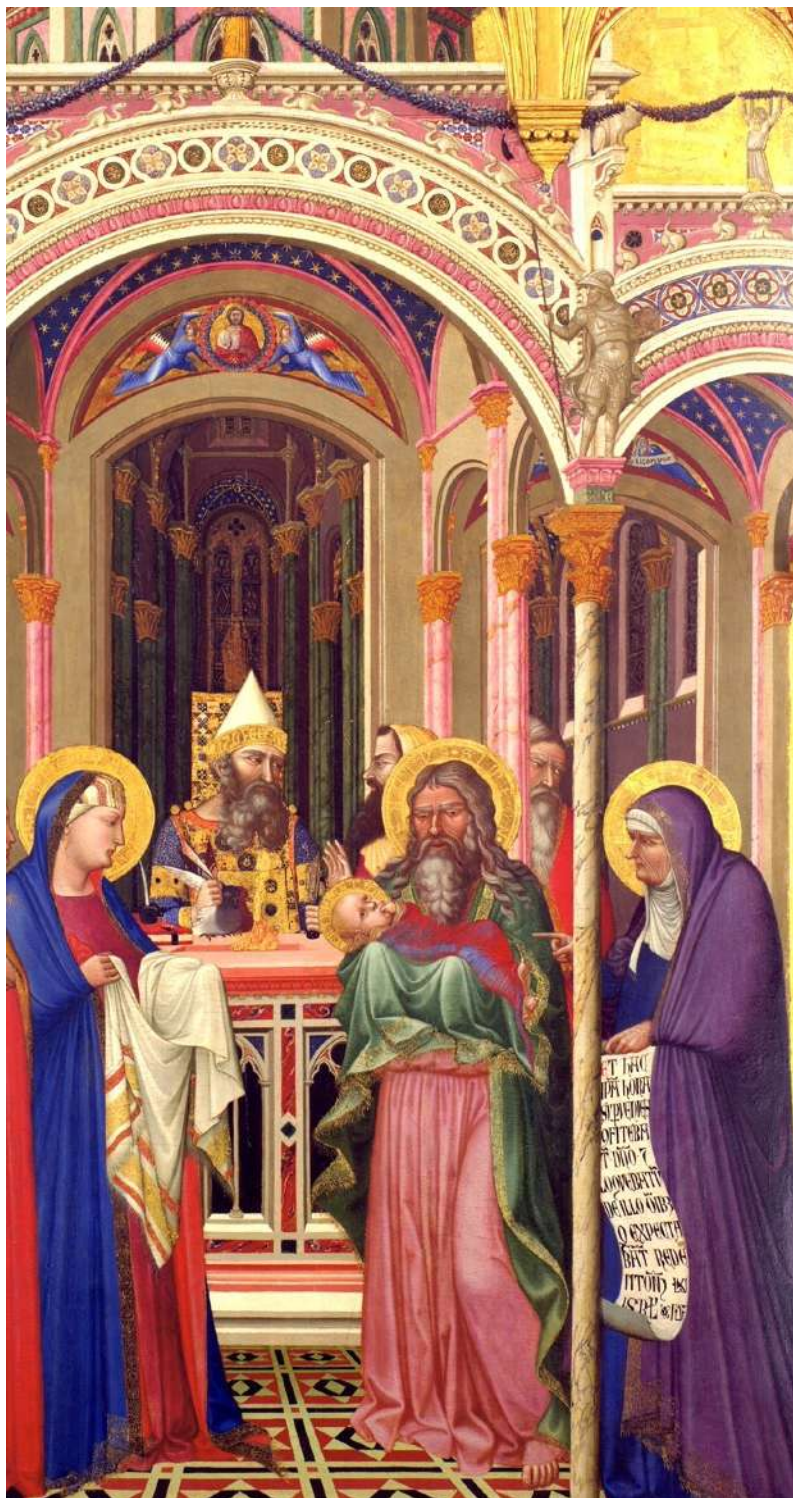


HIGH TIDE

*Parish
Magazine*

*Weymouth
St Paul
with Fleet*

FEB 2025



From the Vicar 4

Save the Parish: The Church of England finances 6

As more and more often we hear about the financial difficulties our dioceses face, a group of forensic accountants and other professionals associated with the Save the Parish movement have looked into the Church of England's finances. Their findings show that while there is money, it is not always spent in the right way. At the end of the article there are some numbers regarding specifically the Diocese of Salisbury.

Jeanne James: Where did the phrase come from? 12

If you have some spare pearls lying around, read this article before you throw them to swines...

Gerald Duke: Logos 14

For this article, Gerald has "collaborated" with Artificial Intelligence. It is a fascinating introduction into the theology of "Logos" which dominates the first chapter of the Gospel of St. John. In their research for truth, Greek philosophers have discovered the existence of Logos but it will only be Divine Revelation who tells us who this Logos is.

Sacramentals: blessed candles 16

February starts with the Feast of Candlemas when candles are blessed. But what is the symbolism of candles? Why do they have such a prominent place in our churches, in the Temple worship, and in our Christian homes? How to use "correctly" blessed candles?

Calendar, Intentions, & Anniversaries 18

We prayerfully remember the dead and pray for the needs of this world.

Morning and Evening Prayer 20

Because without the Lord Jesus (prayer!) we can do nothing (John 15,5) and also so that we are (or become) united in prayer!

Prayers in sickness and in need 28

This month we celebrate the Apparition of Our Lady at Lourdes. Millions of Christians seek healing, strength and consolation in Lourdes in 1858 when Mary appeared to Bernadette Soubirous, a young French girl. This is then a collection of prayers in sickness and in need we can use to pray for ourselves and for others.

Commentary on Zechariah's Song 29

This month we continue to explore the Benedictus - a canticle (hymn) that has been part of Morning Prayer since at least the 6th century.

One of the greatest mysteries is the time Jesus spent in the grave. Why three days? And what did he “do” during that time? Where did he “go”? Where was his human soul in those three days and for what purpose? Was this all part of the work of salvation he carried out? And how did Jesus feel about death, suffering, and the grave during his earthly life? And what can we learn from him and his “experience”? This article invites you to examine these questions and apply whatever Scripture has to say about it to your Christian life.

Dawn Beutner: Blessed Benedetta Bianchi Porro

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Born in 1936 in Italy, Benedetta did not have it easy. Her short life was marked by a lot of suffering, both physical and spiritual. Not only did she have to learn to live with constant pain, but she also had to discover God’s face amidst all this suffering. On her deathbed she confessed how hard it was to accept the life she was given but she also affirmed to her family that she was filled with God’s peace.

Joanna Bogle: The state of Christianity in England today and tomorrow

35

This article brings us the views of someone born in this land and baptised and raised in the Roman Catholic Church. How do our Catholic brethren see the state and future of Christianity in the U.K.?

The Church Fathers on judging others

38

Why do we judge others so promptly? What is the root of this sin? And how to fight it? A few words of teaching and advice from some of the great Saints of the Church.

Know the Bible

40

A short and beautiful writing, the Book of Ruth is a love-story. Actually, it is about more than one love-story: Ruth and Boaz, God and Israel, Christ and his Church.

The Psalms

42

A powerful and highly poetic psalm, Psalm 46 inspired many well-known Christian hymns.

*Many thanks to all who have contributed to the Parish Magazine and to Liz Evans for the proofreading. The next Magazine will be published on **Sunday 23rd February**. Please, send all articles, information, news you wish to be publish by Sunday 16th February.*

Front cover: “Presentation at the Temple” (painting on wood, detail)
by Ambrogio Lorenzetti (1342), Uffizi, Florence (Italy)

From the Vicar

Dearly Beloved,

Those who come to the monthly meetings of the Rosary Group — open to all and cake is served every time! — know about the time-traveling we do there. In these recent months, with the help of images and written sources, we travelled back into medieval England to see what a parish church looked like and how people worshipped in those times. Their devotional life, fundraising efforts, financial struggles and unchristian quarrels sometimes resemble shockingly well our own times. We will continue our time-travelling back into those times for a couple of months still so if you are interested, please come and join us.

However, a journey back into medieval England seems only a small jump compared to the topic we had examined before that: daily life and customs in Palestine in Jesus' times. I know that many of those who came found these little "lectures" illuminating and helpful not only out of pure historical or cultural curiosity but also from a purely Christian point of view. Learning about daily life in Jesus' times helps us to understand the Bible, the Sacraments and Christian worship better.

One thing we certainly witnessed was that religious and secular life were not separated. The Temple did not only dominate the landscape of Jerusalem but also the lives of Jewish people everywhere. Times and cycles of worship followed the times and cycles of life, and the latter was sanctified by the former. When people were unable to be present in the Temple, the Temple found its ways to be present in people's lives. Even the most secular affairs were conducted according to the Mosaic Law. From public buildings to private homes, from food on the table to fashionable haircut and dresses, everything reflected the *sacred* to some extent. That schizophrenic situation of modern times where religion or faith are restricted to the private domain, did not exist.

It is in this context that the Lord Jesus grew up, gathered his disciples, instructed them, and founded the Church. It is also in this context that we must see the ancient customs, prayers and worship of the Church — amongst them the Sacramentals: things of this world that carry the blessing of the other world. Sacramentals are objects (*chalk, water, oil, candle, food, etc.*), gestures (*sign of the cross*) or words (*certain prayers, for example*) that are blessed by the Church and so, by the very authority Christ himself conferred on his Church, they become "channels" of divine grace and blessing.

Sacramentals have always been the most misunderstood elements of the Church's life. In early and medieval times people often tried to turn them

into some sort of magic. Reformation had a deeply rooted hatred for them because “*it’s not in the Bible*”. In modern times many clergy seem to be embarrassed by them. Taken out of their proper context, Sacramentals *are* indeed embarrassing and unbiblical, and they *do* resemble magic. But we put them back into their context and we will find in them great and faithful friends and companions on our Christian journey.

God knows our frailty and weakness. He knows how our thoughts and heart wonder away from him. How our physical, spiritual and mental wellbeing is often threatened by evil forces. How the selfish, incorrect, sinful etc. use of the things of this creation can separate us from him. How easily we forget about God and his gifts, or about our own redeemed and sanctified dignity. And so, through the Church, God has given us the Sacramentals.

We bless candles so their light may dispel spiritual darkness and remind us of Christ, the true Light of this world. We bless and sprinkle water so it cleanses the filth our sins bring into this world. We place crosses everywhere to keep satan away and to remind ourselves of Christ’s immense love. We bless people’s throat so we are protected from the illness of lying words and judgement. Sacramentals, when used with faith, transform the world around us into a big, screaming sign of God’s presence. They remind us of his love and laws, they teach us to use the goods of this world in a Christian way, and they also channel to us God’s grace to live a holy life.

To nothing avails a blessed candle in your home if you choose acts of darkness. But call upon God, fight darkness *and* light a blessed candle: and help will come! What good could ever come from a blessed medal of St. Christopher in your car if you drive aggressively and swear at everyone? But keep the medal in your car *and* pray that you can imitate the meekness of St. Christopher - though only a poor reflection but still a valid one of Christ’s meekness - and God and his Saints will come to your aid. If you line up for the blessing of the throat on **St. Blaise’s day** only to unleash words of hate, judgement, or gossip on this world, how can you expect protection from spiritual and physical evil? Come humbly, with repentance, to receive that blessing while you pray that your words may always be such that Christ and his Blessed Mother would accept to use and *then* you will feel the benefits of the blessing.

Perhaps this year could be the one when you start receiving and using prayerfully the Sacramentals (*many of them available at the back of the church with little cards*), experiencing their benefits. For sure, this should be the year when we all humbly receive the one on St. Blaise’s day...

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

Fr. Gregory⁵

The Church of England Finances

Published from the 'Save the Parish' website and resources

Did You Know? The Church of England has substantial funds at the centre:

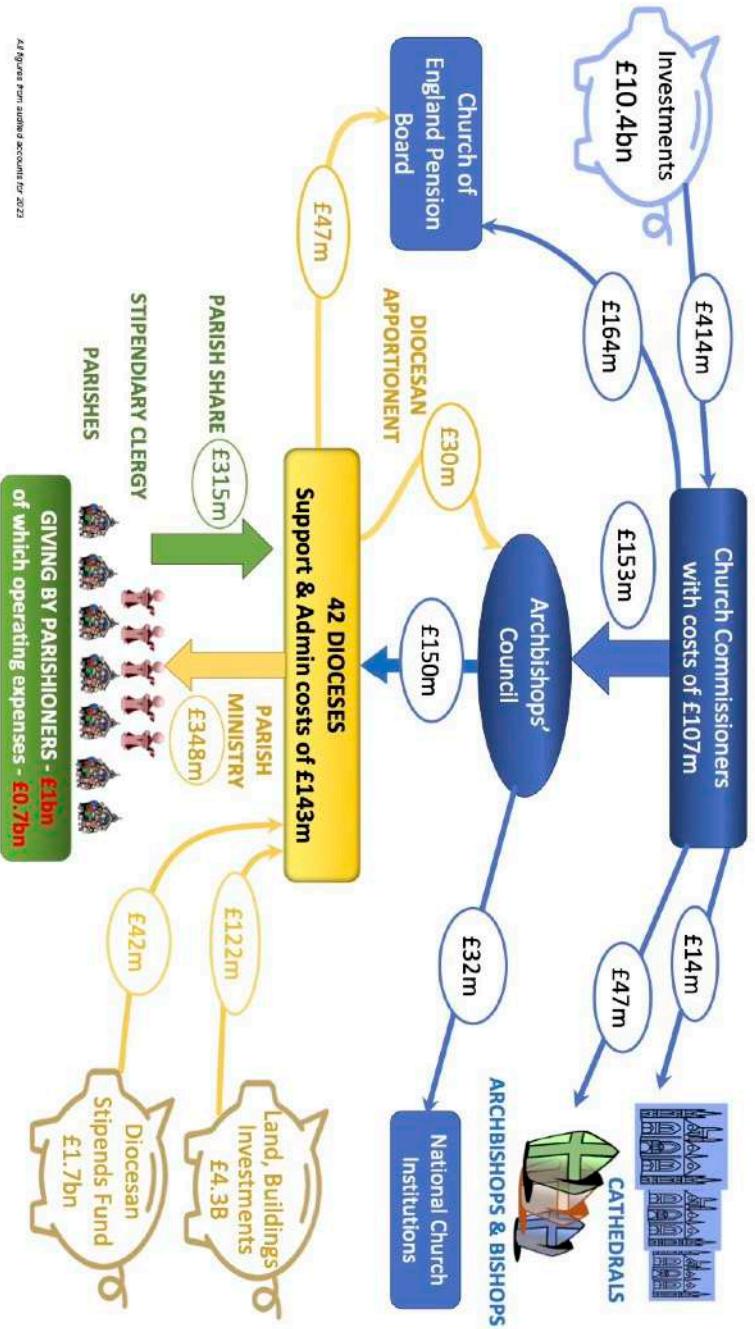
- The Church Commissioners have £10bn (£10,000m) funds that have been built-up over the years;
- The 42 dioceses have £6bn (£6,000m) funds in aggregate;
- In 2023, Church Commissioners and Dioceses Combined could draw an annual investment income of £574m from these funds.

Imbalance between Parishes and 'Head Office':

- The Parishes have very few assets but, mainly thanks to parishioners' generosity, they pull in a colossal annual income of £1bn;
- The Parishes paid £315m to Head Office (2023) through the Parish Share scheme;
- The Dioceses spent £348m on parish ministry (also 2023) and £47m on clergy pension contributions, making £395m in total.
- The difference between parish share 'income' and parish ministry expenditure (£315m-£395m) is £80m (2022 similar at £84m) – dividing that into the £574m Head Office investment income, we compute 14%. This tells us that only 14% of Head Office investment income goes directly to parishes; 86% goes elsewhere.
- Moreover, large amounts of 'diocese' investment income come from glebe land, which was originally donated to parishes, but transferred to dioceses for administrative reasons in the 1970s.

Cash Flow Diagram (see opposite page): This detailed chart shows that the Church of England, far from being a single entity, is an ecosystem of different organisations. Here the Parishes are shown in **Green**, the Dioceses above them are shown in **Yellow**, and the National Church Institutions at the top in **Blue**.

The bottom of the chart shows that in 2023, Parishes received £1bn from giving, and passed £315m of it to Dioceses in the form of Parish Share. The middle of the chart shows that in 2023, **Dioceses paid £348m for Parish Ministry which figure rises to £395m when pension payments are added**. So, it could be said that in aggregate, dioceses paid for Parish Ministry by a combination of the £315m Parish Share and £80m additional funds. (continued on page 8)



All figures from audited accounts for 2021

The Dioceses received £42m income from endowments that came originally from the parishes as Glebe, so passing on £80m is not generous. Dioceses also received £122m income from their Land, Buildings and non-DSF Investments. Additionally, they got grants from Archbishops' Council. From these combined sources, dioceses were able to fund £143m of internal spending and employ over 2,000 people.

The top left of the chart shows **a piggy bank with £10.4bn in it at the end of 2023**. These are the Church investment funds managed by Church Commissioners and in 2023 they generated £414m income and capital growth for distribution. These funds get spent in the various ways shown in the chart, including **£150m going to Archbishops' Council** which is the conduit for passing money on in grants. The spending of this money is determined by a small committee. The centre tends to allocate to projects in million-pound dollops whilst in the parishes, we would be able to make significant changes with £10,000.

Church of England's Finances in Aggregate

Save the Parish has done something simple and revealing – added together the accounts of the 42 dioceses and the Church Commissioners. Our purpose is to give you a simple picture of the external totality, ignoring all the internal money flows, and showing just what comes in from external sources as income, and what goes out as real expenditure. The results are in £m.

Let's start with the total **income** – £910m. That's a lot of money, equivalent to a good-sized business. At the top of the income is Parish Share – £315m – the aggregated amount paid by parishes to their dioceses.

The rest is income from investments, in one form or another, making about £300m income with a further £222m permitted distribution from capital growth in 2023. That's a very significant amount which sits alongside the £1,000m that parishes raise through hard-won, sacrificial giving.

Now let's turn to the **expenditure** that 'Head Office' controls, £980m in total. Now see in the first line that £395m is spent on Parish Ministry. Some of the other expenditure looks innocent enough, but the amounts are huge. Just remember some rough maths as you look at these figures. If a vicar costs £50,000 pa, each £1m is the salary of 20 vicars.

So, let's look at the two expenditure sub totals: first of all **£219m** for the dioceses. It's made up of the **£143m** on Administration, **£47m** on Bishops and Archbishops, and **£29m** given by dioceses to support the National Church in the so-called '5 votes'. The £143m diocese spending funds over 2,000 employees. The £143m spent in 2023 was 19% higher than

the amount spent in 2021 – in the same period the spending on Parish Ministry stayed flat. 0% change. The £47m spending on Bishops amounts to over £1m per diocesan bishop. The £29m given to support the National Church is far from trivial.

All in all, it looks like there is a stark contrast between Head Office which appears to be financially secure, thanks to all the investment income which derives from the inherited assets of the Church of England, and the Parishes which are well-stretched and desperate for more clergy. In the parishes it's scrimping and saving to keep going, and make ends meet. In Head Office, as we have just heard, it's had another £190m to ensure Net Zero and £20m on Racial Justice. Whatever the merits of these causes, they are not the causes that the Church of England is meant to be spending its money on. The investment income is the most wonderful gift, but if we are cutting the number of priests, it seems it is not being used optimally.

You may be wondering, **where are the grants from Archbishops' Council?** The answer is, they are not included here, for they are an example of a 'left pocket/right pocket' internal transfer.

Initially the grant money travels just from Archbishops' Council to a Diocese, both of which are considered to be Head Office in this analysis. If a Diocese passes the money to a parish, then it becomes Parish Ministry, and therefore part of the £395m at the top of the expenditure in this analysis.

The Archbishops' Council has increased the value of its grants in recent years, but the extraordinary thing is, expenditure on Parish Ministry remains flat despite this.

However, it does seem that a lot of the grant money remains in the dioceses' bank accounts and does not emerge from it. All in all, we carry on with huge expenditure from the investment income as if nothing is wrong, as if there are no financial pressures elsewhere in the Church. It is not even properly voted-on and approved by Synod.

By contrast those of you out at the nerve endings – the parishes – will know that it is very difficult, and sometimes so serious that there are clergy lay-offs and/or vacancies that are left deliberately unfilled, to make ends meet. Those funds from Head Office are badly needed to stop this bad trend, and so to revitalise the parish.

Diocese of Salisbury Finances

INCOME £000	2023	2022	2021	2020	2019
Parish share	10009	9903	9697	9604	10354
CoE grants	639	749	682	691	592
Donations	2293	1801	-	-	-
Investment	1487	1445	1631	1603	1763
Other	194	375	1293	1113	1145
Gains on investment	4738	-2418	3860	300	2661
Pension revaluation	0	310	372	483	2482
Total	19360	12165	17535	13794	18997
EXPEND. £000	2023	2022	2021	2020	2019
Parish ministry	9152	9520	9492	9304	9561
contribution to CoE	993	1083	1064	1077	1097
Diocese: training, admin, etc.	3582	3329	3252	3142	3001
Other	1090	1085	954	1001	976
Total	14817	15017	14762	14524	14635
CLOSING BALANCE	4543	-2852	2773	-730	4362

	2023	2022	2021	2020	2019
Parish share target / received	11298 10009	11058 9903	10692 9697	10692 9604	10538 10354
Num. of clergy	162	166	176	181	179
Clergy expense (incl. NI & pens.)	6561	6823	7237	7271	(no data)
Num. of staff	46	44	44	46	48
Diocesan “support costs”	1164	972	907	887	850
Staff on £60-70,000	2	1	1	1	1
£70-80,000	0	0	1	0	1
£80-90,000	1	1	1	1	0
Opening balance	36756	37494	35429	(no data)	(no data)
Closing balance	40324	36756	37494	(no data)	(no data)

All numbers to be read as £000

Where did that phrase come from (part 5)

Jeanne James writes:

Knuckle under — Once knuckle meant any joint, including the knee. To knuckle under meant to kneel in submission.

Lamb to the slaughter — This is from Isaiah 53,7 ‘He is brought as a lamb to the slaughter’. Later this verse was applied to Jesus.

Resting on your laurels or *Look to your laurels* — In the ancient world winning athletes and other heroes and distinguished people were given wreaths of laurel leaves. If you are resting on your laurels you are relying on your past achievements. If you need to look to your laurels it means you have competition.

A leopard cannot change his spots — This is another old saying from the Bible. This one comes from Jeremiah 13,23 ‘Can an Ethiopian change his skin or a leopard his spots?’

Lick into shape — In the Middle Ages, people thought that bear cubs were born shapeless and their mother literally licked them into shape.

Lily-livered — Means cowardly. People once believed that your passions came from your liver. If you were lily-livered your liver was white (because it did not contain any blood). So, you were a coward.

A little bird told me — This old saying comes from the Bible. In Ecclesiastes 10,20 the writer warns us not to curse the king or the rich even in private or a ‘bird of the air’ may report what you say.

Lock, stock and barrel — This phrase comes because guns used to have 3 parts, the lock (the firing mechanism), the stock (the wooden butt of the gun) and the barrel.

Maudlin — This is a corruption of Magdalene. Mary Magdalene, in paintings was often shown weeping tears of repentance. So, she became associated with sentimentality.

Moot point — This comes from the Saxon word moot or mote, which meant a meeting to discuss things. A moot point needed to be discussed or debated.

Namby-pamby — This was originally a nickname for the poet Ambrose Philips (1674-1749) who was known for writing sentimental verse.

Nickname — This is a corruption of eke name. The old word eke meant alternative.

No rest for the wicked — This phrase comes from the Bible. In Isaiah 57:21 the prophet says: ‘There is no peace saith my God to the wicked’.

On tenterhooks — After it was woven, wool was pounded in a mixture of clay and water to clean and thicken it. This was called fulling. Afterward, the wool was stretched on a frame called a tenter to dry. It was hung on tenterhooks. So, if you were very tense, like stretched cloth, you were on tenterhooks.

Pandemonium — This comes from John Milton's poem *Paradise Lost*. In Hell the chief city is Pandemonium. In Greek Pandemonium means 'all the devils'.

Pastures new — In 1637 John Milton wrote a poem called *Lycidas*, which includes the words "Tomorrow to fresh woods and pastures new".

Pay on the nail — In the Middle Ages 'nails' were flat-topped columns in markets. When a buyer and a seller agreed, deal money was placed on the nail for all to see.



Pearls before swines — In Matthew 7,6 Jesus warned his followers not to give what is sacred to dogs and not to throw pearls (of wisdom) before swine (the ungodly).

Peeping Tom — According to legend, a man named Leofric taxed the people

of Coventry heavily. His wife, lady Godiva, begged him not to. Leofric said he would end the tax if she rode through the streets of Coventry naked. So, she did. Peeping Tom is a much later addition to the story. Everybody in Coventry was supposed to stay indoors with his or her shutters closed. However, peeping Tom had a sneaky look at Godiva and was struck blind.

Peppercorn rent — In the Middle Ages and Tudor Times, rents were sometimes paid in peppercorns because pepper was so expensive. Peppercorns were used as a form of currency. They were given as bribes or as part of a bride's dowry.

A pig in a poke — This is something bought without checking it first. A poke was a bag. If you bought a pig in a poke it might turn out the 'pig' was a puppy or a cat.

Logos

Gerald Duke writes:

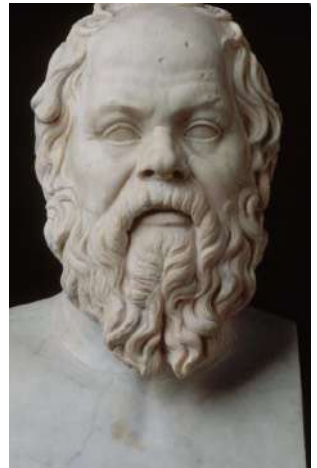


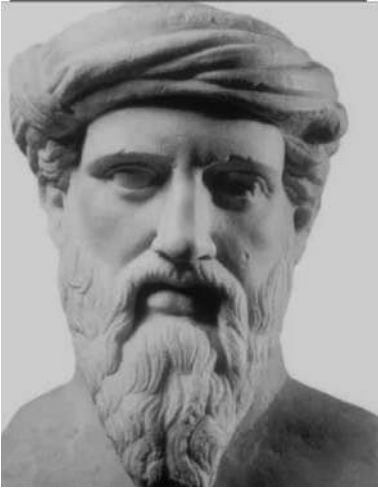
The Logos Hope is a ship that sails the world selling Bibles in countries where Christianity is not always the flavour of the month. As I read my New International Version traveller's Bible bought on board the Logos Hope, I find myself once again at John 1,1 and the meaning of the Word. I have taken the lazy route this time and gone to Gemini, Google's new AI app and asked for a 500 word essay on its meaning. This is the instant response.

Logos: A Bridge Between Worlds — The Gospel of John, originally penned in the Greek language, stands as a testament to the profound influence of Greek philosophy on early Christian thought. Central to this influence is the concept of the Logos (the Word), a term laden with philosophical weight that John employs to describe Jesus Christ. To understand the significance of the Logos in John's Gospel, we must delve into its roots in Greek philosophy and its unique application within the Christian context.

In pre-Socratic philosophy, Logos primarily referred to the underlying principle of order and rationality in the universe. Heraclitus, for example, saw Logos as an ever-present, divine reason that governs all things. Later philosophers, such as Plato and Aristotle, further developed the concept, associating it with reason, discourse, and the divine mind.

The Hellenistic period witnessed a flourishing of philosophical schools, each offering its own interpretation of the Logos. Stoicism, for instance, viewed Logos as the divine reason that permeates the cosmos, guiding all beings towards their proper function. In contrast, Philo of Alexandria, a Jewish philosopher influenced by both Greek thought and Jewish Scripture, conceived of the Logos as an intermediary between God and the created world, a divine agent through whom God acts.





John's Gospel masterfully incorporates these various strands of Greek philosophical thought into its portrayal of Jesus.

In the opening verses, John declares, "*In the beginning was the Word (=Logos), and the Word was with God, and the Word was God*" (John 1,1). This Logos, identified as Jesus Christ, is presented as the eternal, divine principle that brought the universe into existence. This resonates with the Stoic notion of a universal reason, yet it also echoes Philo's concept of an intermediary between God and creation. John's Logos is not merely a passive principle but an active force, "*through whom all things were made*" (John 1,3).

This creative power aligns with the Greek understanding of Logos as the source of order and rationality in the cosmos.

Furthermore, John emphasizes the communicative aspect of the Logos. He states, "*The Word (=Logos) became flesh and dwelt among us*" (John 1,14), signifying that the divine principle of reason has taken on human form. This incarnation allows the Logos to communicate directly with humanity, bridging the gap between the divine and the human.

This emphasis on communication resonates with the Greek understanding of Logos as discourse and reason. Jesus, as the incarnate Logos, is not only the source of creation but also the revealer of divine truth. His words, his teachings, and his very being embody the rationality and order of the universe.

John's use of the Logos thus serves as a bridge between Greek philosophy and Christian theology. It provides a framework for understanding Jesus's divine nature, his role in creation, and his significance as the revealer of God's truth. By employing a term steeped in Greek philosophical tradition, John effectively communicated the profound theological message of the Gospel to a Hellenistic audience.

The Logos, in John's Gospel, is not merely a philosophical concept borrowed from Greek thought. It is a theological term that has been reinterpreted and recontextualized within the Christian framework. It signifies the divine principle of reason, the creative force of the universe, and the revealer of God's truth. Through the Logos, John presents Jesus as the embodiment of divine wisdom, the bridge between heaven and earth, and the ultimate source of salvation.

Sacramentals — blessed candles

Why candle? - Candles are a powerful spiritual tool, symbolizing Christ as the Light of the World. In the Old Testament God commanded that a perpetual light be kept burning in the Temple to show his presence. Candles are also beautiful symbols of our lives. They are like living things: they eat the wax, breath air, move as they flicker, and they burn out at the end of their span—and so do we. They are consumed as sacrifices for the Lord in the liturgy—and so should we be too, consumed for the Lord.

How to use a blessed candle? - We should light them while we pray; and when the priest comes to our home to give Holy Communion or the last rites. We can also light them in times of storm, need, or spiritual struggle.

The effects of candle? - They provide protection against evil forces, invoking God's presence and strength. The prayer of blessing says: "*Lord Jesus Christ, bless these candles. Endow them by the power of the holy cross, with blessings from above. Wherever they are lighted or placed, the princes of darkness may depart from there, and never more dare to disturb those who belong to you.*"

It's not magic! - Blessed candles are symbols of our faith and devotion. Of course, we need to have faith, not in the objects themselves because that would be superstition, but in God's Providence and in the mysterious ways in which He works, including through the blessed candle. In his goodness, God wanted to give us tangible signs of his care for us.

How to use blessed candles? Reminder - Blessed candles provide a tangible symbol of Christ's victory over darkness. When you feel lost - The more hopeless you feel, the more difficult it is to find your way back to hope but God "*is the lamp to our feet and the light to our path*". Nothing is lost when you have God in your life. When you struggle with sin - Praying in the light of blessed candles, you can ask the Lord for the fire of His love to burn out all sin in you, and to illumine the areas of your life which need healing. The Saints are our brethren - The candle helps you remember that you are never alone in your prayers but always joined by the saints who already live in God's perfect and eternal light. Help with prayer - Candles provide a powerful spiritual ambiance. By their impact on our senses, they can calm the heart and open us up to the light of God, making prayer easier. Storms (physical or spiritual) - Light blessed candles in severe weather, invoking the power of God to protect you and your home. As symbols of Christ, blessed candles are also powerful against evil spirits prowling about. They live in darkness, and so the light of the blessed candle invokes the power of God to keep the devil's influence at bay. Devotion - Candles are lit before sacred images to show our reverence to God and his saints.

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

Anniversaries of death

Order of Morning and Evening Prayer

Calendar for February 2025

SAT	1 st	St. Ignatius of Antioch, Bishop & Martyr	9.30am
SUN	2 nd	PURIFICATION OF OUR LADY	10.30am, 4pm
MON	3 rd	<i>St. Blaise Bishop (Blessing of the throat)</i>	12pm
TUE	4 th	St. Andrew Corsini Bishop	9am
WED	5 th	St. Agatha, Virgin & Martyr	10am
THU	6 th	St. Titus Bishop	6pm
FRI	7 th	St. Romuald Abbot	12pm
SAT	8 th	St. John of Matha	9.30am
SUN	9 th	5TH SUNDAY AFTER EPIPHANY	10.30am, 4pm
MON	10 th	St. Scholastica	12pm
TUE	11 th	Apparition of Our Lady at Lourdes	9am
WED	12 th	The Seven Holy Founders of the Servites	10am
THU	13 th	<i>Feria</i>	6pm
FRI	14 th	<i>St. Valentine, Martyr</i>	12pm
SAT	15 th	<i>Of Our Lady (Burial of Alleluia)</i>	9.30am
SUN	16 th	SEPTUAGESIMA SUNDAY	10.30am, 4pm
MON	17 th	<i>Feria</i>	12pm
TUE	18 th	<i>St. Simeon Bishop, Martyr</i>	9am
WED	19 th	<i>Feria</i>	10am
THU	20 th	<i>Feria</i>	6pm
FRI	21 st	Monthly Requiem	12pm
SAT	22 nd	St. Peter's Chair	9.30am
SUN	23 rd	SEXAGESIMA SUNDAY	10.30am, 4pm
MON	24 th	St. Matthias Apostle	12pm
TUE	25 th	St. Walburga, Virgin	9am
WED	26 th	<i>Feria</i>	10am
THU	27 th	St. Gabriel of O.L. of Sorrows	6pm
FRI	28 th	<i>Feria (Anointing)</i>	12pm

*We pray for...*

- 1st Shrine of Walsingham - *Jack Freegard*
- 2nd Our Parish - *May Biles, Neil Pollock pr, Edward Webber, Vera Heller*
- 3rd The purity and charity of our words - *Dot Thorne*
- 4th Our Servers
- 5th Victims of sexual abuse - *Amelia Woods*
- 6th Priests and vocations - *Doll Rowland*
- 7th Dying
- 8th Cell of Our Lady of Walsingham - *Mike Hetherington*
- 9th Our Parish - *Leonard Paddock, Pam Groves, Maureen Riggs*
- 10th Families
- 11th Addicts, alcoholics, gamblers - *Hilda Dix*
- 12th Greater devotion to Our Lady - *Elizabeth Woolveridge*
- 13th S.P.O.T. - its volunteers & clients - *Den Phillips*
- 14th Couples - *Thomas Bibby, Win Marshall, Charlie Cooper*
- 15th An increase in our missionary spirit
- 16th Our Parish - *Joan Hodge, Bob de Quehen, Caroline Stewart*
- 17th Our PCC - *Ivy Curtis, Steve Warner*
- 18th Peace
- 19th Our Benefactors (living and departed)
- 20th Our Organists & Choir - *Leslie Quehen pr*
- 21st Departed
- 22nd Unity of the Church - *Stephen Elliott, William Gentle, Gordon Vincent pr*
- 23rd Our Parish - *Sandra Ryder*
- 24th S.P.O.T., its clients & volunteers - *Mary Adlam*
- 25th Grieving parents
- 26th Grace of true conversion - *Francis Miles*
- 27th All who suffer in body, mind or spirit - *Bill Frecker, Jack Williams*
- 28th Sick - *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	43	Hosea 8 1 Corinthians 12,1-11	2	48, 146	Exodus 13,1-16 Romans 12,1-5
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3	50	Malachi 1 John 13,1-11	16	44	Jeremiah 30,10-22 Acts 6
4	51	Malachi 2 John 13,12-20	17	76	Ecclesiastes 1 John 17,1-5
5	54	Malachi 3 John 13,21-30	18	77	Ecclesiastes 2 John 17,6-19
6	55	Malachi 4 John 13,31-end	19	78 v. 1-39	Ecclesiastes 3 John 17,20-end
7	56	Nahum 1 John 14,1-14	20	78 v. 40-end	Ecclesiastes 4 John 18,1-11
8	57	Obadiah 1 John 14,15-end	21	79	Ecclesiastes 5 John 18,12-27
9	3, 4	Jeremiah 26,1-16 Acts 3,1-10	22	83	Ecclesiastes 6 John 18,28-end
10	63	Joel 1,1-14 John 15,1-11	23	104 v. 1-26	Job 28,1-11 Acts 14,8-17
11	68	Joel 1,15-end John 15,12-17	24	16, 147 v. 1-12	Ecclesiastes 7,1-14 John 19,1-16
12	70	Joel 2,1-17 John 15,18-end	25	85	Ecclesiastes 7,15-end John 19,17-30
13	71	Joel 2,18-27 John 16,1-15	26	87	Ecclesiastes 8 John 19,31-end
14	73	Joel 2,28-end John 16,16-22	27	88	Ecclesiastes 9 John 20,1-10
15	75	Joel 3 John 16,23-end	28	89 v. 1-18	Ecclesiastes 11,1-8 John 20,11-18

Each reading ends with these words:

V. This is the word of the Lord.

R. Thanks be to God.

BENEDICTUS

Ant: The Lord said unto Noah: The end of all flesh is come before Me, make an ark that seed of all flesh may be saved therein.

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: The Lord said unto Noah: The end of all flesh is come before Me, make an ark that seed of all flesh may be saved therein.

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

O Lord, we beseech you favourably to hear the prayers of your people; that we, who are justly afflicted for our sins, may be mercifully delivered by your goodness, for the glory of your Name. Through Jesus Christ our Lord. **R.** Amen.

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

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

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

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

Morning Prayer ends with the final Antiphon of Our Lady:

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;

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

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

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

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

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

1	Psalm 118	1 Samuel 1,19-end Hebrews 4,11-end	6	62	Leviticus 9 Philippians 2,14-end
2	122, 132	Haggai 2,1-9 John 2,18-22	7	64	Leviticus 16,2-24 Philippians 3
3	59	Exodus 23,1-17 Philippians 1,1-11	8	65	Leviticus 17 Philippians 4
4	60	Exodus 30,1-16 Philippians 1,12-end	9	1, 2	Ecclesiastes 12 John 20,19-end
5	61	Leviticus 8 Philippians 2,1-13	10	66	Leviticus 19,1-18 1 Timothy 1

11	67	Leviticus 23,1-22 1 Timothy 2	20	86	Genesis 27,1-40 2 Timothy 1,15-end
12	69	Leviticus 23,23-end 1 Timothy 3	21	91	Genesis 28 2 Timothy 2
13	72	Leviticus 24,1-9 1 Timothy 4	22	93	Genesis 29,1-30 2 Timothy 3
14	74	Leviticus 25,1-24 1 Timothy 5,1-16	23	147 v. 13-end	Jeremiah 7,1-20 John 6,27-40
15	80	Numbers 6 1 Timothy 5,17-end	24	94	1 Samuel 16,1-13 Matthew 7,15-27
16	5, 6	Jeremiah 4,1-18 John 4,43-end	25	80	Genesis 31,1-24 2 Timothy 4
17	81	Genesis 24,1-28 1 Timothy 6,1-10	26	102	Genesis 31,25-end Titus 1
18	82	Genesis 24,29-end 1 Timothy 6,11-end	27	104	Genesis 32,1-30 Titus 2
19	84	Genesis 25,7-end 2 Timothy 1,1-14	28	105	Genesis 33,1-17 Titus 3

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, 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, 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 one of the following Collects is said:

O Lord, we beseech you favourably to hear the prayers of your people; that we, who are justly afflicted for our sins, may be mercifully delivered by your goodness, for the glory of your Name. Through Jesus Christ our Lord. **R.** Amen.

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

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

V. Let us bless the Lord. **R.** Thanks be to God. *V.* And may the souls of the faithful departed, through the mercy of God, rest in peace. **R.** Amen.

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

Prayers in sickness and in need

In any need: O my Jesus, you have said: “*Verily I say to you, ask and you will receive, seek and you will find, knock and it will be opened to you.*” And: “*Verily I say to you, if you ask anything of the Father in my name, he will give it to you.*” Behold I knock, I seek and ask the Father in your name for the grace of...*(here name your request)* O Sacred Heart of Jesus, for whom it is impossible not to have compassion on the afflicted, have pity on me, miserable sinner, and graciously grant me the grace which I ask of you, through the Immaculate Heart of Mary, your tender Mother and mine. Amen.

In any need: Holy Heart of Jesus, Sweet Sanctuary of rest, bring peace to my soul and settle my spirit, especially in the matter of... *(here name your request)* I vow to place all of my worries and fears into the wound of your Sacred Heart, there to be tended to in accordance with your perfect will, which desires only what is best for me. Your love alone is enough, and I surrender to it; clinging to the hope of a swift resolution and trusting with confidence in all of your promises. Amen.

When health is failing: Sweet Heart of Jesus, my health is failing, and I am hurting. Thank you for my body, which is a great and marvellous gift and a temple where your Holy Spirit chooses to dwell. I offer up my current suffering *(for ...)*, accepting whatever you permit to happen to me. I believe in your healing power and claim your promises of peace, help in all my afflictions, and the grace of final perseverance. Help me to resist all fear, and hide me, Lord, in the haven of your Sacred Heart. Give me the strength to accept this current state of my health with joy, holy resignation, and lively hope for the future. Amen.

In times of loss and betrayal: Sweet Jesus, your heart beats for the broken-hearted, and you know their pain. You experienced loss when your friend Lazarus died, and betrayal when your friends abandoned and rejected you in your darkest hours. I ask you for relief in this time of grief. I cry out to your Heart, seeking comfort and consolation. Take this present heartache and unite it to your own for my good and for the good of others. Ease my sorrow and fill my heart with hope and light to face another day. Amen.

For all those in need: Watch, O Lord, with those who wake, watch, or weep tonight, and give your angels charge over those who sleep. Tend your sick ones, O Lord Christ. Rest your weary ones. Bless your dying ones. Soothe your suffering ones. Pity your afflicted ones. Shield your joyous ones — for all your love’s sake. Amen.

Commentary on Zechariah's Song (The Benedictus) - part 2

*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.*

The allusions to the Old Testament are as replete here as in the previous stanza; indeed, the Benedictus now heightens them. We see the Messiah's birth fulfilling the great covenant promises to the patriarchs. As God promised that Abraham would have his seed bless the earth, that Isaac would have a Land, and promised Jacob that Shiloh would come, so Christ appears on the scene. Indeed, all of these promises stand against the backdrop of the first of the great patriarchs.

We see the story of Christ as the second act of a play that began with Father Abraham. We now see those magnificent promises realized. In chapter 3 of the Acts of the Apostles Peter already blesses and heals in Christ's name and power and explains in what is one of the earliest sermons of the Church, how all promises pointed to and now have been fulfilled in Christ Jesus.

As these promises are heightened, however, they are also transformed, or rather transposed. Zechariah speaks by the Holy Spirit that Christ would "save us from our enemies." Contemporary Jews of Our Lord were expecting this saving act of God in terms of political freedom. Their hope was that the Messiah would rid them of the Romans (and any other oppressors) so that they, the Chosen People, may live in peace and prosperity in the promised land of Palestine. It will be Christ to open the eyes of us all to the fact that our true enemies are sin and death and it is from these he came to free us.

Zechariah, indeed, prophesies already in this sense when he makes a clear reference to freedom of worship. He says that his son, John, would prepare the way for the Messiah at the end of time, who would come in the power of the Most High and give us full and final freedom to worship God. But what else could keep us from worshipping God if not sin and death...?!

Zechariah confesses that this will happen in the ministry of Christ, a ministry that did not come with the sword. We now see the ultimate reality clothed in the words: Jesus came and defeated the true enemy, the final Goliath, the unconquerable giant: Satan, sin, and death. He set us free from the ultimate Pharaoh and leads us daily further into the true Promised Land.

Three days that changed the world Part two: The Grave

Irene Leader writes:

Jesus learned the Scriptures like every Jewish child. He was a Rabbi, a Teacher (Jn 3,2). He learned who He was from His Mother. This was verified by His Father at His Baptism where God called Him His beloved Son and He was filled with Holy Spirit. Prior to this, Holy Spirit had only come upon people in the Old Testament for a specific reason, like the Prophets. However, now Jesus was able to fulfil His Ministry because He was a man filled with Holy Spirit who enabled Him.

The Old Testament speaks of Jesus all the way through it. In John 5,39-40 Jesus said the Scriptures talked of him. In Matthew 12,38-40 he talked about the testimony of Jonah: Jonah's three days and three nights in the belly of the Whale were a foretelling of Jesus in the grave. Jesus declared that the Son of Man would be in the heart of the earth three daytimes and three nights (Jonah 1,17). We either believe what He says, or we call Him a liar?

For a timeline of these three days: https://www.youtube.com/results?search_query=in+the+grave+three+days+and+three+nights In 1 Cor 15,4 we read: "He rose again the third day," which does not mean He died on Friday and rose on Sunday morning (see the link).

In Matthew 27,62-66 the Chief Priests and Pharisees informed Pilate that Jesus said, 'I will rise again in three days,' so requested Pilate to place guards at the tomb for three days.

Psalms 22,12 speaks of the bulls of Bashan representing all that is pressing in on Jesus trying to trap him into the eternity of hell.

Jesus experienced what it means being forsaken by God or the Holy Spirit leaving him. He was not in Hell, he descended into what in Hebrew is called Sheol, in Greek Hades, and in Latin Limbo. Revelation 20,14 shows there is a difference between Hades and Hell. From the Bible we know that Israel believed there were two parts to Hades: the bosom of Abraham where believers went, and the abode of the wicked dead for those who had not accepted God and were alienated from Him (Lk 16,19-31).

Jesus knew very well God's word in the Scripture and he intimately knew all the prophecies. A few examples are: "*Weeping may endure for a night, but joy comes in the morning.*" "*You will make My enemies My footstool.*" "*You will not abandon me to Sheol, nor will You allow Your Holy One to undergo decay.*" "*The Spirit rests on Me because the Lord has anointed me.*" Jesus also had what His Mother told

Him. The Father called him His beloved Son at the Jordan. We can be certain that Jesus often meditated on these things and his identity, based on God's realities, was clear to him: he knew exactly who he was.

The grave, too, was about his identity. Without any shadow of doubt Jesus knew God would make him victorious over death. In his divine nature, Jesus himself rose from the dead. But in his human nature, we can say that God burst Him forth from the grave by the power of Holy Spirit.

Facing the grave, facing death, the human nature - soul, knowledge, emotions, intelligence - of Jesus had to show forth a complete trust in God and his word, including the very prophecies about him. He was the appointed Messiah who would overcome death to provide a way for us to come to God.

Taking into account strictly only his human nature, Jesus did not have inherent power to raise Himself from the dead. Hence the Scripture says God raised him (see: Acts 2,32; Ephesians 1,20). Jesus did not give in to the emotions of defeat, neither should we. We cannot abandon all that God has done for us because we have all these present negative circumstances which weigh us down.

In the Grave Jesus took the curse of the Law that we deserved and of which we were guilty. He overcame all the curses. He overcame death, and just as he descended into Hades, so he returned from there victorious to lead captive captivity: that is to lead the believers (the just) into the bosom of Abraham who had been captive to death (Ephesians 4,8). By this he showed his authority over death.

We need to acknowledge the magnitude of what Jesus did for us to know 1) how much God loves us, 2) from what we are saved, 3) what He achieved for us.

When we die to self, we take our sin, that is everything of us that is outside of Christ, to the Cross and into the grave. Although we are reborn in water and the Spirit, we still do sin time to time. The Holy Spirit convicts but never condemns, so we should not condemn ourselves either (Romans 8,1.16-17). Like Jesus, the "grave" is where we can overcome temptation before we rise again and realise that we do not need to behave or say something in a way that does not glorify God. Jesus gave us a model of how our life could be when we are in harmony with God.

The part of ourselves that we take to the "grave", in the short term, we experience the pain of doing so. Pain in life is inevitable but suffering is optional. Like Jesus in the grave, we look to the joy of harmonising our life with God.

Christians and the Christlike way of suffering: Blessed Benedetta Bianchi Porro (1936-1964)

by Dawn Beutner for CNA (23/1/25)

One of the finest aspects of modern American culture is our willingness to find innovative ways to help individuals with disabilities. From motorized wheelchairs to individualized education programs to cutting edge assistive technology devices, there are many options available today to aid those with disabilities.

However, one of the worst qualities of contemporary life is our horror of the suffering experienced by disabled persons. When our technology is unable to eliminate their pains, cure their illnesses, or make them able to live “normal” lives, we are tempted to give up. The life of one young woman shows us a better way.



Blessed Benedetta Bianchi Porro was born in Dovadola, Italy, in 1936. She grew up in a devout family with five siblings, was a happy, beautiful child, loved reading, and was an outstanding student in school. But she also repeatedly suffered from health problems.

Almost immediately after Benedetta’s birth, her mother baptized her with water from Lourdes because she was so worried about the newborn’s health. Only three months later, Benedetta contracted polio. Although she survived the potentially fatal disease, Benedetta suffered long-term side effects. One of her legs never grew as long as the other, and she was forced to wear a medical brace on her torso to support her curved spine. Benedetta was also teased about her disabilities by other students. She was thirteen years old when she could no longer hear the teacher’s questions in school and realized that she was losing her hearing. Later, she had to use a cane to walk.

At the age of seventeen, Benedetta started college. She quickly discovered a love for the field of medicine. Believing the care of the sick to be her life’s vocation, she threw herself into her studies.

She was an excellent student, but it wasn’t easy for her to persevere. On one occasion, a professor yelled at her in front of the entire class, angrily insisting that a deaf woman could never be a doctor. Benedetta responded to him with patience and charity—and she learned to lip-read. Although medical treatments and hospital stays periodically interrupted her classwork, she aced her exams when she recovered.

With the help of her medical training, Benedetta realized that she had a rare condition called Von Recklinghausen's disease. The tumours which were growing in her nervous system had caused her deafness, and permanent blindness and paralysis could be expected as the disease progressed. Today, cancer treatments and other procedures are available for sufferers of Von Recklinghausen's disease, but surgery to remove the tumours was the only option at the time.

Multiple head surgeries were performed on Benedetta, but they only slowed the progression of the disease. One of the surgeries even dramatically worsened her condition when a surgeon accidentally cut a nerve, which left her paralyzed on one side of her face.

Benedetta, very humanly, feared the surgeries and the pain associated with her condition. She was dismayed at her continually declining health and her increasing loss of autonomy. She grieved the need to abandon her studies and the end of her dreams of becoming a doctor. But instead of anger, bitterness, and rebellion over all the things she could no longer do, she turned to God for help.

From the time she was small, Benedetta had tried to see her Heavenly Father's love for her in the good times and bad. She was comforted by the presence of Jesus Christ in the Eucharist. She sought the wisdom of the Holy Spirit as she made decisions about her medical care. As her sufferings increased, she drew closer to Christ on the Cross and drew strength from Him.

Benedetta travelled to Lourdes on two occasions and prayed for healing. When the woman in the bed next to her at Lourdes was miraculously cured, Benedetta heroically tried to accept the gift of being a witness that woman's cure but without envy or disappointment that her own condition was unchanged.





At the end of her life, Benedetta was very limited in her ability to communicate. She was still able to speak, although weakly. For some inexplicable reason, her left hand was not paralyzed,

which allowed her to write. She could also understand others when they spelled letters from sign language on one side of her face.

Benedetta admitted to her family and friends that her disabilities were hard to bear. But she also said that she was filled with God's peace. She experienced both physical and emotional agony during her long battle with this disease, but she also experienced spiritual ecstasies and a great closeness to God.

That's why her friends and family, rather than trying to avoid being around a woman in such obvious pain, tried so hard to communicate with her. They found themselves consoled by her presence and growing in their faith in God simply by being around her.

The night before Benedetta died, she thought the end was near and told her nurse that she was hoping for a sign from God. On the morning of January 23, 1964, her mother happened to tell her that a white rose had opened in the family garden, a surprising event for January. Benedetta recognized the rose as a sign from a dream she had had a few months ago. She died that very day.

Benedetta's life, like that of other holy men and women who faced lifelong health problems, reminds us that freedom from pain in this life is impossible. Granted, we can and should as a culture seek morally licit ways to help those with disabilities, particularly through science, medicine, and technology. But we can also, through ordinary acts of compassion, genuine friendship, and the gift of our time, help those who are suffering.

More importantly, just as our Lord showed us the power of His redemptive suffering on the Cross, so we can follow His example when we are enduring severe pain, are misunderstood by others, or are forced to set aside our dreams. Rather than turning to despair, we can turn to God, who is always closest to us when we are suffering like His Son. In so doing, we will make our lives as holy as that of Blessed Benedetta Bianchi Porro, whose soul was made beautiful by God's grace in her sufferings.

The state of Christianity in England today and tomorrow

by Joanna Bogle (for The Dispatch, 30 Dec 2024)

Some years before inheriting the throne, the then Prince Charles, on being asked about that ancient title “Defender of the Faith”—conferred, of course, by a Pope on King Henry VIII, in one of the ironies of history—reflected that he would see himself rather as simply “defender of faith”. This caused a minor stir at the time and is still quoted with indignation by friends who enjoy being angry about this perceived lapse from loyalty to Christianity.

I am not so sure. As Prince of Wales and now more significantly since coming to the throne, King Charles has been an outspoken defender of Christians persecuted for their faith. This Advent, he led the congregation at a special service of prayer for the Christians of Iraq who have suffered cruelly at the hands of ISIS (Daesh). The service, held at London’s famous Farm Street Jesuit Church, was organized by the international Catholic charity Aid to the Church in Need. It was a powerful experience to be there, along with the Papal Nuncio, our Cardinal Archbishop of Westminster, and a large congregation, listening to a Chaldean choir and hearing a prayer in Aramaic, the language Our Lord himself would have spoken while on earth. And we sang “Dear Lord and Father of mankind” with its line about those very first Christians “beside the Syrian sea”.

At his coronation, the King made the now-standard promise to uphold the Protestant form of Christianity. George V adapted the oath, refusing to use an earlier version that specifically denounced various Catholic beliefs and practices. King Charles is known to be interested in Eastern Orthodoxy—in which his father Prince Philip was brought up—and has stayed on Mount Athos where monks offer hospitality to those prepared to share in some days of austerity and prayer. And he has been openly supportive of Catholicism: in a significant move, he attended the canonization of St John Henry Newman in Rome in 2019 and wrote a notable feature published in *The Times* celebrating Newman’s life and work.

The link between monarch, Church, and people is a strange one. Queen Elizabeth II, along with large numbers of her subjects, attended church as a matter of course on Christmas morning. This was usually mentioned in the news bulletins later in the day, but I don’t recall any live television coverage of her walking with her family along the lane to the little church near the Royal estate at Sandringham, much less of large crowds attending her as she did so.

But in recent years, this Royal walk to worship has become something of a spectacle: people gather to present flowers, call out greetings, and hope

for the chance of a chat or even a selfie with one of the Royals. It's strange: most seem to pay little or no attention to the service in church (old-fashioned Matins), which is sometimes broadcast to the crowds outside. And they are certainly not in church themselves—instead, they have travelled by car (Sandringham is in a rural part of Norfolk) simply to be near the Royals on this Christmas morning in what seems to be turning into a sort of substitute for Christian worship.

I have lost count of the times that Americans, taking part in the Catholic History Walks that I lead around London, have asked me about the status of the Church of England and the religious prospects of our country. They are fascinated by the role of the King.

The situation is going to get messy. Along with many (most?) other Catholics in the UK, I have always felt that having some Church of England bishops in the House of Lords is in general a good thing, bringing some Christian influence to bear and paying due tribute to our Christian tradition and heritage. As St John Henry Newman put it, the Church of England was at least some sort of bulwark against atheism. But today's Anglican bishops certainly cannot offer any reliable guarantee that they will defend, for example, marriage as the specific union of a man and a woman or the need to protect children in the womb.

Numbers for Anglican worship are plummeting. Catholic numbers are poor, too, and the majority of boys and girls at our Catholic schools are certainly not at Mass on Sundays. We can muster large crowds for major events but the state of the Catholic church is poor: we are not ordaining enough priests and parishes are being effectively merged or having to offer reduced numbers of Sunday Masses.

On the other hand, the general trend is towards orthodox and traditional beliefs and values among the Catholic young: the days of “kum-by-ya” are over, and projects like Radio Maria, Youth 2000, and the Faith Movement flourish along with Latin chant and Adoration of the Blessed Sacrament. Large numbers of African, West Indian, Goan, Filipino, and Hong Kong Chinese parishioners keep urban and suburban congregations flourishing and produce crowds at pilgrimages and diocesan events.

What next? At a guess, nothing dramatic. The quietly busy Anglicanism that Queen Elizabeth II knew and lived has gone: today many country churches of Medieval beauty attract only a tiny group of worshippers. The vicar, sometimes with his young family, still exists in rural areas—usually serving several churches—and the most energetic tend to be of an Evangelical style. There continues to be a small, irregular trickle of the “high” Anglican clergy towards the Catholic church. The Church of England's lady

“priests” tend to describe themselves as having studied “pastoral theology” in what is often a later-life career change with—at least to this Catholic questioner—a confusion about once standard Christian theology. There is a lot of emphasis on higher-level bureaucracy with well-paid staff at diocesan levels, and this has caused some public backlash, as has a recent announcement that the Church of England would pay sums of money to undisclosed recipients in countries deemed to have suffered from Anglican involvement in slavery two hundred years ago.

The present government seems likely to try to evict the Anglican bishops from the House of Lords. The Anglicans’ Synod will probably endorse formally the arrangement for public same-sex blessings that has already been agreed upon for private ceremonies. The Methodist church, once a major part of community life, has long conceded to the general culture on such issues and will continue to melt away in its former heartlands—Wales is now dotted with former chapels that have become picturesque holiday homes for well-to-do city dwellers.

The scene is messy and frankly bleak. England isn’t going to become Catholic anytime soon, and nor will it be sensible to describe us as an Anglican country. The Moslem strength grows daily. Large numbers throng the mosques, and Islamic dress is a normal sight on city streets, along with advertisements for Moslem projects and, of course, halal meat food for Eid as standard in supermarkets.

Don’t assume any dramatic change at a formal level in Britain’s Church/state relationships. Don’t assume, either, that things are static. They never are. When Catholics talk—and pray—about the conversion of England, as they have never ceased to do since the Guild of Our Lady of Ransom was founded during the Catholic revival of the 19th century, they do so with a recognition of our complicated history. The Reformation in England was never a popular movement—it was imposed from above via a king’s lust, a dynasty anxious to assert its power, and an episcopate in need of renewal.

The Church of England, inheriting the churches and parish system, worked partly through people’s sense of connection with their past and their local, national, and family structures. Today, with a population that is changing daily as new immigrants surge across the Channel and with new media shouting a vast variety of ideas and opinions against formal older structures urging varying degrees of “woke”, the hope for Christian renewal essentially lies where it always has—with the truth committed by Christ to the care of his Church, via fragile men and women with all their hopes and failings. With prayer and courage, that Church can remain and flourish in Britain.

The Church Fathers on Judging Others

Archimandrite Kirill — Our neighbour does not depend on us, he owes nothing to us. We all belong to God, both our life and our death are in His hands. We are children of the Heavenly Father, who gives each and everyone different gifts, both spiritual and physical. Consequently, only God has the right to hold our neighbour accountable for what he does with his gifts—whether he manages them properly or does harm to himself or to his neighbour. So we must not get into others' business by judging them.

St. Ambrose of Optina — We should humble ourselves, anger and judgment come from pride. Like rings of a chain, our sins are connected to and cause one another.

Do not ponder over what people do, do not judge, do not lament, “Why? For what?” You had better say to yourself, “Why would I care about them? At the Last Judgment, God will not blame me for what they did.” Turn away from thinking about people's lives and gossiping, but fervently pray to the Lord imploring for help.

Some succumb to the sin of judgment out of habit, some because they remember wrongs, others out of envy or hatred; but in most cases we start judging others because of our conceit and arrogance. Never changing and also sinful, we anyway believe we are better than many other people. If we wish to be rid of the sin of judgment, we should force ourselves in any possible way toward humility before God and people, and implore the Lord for help.

St. Maximus the Confessor — Whoever is curious to know about the sins of others or judges his brother out of suspicion has not yet begun to repent, neither does he care to know about his own sins, heavier than heaviest lead indeed. He does not know why people are heavy-hearted, take pleasure in vanity and seek after falsehood (Psalms 4:3). So, as a madman wandering in the dark and neglecting his own sins, he muses on the sins of others—either real or imaginary—guided by his suspicion.

St. Nicodemus of the Holy Mountain — Pride and conceit give rise to another evil doing us serious harm; this is making harsh judgment on our neighbour and condemning him; this makes us disregard, despise, and humiliate him when the occasion arises. Esteeming ourselves highly and imagining that we are better than we really are, we clearly look down upon our neighbours, judge and despise them, as we believe ourselves free of their shortcomings and think we are different. But you have no authority to do

this; by claiming this authority you immediately think yourself good enough to make judgments—not before weak people, but before God, the omnipotent Judge of all.

St. Anthony the Great — Do not judge any mortal being lest the Lord should dismiss your prayers.

Abba Dorotheus — Who troubles, judges and does harm other than demons? So, it turns out, we help demons to ruin both our lives and the lives of our neighbours. Why does this happen? It happens because we have no charity. For charity shall cover the multitude of sins (1 Peter 4:8). Saints do not condemn one who sins, nor do they reject him, but rather sympathize with him, they are sorry for him, they instruct and comfort him, they heal him as if he were an ailing man, and do everything to save him.

St. Simeon of the Pskov-Caves — For a kind person everyone is kind, but an evil and wretched man not only has a distorted view of everyone, but also suspects, scorns and speaks spitefully of those who are righteous. We judge our neighbour because we make no effort to get to know ourselves. The one who seeks to know himself, his shortcomings, sins and transgressions has no time to see them in the neighbour.

The tongue of one who judges is more foul than hell; yet hell takes those who are evil, while the tongue kills both the wicked and the good.

Prayer of St. Ephraim the Syrian — Lord, grant me to see my own failings, and not to judge my brother.

Do not mock or judge someone who has fallen into sin, but rather pray lest you fall into sin. Do not pamper anyone while he is alive and do not lose hope in him before he dies. Do not laugh at one who has sinned, rather set him on his feet.

Saint John Chrysostom — Do not judge anyone, but try to overcome your own shortcomings; otherwise, you will deserve condemnation. Anyone will fall when the Lord does not support him; we cannot stand without Divine help.

St. Isaiah of Scetis — The one whose heart is flawless deems everyone to be flawless; the one whose heart is defiled by sins deems no one to be flawless, but finds everyone similar to him.

Saint Macarius — Our pure thoughts can help us see everyone as pious and good. If we see them as wicked, this often proceeds from our own disposition.

Know the Bible! - The Book of Ruth

The Book of Ruth can be divided into five main sections:

1. Naomi and Ruth return to Bethlehem (chapter 1)
2. Ruth gleans in Boaz' field (chapter 2)
3. Ruth proposes to Boaz (chapter 3)
4. Boaz redeems Ruth and Naomi (4,1-15)
5. King David's genealogy (4,16-22)

Chapter 1 — It's a dark and troubled time for Naomi, a Jewish woman: a famine drives her and her family from their land in Israel, and her husband and sons die in a foreign country. But when she hears that there is food in her homeland again, she makes her way back. One daughter-in-law leaves Naomi to find a new husband in Moab; the other swears an oath of loyalty to Naomi:

“Where you go, I will go, and where you lodge, I will lodge. Your people shall be my people, and your God, my God. Where you die, I will die, and there I will be buried. Thus may the LORD do to me, and worse, if anything but death parts you and me.” (1,16-17) This woman's name is Ruth.

Chapter 2 — The arrival of Naomi and Ruth in Bethlehem coincides with the barley harvest. Naomi gives Ruth permission to glean those fields where she is allowed.

Ruth is working in the field of Boaz, a rich Jewish landowner, when a servant identifies her to him as Naomi's daughter-in-law. It happens that Boaz is a kinsman of Naomi's late husband, making him eligible to redeem Naomi's family, that is, to purchase her late husband's field and continue her late husband's bloodline.

Chapter 3 — Boaz tells Ruth to work with female servants, warns the young men not to bother her, and at mealtime invites her to share his food. When Naomi learns that Ruth has the attention and kindness of Boaz, she counsels Ruth to approach him directly: *“Put on your best attire and go down to the threshing floor. Do not make yourself known to the man before he has finished eating and drinking. But when he lies down, take note of the place where he does so. Then go, uncover a place at his feet, and lie down. He will tell you what to do”* (3,3-4).

Naomi's plan was that Ruth seduce Boaz, just as Tamar and the daughters of Lot all seduced *“an older family member in order to become the mother of his offspring”* (Genesis 19). At the crucial moment, however, Ruth abandons the attempt at seduction and instead requests a permanent, legal union with Boaz.

Chapters 4 & 5 — Boaz is impressed by Ruth's character, and marries her. Ruth and Boaz have a son, and the book closes with a surprise: Ruth is the great-grandmother of King David, whom we meet later in the book of 1 Samuel.

The story of Ruth takes place during the time of the Judges: it's a bright story of hope during a very dark period in Israel's spiritual and political history. Indeed, 4,14 could be the theme verse of the whole Book of Ruth: *"Then the women said to Naomi, 'Blessed is the Lord who has not left you without a redeemer today, and may his name become famous in Israel.'"*

So what is Ruth's role in the Bible?

The book of Ruth is a love story, but it is far more than a romance. Ruth's devotion to Naomi and Boaz' devotion to Ruth provide two compelling portraits of love among the people of God. But the greatest love displayed in this book is God's love for Naomi (and all of Israel):

1) Naomi claims that God has dealt bitterly with her (1,20), but the story ends with the women recognizing God's provision for her (4,14);

2) Naomi blames God for the loss of her two sons (1,21), but the book concludes with Ruth being praised as better than seven sons (4,15).

Just as Boaz redeemed Naomi, David will go on to deliver Israel from her enemies and bring about security for the nation of Israel.

St. Augustine wrote that the New Testament is hidden in the Old, and the Old Testament revealed in the New. In other words: the Old Testament was a preparation for truths and mysteries that we can fully understand only once they have been brought to their fullness in the New Testament. A good example can be Boaz in the Book of Ruth as the book of Ruth shows us a picture of Christ in Boaz, the kinsman-redeemer.

Boaz was a qualified redeemer to Naomi: he was a family member, he had the means of purchasing her land, he had the willingness to buy the land and marry Ruth. The parallels with Jesus are obvious:

- Jesus became one of us (see John 1,14 and Hebrews 2,14) just as Boaz and Ruth became one family though previously separated by race, language, culture, and distance;
- Jesus was capable of buying us back (1 Peter 1,18-19) as Boaz did with Ruth following Old Testament law;
- Jesus was not only capable but also willing to buy us back, setting an example of a self-sacrificing husband (see Ephesians 5,25-27).

While the Book of Ruth historically is about the genealogy of King David, theologically speaking the story of Ruth foreshadows Jesus Christ, the great Redeemer, and his work.

The Psalms

Psalms 46: Our God is a safe stronghold

With its powerful and poetic words, Psalm 46 inspired various Christian hymns. Its form combines elements of hymns and of prophetic literature. The psalm can be divided into three strophes, each of which gives a different world-picture; however, they all conclude with a testimony to God.

The keynote of the psalm is the intrepid confession of faith in God. That confession triumphantly rises in the first strophe (1-3) above the raging of *nature* at the formation and dissolution of the world, and in the second strophe (4-7) above the image of the *history* of the assaults of the nations who storm at the walls of Jerusalem like the surge of the waves. Finally in the last strophe (8-11) this confession of faith shows a God who rises above the battlefield covered with corpses and ruins to establish his eternal Kingdom of peace on earth.

First strophe: *the formation and dissolution of the world (verses 1-3)* — The God celebrated in these verses is a God who is very near and also is the same God who in the past has helped in thousands of adversities. His people and their prayer are a memorial to his imperishable might and love.

The thoughts of the psalmist are completely focused on God who was and is and is to come. This is why we are presented with a complete arch of history which reaches from the beginning of creation to its end and shows it to us as the sphere of God's activity. God created the world so that he can show his faithfulness, love, mercy and might to his creatures, filling them with hope, joy and awe.

The worshippers face the end of the world without trepidation. Even though the world perishes and “changes its shape” whilst the last days emerge with terrible labour-pains; even though the everlasting mountains sink in the waves of the sea—this total collapse of what is only finite cannot frighten the faithful whose faith is grounded in eternity. After all, what harm shall the roaring and firming waves of the great flood, that comes surging along at the end of the days, be able to inflict upon a faith which sees God at work even in such a world-catastrophe!

The final verse of the first strophe is filled with joy. God's people watch the crackling of the world and sees it as the triumph of God's power and, in consequence, of their faith in God. They witness the victory of their God which outlives the destruction of the world so they await this event without fear and with confidence.

Second strophe: the raging of the nations (verses 4-7) — The scene and the mood change. The beautiful picture of the river in Jerusalem, on whose banks gladness has its dwelling-place, constitutes a magnificent contrast to the picture of the waves of the seas that rush along. Those former waters bring blessing, the latter ones desolation.

Since Jerusalem has no river, the image must refer rather to a different Jerusalem: the perfect one, the one yet to come—paradise. The image of the river is used to illustrate the blessing and protection resulting from the nearness of God, the actual source of joy for Jerusalem, God's city. This gracious protection and preservation of Jerusalem can be found in Isaiah (10,24; 28,16; 29,1; 31,4; 33,21; etc.) and is a most dear topic of the Old Testament. As the God of Sinai has made his habitation unapproachable, so he defends Jerusalem from those who seek to destroy it.

This holy and inaccessible God is the ultimate safety and salvation of his own and of all those who trust in him. Again, a clear parallel with Isaiah (chapters 28-31) who, in times of trouble, demanded from his king and people this trust.

The last verses clearly show that the God of Israel is a God who at every moment simultaneously embraces all space and every age. He is the exalted Lord of the world at work in history.

Third strophe: the Divine Kingdom of Peace (verses 8-11) — What so far has been only hinted at, now becomes quite clear and the faithful are invited to see with their own eyes what has come to pass: God's great work of deliverance. At first glance the impression of dreadful horror prevails: corpses, desolate city, broken arms. In a most powerful manner it bears witness to what it means to oppose the living God. However, this picture of the collapse of the power of man under the mighty fist of God is not the only thing, and also not the final thing, which the eyes of faith are able to see here. All this scenery of utter destruction testifies not only to what man causes by relying on his own power, but also to God's will for peace who wants all wars to cease.

The psalm now reaches its climax: God himself appears and speaks his Word to the nations. It is only in knowing that God is God, and in submitting to him, that peace can be achieved. We are not presented here with some blissful human dream of eternal peace, fuelled by men being tired of wars but with the certainty of faith which, having experienced divine love, knows that the world will find its consummation in the peace of God. It is on this jubilant note that Psalm 46 ends: the expectation of the future fulfilment of the promises of a mighty and loving God of peace.

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