

High Tide

Parish Magazine
Weymouth, St. Paul with Fleet



<http://www.stpaulsweymouth.org>

Index

From the Vicar	3
<i>Fr. Pál Bolváry</i> : Prisoner of Christ Jesus (final part)	4
<i>Sharon Waight</i> : Safeguarding at St. Paul's	6
<i>Jeanne James</i> : Easy-peasy honey chicken	7
<i>Sue Biles</i> : Young peoples' feelings about church and love	8
Beechcroft's Easter visit to St. Paul's	8
<i>Anne Mullis</i> : The Garden in May	9
What is a <i>welcoming</i> church?	10
Not the end of the world—"only" of our world	13
St. Isidor, Patron saint of the internet	16
Calendar, Intentions, & Anniversaries	18
Morning & Evening Prayer	20
From the Book of Common Prayer	28
Where to find information about our parish?	29
<i>Dr. R. Jared Staudt</i> : The power of witness of the early Church	30
<i>Bl. John Henry Newman</i> : Meditations on the Litany of Loreto	32
The seven gifts of the Holy Spirit	36
Catechism	38
Novena to the Holy Spirit	41
Psalms 26	42
Contacts	44

*Many thanks to all who have contributed to this issue of the Parish Magazine. The next Magazine will be published on **Sunday 28th May**. Please, send all articles, information, news you wish to be published by Sunday 21st May.*

Front cover image: "Pentecost" by Jean Bourdichon (ca. 1505);
codex Latin 9474, fol. 49v; Paris, Bibliotheque nationale de France

From the Vicar

Dearly Beloved,

There is certainly a sense of relief—and I mean it in the best possible sense—after Holy Week and Easter. We all enjoyed those beautiful, moving days and especially the Easter Vigil was a unique experience. However, for us to have a wonderful Holy Week, behind the scenes there had to be a lot of hard work done: rehearsals, decorating, cleaning. Lent itself was a long, uplifting but also trying time of preparation with its fasting, extra prayers and services, or the Lent group meditating on the Lord's Passion. Indeed, most known liturgical traditions have abbreviated forms of worship for the week of Easter to give a well-deserved rest to clergy, servers, and congregations.

The danger of this short rest is that we will go back to “Sundays only” (if that!) in our personal church-life until Christmas... forgetting that actually Easter is not over at all. The great feast of our redemption will culminate in Pentecost, solemnity of the descend of the Holy Spirit, and will irradiate the feasts of Holy Trinity, Corpus Christ, Sacred Heart, and Assumption.

To see this long-reaching glory of Easter it is enough to ask ourselves the question: *why* have we been redeemed? What moved God to save us? There was no obligation, neither more nor other, on his part to save us. Why did he do it? The only feasible answer is that because he loves us *and* (!) he wants a real, personal, loving relationship with us.

Pentecost is not a historic event only but the celebration of a God who pours himself into our hearts so that he can be in us and us in him. The mystery of the Blessed Trinity reveals that God himself is a loving, intimate relationship and he wants us to be part of it. In the Eucharist (Corpus Christi) he becomes our food and substance, we make his body ours. The Sacred Heart—pierced and crowned with thorns yet on fire with love—is an invitation to enter not simply into heaven but into the very Heart of God. Finally, Assumption shows us that God really does want us with him, for all eternity, in heavenly bliss, in his presence, in body and in soul.

So much he desires to be with us... no wonder both Testaments compare his relationship with us to the desire, union, love, and affection of a bride and bridegroom and heaven to a marriage feast. Well, that feast but more importantly that loving relationship with our God starts here and now, in our church, on those feast days and every day. You are all invited—do come!

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

Fr. Gregory 3

A prisoner of Christ Jesus (*final part*)

by Father Pál Bolváry

Leaving Hungary

I moved to Budapest and started to work in a hospital as an operating theatre assistant. During night shifts, between two operations, I used to say Holy Mass in the operating room. Otherwise, I said my daily Mass in my small apartment before starting work.

After many rejections, in 1968 finally I obtained a passport only valid for Communist countries. I visited the Soviet Union and spent some of my leave in Czechoslovakia and Poland. In 1970 I met the Bishop of Székesfehérvár and asked him to accept me into his diocese. He promised he would talk to the Vicar of Dunapentele...

Note: the Communist Party and Government started a group called "Priests for Peace" in 1950 with the intention of dividing the church and creating division between priests and their bishops. Some priests became members willingly and sent regular reports on their fellow priests to the Communist. These reports often lead to intimidation or even arrests. Others became members after being tortured or blackmailed. Only members of this group could be nominated to important posts—vicars of great churches, canons of cathedrals, etc. The fact that the Bishop of Székesfehérvár felt he needed to talk to the Vicar of Dunapentele about diocesan decisions shows that in the Diocese the real power was exercised by the State through its agents, the priests "for peace."

That year I spent my summer vacation in East Germany, helping out in parishes. The local bishop invited me to take care of the spiritual needs of the Hungarian guest workers in his diocese. Once back in Hungary, I submitted a request for a passport again for Eastern Germany. After ten rejections, in 1972, I presented a request for a passport to Yugoslavia. The waiting time of six weeks passed, after which I received another rejection. I appealed. Another six weeks passed. No answer. At the end of the seventh week, I found a registered envelope in my mailbox: my passport to Yugoslavia.

A long time ago I had decided that if I would ever get to Yugoslavia, I would get to Italy, even if I had to swim across the sea. On June 12, 1972, I arrived in Yugoslavia. I went to Belgrad to meet the secretary of the Papal Nunciature. The young Jesuit father spoke Hungarian very well. He listened

to my story of trials with great interest and promised that on Sunday, after his Holy Mass for the ambassadors, he would mention my affair to them.

On Monday he called me, and said that I should write the story of my life in German, and he would like to see me Wednesday morning in the Nunciature. On Wednesday I was informed by the Father that at first the Austrian ambassador offered his help, but his superiors declined because the affair of Cardinal Mindszenty was yet very fresh. So I went to the West German Consulate with my German autobiography. The waiting room was filled with men. When, at the information desk, I mentioned the name of the Nunciature, the clerk led me up a spiral staircase directly to the Consul.

I gave the Consul my autobiography. He read it through and then recommended that I go back to Budapest. He, too, refused to help.

I returned to the Nunciature. The Jesuit Father requested an audience for me with the Nuncio, Archbishop Cagna. The Archbishop wanted to know why I came to him with my affair. My reply was: *“Because I am a priest and monk and I cannot live my vocation in my country. For 22 years I have been unable to say Mass publicly and legally.”* The audience took nearly twenty minutes. At the end, Archbishop Cagna stood up and said: *“I am sorry, I cannot help you. But I give my secretary permission to help you. Should you wish to approach the Italian Consulate, ask for Ms Anna della Croce.”*

After John XXIII had initiated an opening to the Communist countries, Paul VI continued this politics (called Ostpolitik) through negotiations with the governments of eastern Europe in spite of the fact that these negotiations produced few, if any, benefits for the Church. The Catholic Church was seriously divided over the program of Ostpolitik, with many of the opponents of that policy being found among the churchmen of eastern Europe and with many being willing to criticize the apparent doggedness with which the policy was followed by Paul VI in spite of minimal results.

Archbishop Cagna, appointed Nuncio to Yugoslavia by Pope Paul VI, followed the Ostpolitik—hence his reluctance to help a persecuted priest as this would have caused diplomatic issues. The “bigger picture” was more important than a priest...

Fr. Bolvary, finally, was helped by Ms Anna della Croce who obtained for him a temporary passport for a single entry to Italy. In December of the same year, Fr. Bolvary emigrated to the U.S.A. and became a parish priest. He was able to return to Hungary only in 1990. I spent four years with him in the monastery, until his death in 2001.

It was only in 1977, after the visit of a Hungarian Communist delegation to Rome, that the last Catholic priest was finally released from prison in Hungary. He had been condemned to 19 years in 1966—this was his third time in prison—for having had organised secret retreats and having had said Mass daily in his flat before starting his workday as water-meter reader.

Promoting a safer environment and culture Create a safe and caring place for all

Sharon Waight writes:

In April 2023 the PCC met to approve our safeguarding policy and commitments in accordance with the Church of England. The PCC and incumbent have a duty of care to ensure the protection of the vulnerable in their church community and therefore adopt the House of Bishops' Safeguarding Policy 'Promoting a Safer Church'. A copy of the safeguarding commitments is available to read on our safeguarding notice board. We encourage you to take time to read through the safeguarding statements, two of which are headlined above.

What do you think of when you hear the word 'safeguarding'? As part of my recent safeguarding leadership pathway training with the Diocese I was asked to reflect on this question. I share some of my reflections here. It is how church communities keep people safe, the 'how' being a key word. In safeguarding, being able to recognise and respond to safeguarding concerns is important. Being able to 'speak up', if noticing, seeing, or hearing something of concern. The guidance on how to respond is set out in our policy and the key steps are displayed on the parish safeguarding notice board. As I explored this safeguarding question further, to me it became more than how well people respond to a safeguarding concern. Safeguarding is also about prevention, a term that may not come immediately to mind. Prevention is about the church needing to become, and be, a safe place for all, including those at risk of harm or who are vulnerable. Within a church community, prevention can be evident by values, behaviours, and attitudes, in particular the values of compassion, patience, tolerance, and kindness. To treat people with respect, dignity and equally. As a church community we uphold these principles, values and behaviours always working to ensure our church community is one that is safe, nurturing and most of all enjoyable.

Maybe safeguarding is also about a church community sharing the safeguarding journey together. Perhaps you too may wish to reflect upon the question *'What do you think of when you hear the word safeguarding?'*

I wish to thank our PCC members for recently taking the time to review, consider and approve our safeguarding policy, statements, and commitments for 2023. Thank you to all our church community in making our church a safe place for everyone. A short prayer:

Loving God, we pray that this church may be a place of welcome, security and compassion. Keep us watchful yet caring, trusting yet ready to question, that all who worship here may do so in the safety and in the knowledge of your love.

Easy-peasy honey chicken

Jeanne James writes:

Serves two. Ingredients:

2 fresh chicken breasts
flour to coat the chicken
salt and pepper to taste
3 large knobs of butter
2 cloves of garlic (crushed)
4 tbsp of honey
2 tbsp of soy sauce
1 tbsp of vinegar
a few sprigs of parsley

- Deeply score the chicken in a criss-cross pattern. (Don't cut all the way through). Rub salt and pepper into the cuts.
- Dip the chicken into the flour.
- Melt 2 large knobs of butter in a frying pan on a high heat. Add the chicken and brown on both sides for around 10 to 15 minutes in total.
- Add another knob of butter, the chopped garlic, honey, soy sauce and vinegar. Stir, then reduce heat and allow to sizzle for 10 to 15 minutes until the chicken is cooked.
- Remove from pan and sprinkle fresh parsley on top.
- Serve with crusty bread and a fresh salad. Really tasty. *(No calories if you eat it with your eyes closed!)*



Young peoples' feelings about church and love

Sue Biles writes:

In recent research conducted by the Church of England, young people shared the following reflections.

“Each of us growing up today needs to know love more than anything. We long to experience it, to know we are safe, accepted, valued, forgiven and without it, even as children, we know pain, loneliness, anxiety, fear, trauma, and regret.”

“A God we can't see so easily these days, whose story we don't all know so much anymore, might be harder to believe in. But a Church that could show us His love—that really would be something.”

“It would have to be the kind of love that doesn't come with conditions, predispositions, prejudices, and baggage about who we are.”

At the conclusion, the finding reflected on what they would like from a Church. Showing them the kind of love that says, “*You are welcome!*” first before anything else. The kind of love that says, “*You can belong here.*” The kind of love that says, “*Whatever you're thinking or whatever you're dreaming you are accepted for who you are, not for who we would prefer you to be.*”

At St. Paul's we always show a wonderful welcome to young people who come to formal services but are we as welcoming as we could be to young people and their families who access the Church for other purposes? Is this not also an opportunity for us all to show them God's love?

In the immortal word of AA Milne: ‘Piglet: “How do you spell love?” Pooh: “You don't spell it, you feel it.”’

Let us love one another, for love comes from God. Everyone who loves has been born of God and knows God. Based upon St John's Gospel.

Beechcroft St Paul's' Easter visit to church

Sue Biles writes:

On the 29th March it was my delight to welcome Mrs Cath Crossly, the Head Teacher at Beechcroft, with the staff team, the pupils, and a congregation of over 100 made up from the children's parents, grand-parents, and carers to St Pauls for the school's Easter Worship. It was wonderful to see the church packed for the occasion—it was standing room only at the back of the church.

During Lent, the children and their teachers had been busy rehearsing a mini musical play called “The Tale of 3 Trees.” The theme of the play developed the idea that everything and everybody has a purpose. The story

developed around the hopes and dreams of the three trees. However, in God's plan, the three trees were going to play a part in the life of Jesus.

Tree 1 would become the manger in which the baby Jesus slept. Tree 2 would become a fishing boat on the Sea of Galilee, when Jesus calmed the storm. Tree 3 would become the cross on which Jesus died.

In the words of Tree 3, "*I never could have imagined in all my wildest dreams that I could hold the greatest treasure that the world has ever seen. I never could have imagined in all my wildest dreams the Saviour of the World would die upon my beams.*"

Julia Moore, the chair of Governors, said: "The children sang and delivered their words brilliantly. It was so pleasing for the children and staff to see so many parents and grandparents supporting the children, it was a very uplifting occasion."

The garden in May

Anne Mullis writes:

Jobs in May are pretty much similar to April, weeding, pruning, planting, sowing seeds etc...

In my garden the daffodils are now over, so I have taken off the dead flower, removed the plant from the pot and planted them in the garden. The pots I will need for summer bedding later on.

I have decided to try growing dahlias this year, I ordered online, they arrived and are now in pots of compost, so fingers crossed! Hydrangea cuttings I took last year are growing well, even though I left them outside all winter!

My garden at the moment is full of bluebells and forget-me-nots which look lovely even though they are a sort-of weed... Hopefully soon the temperatures will rise to encourage plants to start growing stronger .

It seems to have been a long, cold, wet winter.

Come into my garden, there are treats in store for you.
Smell the roses on the arch, the honeysuckle too.
Follow the old grey stepping stones that wander through the lawn.
And wonder at the flowers that greet us every morn.
Wisteria on its white washed wall
Pours down like purple rain.
A sight that gladdens every heart as
Spring comes round again...

What is a *welcoming* church?

(some considerations in this article are based on John M. Grondelski's writing)

Smiling at people, being kind and generous, offering a friendly word is all part of being “welcoming”—but in the case of a church it is insufficient and may well be misleading as well. Many churches have made this their chief motto: “all are welcome here.” So what does it mean for a church to be welcoming?

To attempt any answer we must first inquire about the very essence of the Church: why does it exist? Why did Jesus found the Church?

The Church exists to proclaim the Good News of redemption in Jesus Christ. Full stop. Everything else, important as it may be—charitable giving, outreach, social justice, education—could be done by any other group or institution. At the same time, no one else could ever witness and offer that redemption in Jesus Christ which was entrusted to the Church in her teaching and Sacraments.

Being kind, gentle, generous, good, respectful, joyous, etc. makes the proclaiming of Good News easier and more efficient and so they are of utmost importance. However, they are only means while the primary and only reason for the existence of the Church is the proclamation of Jesus Christ.

Psychiatrist Thomas A. Harris published a book in 1967 with the title “I’m OK, You’re OK.” This “self-help” book is a practical guide to solving problems in life like depression, sense of guilt, or even injustice, etc. Many churches outdo themselves in proclaiming this “You’re OK” message. The only problem is: it’s not the Christian message.

We are not OK as a result of original and personal sin. However, it is not at all bad news because if we are not OK, it simply means that we need redemption and a Redeemer. During the history of mankind many tried one form or another of self-redemption (see prof. Harris) while the Christian message is that redemption can come only from Jesus Christ.

Unfortunately, we are losing sight of this. In many churches counselling has replaced confession, the centre of worship has shifted from God to man, Christian charity is transformed into social justice or class fights, efforts to save souls are substituted by efforts to save the planet (in itself, there is nothing wrong with saving the planet, of course!), true love that comes with demands became a wishy-washy good feeling and general acceptance not only of everybody (which is good) but of everything too (which is bad). In other words: many churches ceased to be churches and became social clubs, environmental activists, or social service providers.

One obvious problem with this is that these churches have become easily replaceable. They focus on activities and messages that can be done and delivered by other groups, often more effectively.

The other problem is that these churches have jumped on the bandwagon of secular thought which seeks to convince people that they are *basically* OK only if they could do or become whatever they want. In our times, particularly clear is this way of thinking in secular context when it comes to questions of sexuality and gender or lately, of marriage and family.

The new secular message is: if you want to identify (and consequently to live, to think, to act) as, for example, a rainbow-coloured, three-winged unicorn then you should do so—and if/when you can freely do it, you will be finally OK. The plan of who we should become, made by the infinitely loving and wise Creator who knows us better than we do, has thus been substituted with a plan made by our own, often misled or sinful desires and imagination.

The fear of being marginalised by our world led many churches to stop talking about sin, conversion, and redemption. They have got rid of penance, fasting, and confession. Discipline, discipleship, faith, prayer, creed, dogma—all of it has been replaced by some “unconditional welcome.”

Of course, if by “welcome” we mean welcoming sinners without judging *them*, that’s absolutely true. If we excluded sinners, none could join the Church, us included. But welcoming sinners without judging *them* is distinct from welcome sin without calling sinners (us included!) to conversion.

Churches must resist the temptation of proclaiming the false gospel of self-redemption: “you will be OK if you become *whatever* you feel like becoming.” Instead, they must stand firm in the truth of Christ’s Gospel: “you will be OK once you start becoming what God wants you to be: his image, Christ’s image.”

However, the problem is—well, problem for the world; it should not be a problem for churches—that this can only be achieved through repentance and conversion. Jesus’ first message in Mark (1,15) is “repent.” His public ministry is prepared by John the Baptist who called to conversion. During his public life Jesus welcomed all with love, kindness, and—I am sure even if it’s not explicitly mentioned—with a warm, sincere smile on his face. But once he welcomed them he never shied away from calling them to conversion: “follow me,” “do not sin,” “believe in me,” etc.

For many this sounds as “negative” and “unwelcoming.” Who wants to inquire about, much less join, a group whose message is such a downer...? But they forget that the message of “sin, conversion, and redemption” *is* actually Gospel, it is truly “good news.” A diagnosis of terminal illness is not good news... however, the possibility of its definite cure very much is.

As John M. Grondelski' writes: "A church which confuses diagnosis with cure, dissembling about the latter so as not to address the former, shouldn't 'welcome' anybody. It *should* close its doors to avoid spiritual malpractice."

Going to church is not part of everyday life anymore. The silver lining is that people who actually do approach a church today do so because they recognize "I'm not OK" and so churches must be ready to offer diagnosis and cure. Only those who admit that they are not OK will recognise their need for Jesus Christ. This means that only churches which offer the authentic Gospel of conversion and redemption in Jesus Christ will survive and grow.

Which is why a special "all are welcome" sign is redundant in a church. (*This, of course, doesn't mean we shouldn't try to make our churches warm, friendly, welcoming, and accessible places.*) Churches, by their nature, are for *all* peoples of *all* time, especially for *all* sinners. Much more meaningful is then a sign informing about times of services—Holy Communion, confession, Rosary, prayer times—as it tells people when a church does the things that no one else could ever offer them: necessary means of redemption.

A congregation that welcomes everyone with a sincere smile, open arms, and helping hand and a building that is open, accessible, clean and warm have made the first steps into the right direction. They have made it easier for their visitors to overcome the first difficulties of approaching God and his Church. They have become welcoming. But they are not a church yet. Being a church, a welcoming one, takes more.

A church proclaims and practices repentance and conversion: a daily renewed turning to Jesus Christ in prayer. A church has at its centre worship and the Sacraments as encounters with the living God. A church reads, lives, and offers to others the Holy Scripture. A church reflects the features of Jesus Christ through mutual love, charity, and forgiveness. A church stands firm in the unchangeable Truth revealed by Christ to the Apostles. Simply: a church is every bit about Jesus Christ.

Every year we see countless new plans, strategies, and mottos emerging from panic-ridden diocesan and other church offices intended to stop numeric and financial decline. Most of them miss the point: if you transform the church into something replaceable (social club, environmental front-fighter, etc.) sooner or later it *will* be replaced by someone more capable. If you make the church terribly modern and contemporary, it will become anachronistic and obsolete soon enough. Instead a church must be what its Divine Master intended it to be: a place of conversion and redemption in Jesus Christ—the only message of welcome worth proclaiming and hearing, worth living and dying for.

Not the end of the world—“only” the end of the world as we have known it

*(an abbreviated and edited version of an interesting article about AI
originally published in Hungarian by Dániel Pál Rényi and Márk Herczeg)*

When I read the original article on a Hungarian, online news platform, it had a great effect on me so I thought I would share it with you. The original article is long and uses a lot of technical language so I thought I would give you a shortened version—so the wording will be mine but the information and thoughts are of the above named two journalists.

The topic of the article is Artificial Intelligence (AI). Wikipedia defines AI as *“intelligence—perceiving, synthesizing, and inferring information—demonstrated by machines, as opposed to intelligence displayed by animals or humans. Example tasks in which this is done include speech recognition, computer vision, translation between natural languages, as well as other mappings of inputs.”*

Probably most of you is thinking that this does not regard you. If that is the case than most of you are dangerously wrong and should definitely read this article.

Tristan Harris and Aza Raskin, two scientists researching AI, are warning us that technology is changing more rapidly than we realise. At least half of scientists researching AI think that there is more than 10% chance of AI destroying human civilisation in the near future. AI is already causing changes not only in IT, but in politics and culture, in our social relationships, in our intimate sphere, or in how we perceive reality. Their findings are confirmed by many philosophers and historians as well.

One example of AI are image generation applications: based on written instructions, they create images. For example you can type: *“a cat in pink evening dress is watching the sunrise on Jupiter”* and your image will be ready in seconds. To create an image, AI uses both existing databases of images and its own creative capacities. Various prizes awarded to photographers had to be



withdrawn lately as they admitted to having used AI to create those photos.

Perhaps an amusing but certainly shocking “photo” created by an AI is Pope Francis in white puffer jacket. These photos are completely fake—but they show that it has

become impossible to tell the difference between real and fake photos. Even more frightening is the fact that not only fake photos but completely fake videos can be created as well.

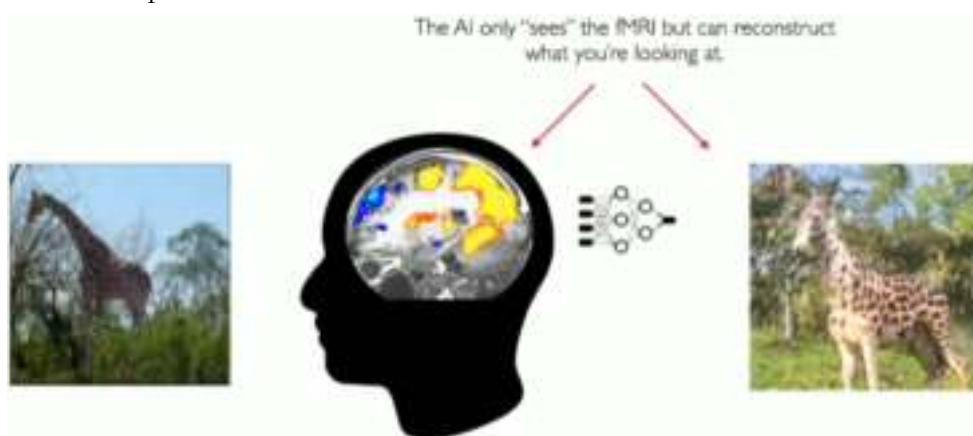
The speed of development is well illustrated by another image. The left photo was drawn by the Midjourney image generator in March 2022, and the right one in March 2023, based on the same textual instructions. The difference is shocking because it demonstrates a learning process.



In recent past various different groups of scientists were working separately on their own AI. Many of these AIs have been integrated and they are able to communicate between each other. We could say that they are using something that so far was unique to humans: they are using language.

Tristan Harris and Aza Raskin gave a few examples. These new systems of AIs are able to perfectly model a human voice using a sample of less than 3 seconds and produce samples that are deceptively similar to the original. In the US scammers are now using AI during phone calls to sound like family members in distress. People are falling for it, they think their loved ones are calling for help—the result: they are scammed out of thousands of dollars.

Another example are AIs connected to MRI machines. The latest AIs, analysing brain waves, can tell what a person is thinking about and they can draw a picture of it.



The problem with AI is that the technological revolution is taking place at such a speed that even the developers themselves cannot control it. Even less can legislation keep up with these developments.

To understand the severity of the problem we must think about platforms like Facebook 15-20 years ago. The algorithms they used were incredibly primitive compared to modern AI—yet, they were able to analyse users' behaviour and create targeted advertisements. Everybody was seeing adverts based on their browsing history, the articles they clicked on, the news they read. What followed was manipulation of elections, fake news, the increase of mental and body-image disorder amongst young people, etc. Even these “primitive” algorithms were capable of fundamentally changing our everyday reality.

All of this shows that AIs are capable of changing our environment even if their developers did not necessarily intend this to happen. The consequences seemed unpredictable beforehand, and now they seem irreversible. AI solves scientific problems faster than ever before. It will benefit humanity in many ways but... What will happen to our jobs? What about our personal and national information security? In many fields AIs and robots have already made human workforce inefficient and superfluous. Self-teaching robots that can learn taking care of the elderly, for example, is still the future—but not an impossible future anymore.

Our security systems (military, banks, etc.) may become worthless within a few years. The time is not far off when we will be no longer able to tell who we are talking to: an AI or a real person. Ads could replace human relationships in cases of isolated people and having access to all sort of databases, they will know better than we do what we need, what we are afraid of, how can we be manipulated.

According to Ruskin the last “human” elections in the USA will be in 2024 because in 2028, it is already expected that the candidate who has greater computer capacities and can more easily reach the lonely masses of voters will win. AIs will be able to use the voice of politicians, for example, and no one will be able to tell the difference. The distinction between illusion and reality will be washed away. Anybody's life or career could be destroyed by fake photos and videos while real scandals and crimes could go unpunished by saying they are deepfakes.

One of the most worrying aspect of modern AIs is that they are able to develop themselves and each other. Sometimes completely new capacities are created, and often it is not even known: from where, what, when and why they were made. Even their own developers don't fully understand it. When in 2017 an AI was simply given the rules of chess and no other information—no strategies, no outcome of past games, no statistics—it learned to play chess on its own in under 4 hours. Playing against itself, in 4 hours it mastered

centuries of chess strategy so well that it won 100 matches out of 100 against any other chess player or computer program.

Another AI that was trained to learn to answer questions in English suddenly learned Persian by increasing the size of its large language module, and no one understands exactly how.

All this does not mean that machines will become self-aware and take over our world. However if we create capacities that we cannot control or understand, they may cause irreparable damage to our world. In the case of humans, consciousness and intelligence have always gone hand in hand. AIs have no consciousness which means their intelligence is so much scarier. They are able to solve problems but cannot understand, nor can they appreciate, feelings, pain, joy, love, or hate. The most efficient solution to a problem is not always the most human or fair or just one. We know it. AIs do not—yet they are connected to everything: to our bank systems, water reservoirs, cars, mobile phones, TVs, kitchen gadgets.

St. Isidor of Seville, Patron Saint of the internet — It may seem strange that a 7th-century saint was chosen as the patron saint of the internet, but after a careful examination of his life, St. Isidore of Seville turns out to be the perfect choice. Isidore was the Archbishop of Seville during the 7th century. He was a great scholar whose encyclopaedic knowledge was far reaching.

Before his death, St. Isidore wrote a collection of books which was a vast storehouse in which he gathered, systematised, and condensed all the learning possessed by his time. Throughout the greater part of the Middle Ages it was the textbook most in use in educational institutions. Interestingly enough, St. Isidore did not contain himself to only theological topics, but successfully collected information on all subjects. He was, in a certain sense, a human “Wikipedia,” possessing a vast storehouse of information on every topic available.

St. Isidore is a great intercessor for all those logging on to the internet, a saint who can help us find what we need as well as protect us from the darker side of the internet.

Prayer before using the internet: *Almighty and eternal God who has created us in thine image and bade us to seek after all that is good, true and beautiful, especially in the divine person of Thy only-begotten Son, Our Lord Jesus Christ, grant we beseech Thee that through the intercession of Saint Isidore, bishop and doctor, during our journeys through the internet we will direct our hands and eyes only to that which is pleasing to Thee and treat with charity and patience all those souls whom we encounter. Through Christ our Lord. Amen.*

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

Anniversaries of death

Order of Morning and Evening Prayer

Calendar for May 2023

MON	1st	ST. PHILIP & JAMES APOSTLES	9am
TUE	2nd	St. Athanasius Bishop	9am
WED	3rd	Finding of the Holy Cross	10am
THU	4th	St. Monica Widow	6pm
FRI	5th	St. Pius V Pope	12pm
SAT	6th	St. John before the Latin Gate	9.30am
SUN	7th	4TH SUNDAY AFTER EASTER	10.30am, 5pm
MON	8th	<i>Monthly Requiem</i>	9am
TUE	9th	St. Gregory Nazienzen Bishop	9am
WED	10th	St. Antoninus Bishop	10am
THU	11th	St. Walburga Virgin	6pm
FRI	12th	<i>St. Pancras, Martyr</i>	12pm
SAT	13th	St. Robert Bellarmin Bishop	9.30am
SUN	14th	5TH SUNDAY AFTER EASTER	10.30am, 5pm
MON	15th	St. John Baptist de la Salle	9am
TUE	16th	St. Simon	9am
WED	17th	St. Paschal Bylon	10am
THU	18th	ASCENSION OF OUR LORD	6pm
FRI	19th	St. Dunstan Bishop	12pm
SAT	20th	St. Bernardine of Siena	9.30am
SUN	21st	SUNDAY AFTER ASCENSION	10.30am, 5pm
MON	22nd	<i>Feria</i>	9am
TUE	23rd	<i>Feria</i>	9am
WED	24th	<i>Feria</i>	10am
THU	25th	St. Aldhelm Bishop	6pm
FRI	26th	ST. AUGUSTINE BISHOP (<i>Anointing</i>)	12pm
SAT	27th	Vigil of Pentecost	9.30am
SUN	28th	PENTECOST (WHIT SUNDAY)	10.30am, 5pm
MON	29th	WHIT MONDAY	—
TUE	30th	WHIT TUESDAY	—
WED	31st	Wednesday in Pentecost Octave	—

Daily Intentions



Anniversaries of death

We pray for/with...

- 1st Our Bishops - *Sarah Grainger, Maurice Galling, Richard Limb*
- 2nd Greater Faith
- 3rd Spread of the Gospel - *Kenneth Kemp pr., Hamish Roger Grierson*
- 4th Priests and vocations
- 5th Dying - *Marjorie Wray, Bert Sertin, Daisy Bown*
- 6th Shrine of Walsingham - *Joy Scriven*

- 7th Our Parish
- 8th Departed - *Jim Clothier, Gillian Hubbard*
- 9th Elderly - *Jane Taylor*
- 10th Linden (mental health unit) - *Tony Hamsbaw*
- 11th Westhaven Hospital - *David Thomas bp.*
- 12th Safe journey for travellers - *Paulette Gasser*
- 13th Our Cell of O.L.W.

- 14th Our Parish
- 15th Beechcroft - *Roger Pittard pr.*
- 16th Families
- 17th Deeper love for the Eucharist - *Marjorie Bishop, Norman Moore*
- 18th Our Parish - *Frank Woods*
- 19th Our Choir & Organists - *Carol Wilson*
- 20th Those who do not know or love the Lord Jesus

- 21st Our Parish
- 22nd Migrants and refugees - *Jenifer Cooper*
- 23rd Young people
- 24th Our Benefactors
- 25th Our Servers
- 26th Sick
- 27th Catholic Societies (& their joint festival)

- 28th Our Parish - *Dick Evans, Nan Evans*
- 29th Our Parish - *Janet Allen*
- 30th Grace of a holy & good death
- 31st Peace in Ukraine - *Nigel Brown*

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

MORNING PRAYER

Joy to thee, O Queen of Heaven, alleluia. He whom thou wast meet to bear, alleluia. As he promised, hath arisen, alleluia. Pour for us to him thy prayer, alleluia.

V. Rejoice and be glad, O Virgin Mary, alleluia.

R. For the Lord has risen indeed, alleluia.

V. Let us pray. O God, who through the resurrection of Thy Son our Lord Jesus Christ didst vouchsafe to give joy to the world: grant, we beseech thee, that through His Mother, the Virgin Mary, we may obtain the joys of everlasting life. Through Christ our Lord. **R.** Amen.

V. O Lord, open my lips. **R.** And my mouth shall proclaim your praise.

V. O God, make speed to save me. **R.** O Lord, make haste to help me.

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

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

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

R. The Lord is risen, indeed, alleluia.

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. Alleluia.

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. The Lord is risen, indeed, alleluia.

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. Alleluia.

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. The Lord is risen, indeed, alleluia.

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. Alleluia.

HYMN

O thou, the heavens' eternal King,
 Creator, unto thee we sing,
 With God the Father ever One,
 Co-equal, co-eternal Son.

Thy hand, when first the world began,
 Made in thine own pure image man,
 And linked to Adam, sprung from earth,
 A living soul of heavenly birth.

And when by craft the envious foe
 Had marred thy noblest work below,
 Clothed in our flesh, thou didst restore
 The image thou hadst made before.

Once wast thou born of Mary's womb;
 And now, newborn from out the tomb,
 O Christ, thou bidd'st us rise with thee
 From death to immortality.

Eternal Shepherd, thou dost lave
 Thy flock in pure baptismal wave,
 That mystic bath, that grave of sin,
 Where ransomed souls new life begin.

Redeemer, thou for us didst deign
 To hang upon the Cross of pain,
 And give for us the lavish price
 Of thine own blood in sacrifice.

Grant, Lord, in thee each faithful mind
 Unceasing paschal joy may find;
 And from the death of sin set free
 Souls newly born to life by thee.

To thee, once dead, who now dost live,
 All glory, Lord, thy people give,
 Whom, with the Father, we adore,
 And Holy Ghost forevermore. Amen.

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

1	Psalm 146	Proverbs 4,10-18 James 1,1-12	8	145	Deuteronomy 16,1-20 1 Peter 1,1-12
2	139	Deuteronomy 9,23-end Ephesians 4,17-end	9	19	Deuteronomy 17, 8-end 1 Peter 1,13-end
3	135	Deuteronomy 10 Ephesians 5,1-14	10	147	Deuteronomy 18,9-end 1 Peter 2,1-10
4	118	Deuteronomy 11,8-end Ephesians 5,15-end	11	57, 148	Deuteronomy 19 1 Peter 2,11-end
5	33	Deuteronomy 12,1-14 Ephesians 6,1-9	12	138	Deuteronomy 22,1-8 1 Peter 3,1-12
6	34	Deuteronomy 15,1-18 Ephesians 6,10-end	13	124	Deuteronomy 24,5-end 1 Peter 3,13-end
7	30	Ezekiel 37,1-12 John 5,19-29	14	73 v. 21-28	Job 19,23-27 1 Thessalonians 4,13-end

15	125	Deuteronomy 26,16-end 1 Peter 4,1-11	24	2	Deuteronomy 32,1-14 1 John 3,11-end
16	126	Deuteronomy 28,1-14 1 Peter 4,12-end	25	24, 72	Deuteronomy 32,15-47 1 John 4
17	127	Deuteronomy 28,58-end 1 Peter 5	26	28	Malachi 2,5-7 Matthew 24,42-46
18	110, 150	Isaiah 52,7-end Hebrews 7,26-end	27	42, 43	Deuteronomy 34 1 John 5
19	20	Deuteronomy 29,2-15 1 John 1	28	87	Genesis 11,1-9 Acts 10,34-end
20	21, 47	Deuteronomy 30 1 John 2,1-17	29	123	Numbers 27,15-end 1 Corinthians 3
21	104 v. 26-35	Isaiah 65,17-end Revelation 21,1-8	30	132	1 Samuel 10,1-10 Corinthians 12,1-13
22	93	Deuteronomy 31,1-13 1 John 2,18-end	31	133	1 Kings 19,1-18 Matthew 3,13-end
23	98	Deuteronomy 31,14-29 1 John 3,1-10			

Each reading ends with these words:

V. This is the word of the Lord.

R. Thanks be to God.

BENEDICTUS

Ant: Jesus stood in the midst of his disciples and said to them: Peace to you, alleluia, alleluia.

Blessed be the Lord the God of Israel, *

who has come to his people and set them free.

He has raised up for us a mighty Saviour, *

born of the house of his servant David.

Through his holy prophets God promised of old *

to save us from our enemies, from the hands of all that hate us,

To show mercy to our ancestors, *

and to remember his holy covenant.

This was the oath God swore to our father Abraham: *

to set us free from the hands of our enemies,

Free to worship him without fear, *
holy and righteous in his sight all the days of our life.
And you, child, shall be called the prophet of the Most High, *
for you will go before the Lord to prepare his way,
To give his people knowledge of salvation *
by the forgiveness of all their sins.
In the tender compassion of our God *
the dawn from on high shall break upon us,
To shine on those who dwell in darkness and the shadow of death, *
and to guide our feet into the way of peace.
Glory be to the Father, and to the Son, *
and to the Holy Spirit.
As it was in the beginning, is now, and ever shall be, *
world without end. Amen.

Ant: Jesus stood in the midst of his disciples and said to them: Peace to you, alleluia, alleluia.

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

Almighty God, who alone can order the unruly wills and affections of sinful men: Grant unto your people, that they may love the thing which you command, and desire what you promise; that so, among the sundry and manifold changes of the world, our hearts may surely there be fixed, where true joys are to be found. 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, alleluia, alleluia.

R. Thanks be to God, alleluia, alleluia.

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

R. Amen.

EVENING PRAYER

Joy to thee, O Queen of Heaven, alleluia. He whom thou wast meet to bear, alleluia. As he promised, hath arisen, alleluia. Pour for us to him thy prayer, alleluia.

V. Rejoice and be glad, O Virgin Mary, alleluia.

R. For the Lord has risen indeed, alleluia.

V. Let us pray. O God, who through the resurrection of Thy Son our Lord Jesus Christ didst vouchsafe to give joy to the world: grant, we beseech thee, that through His Mother, the Virgin Mary, we may obtain the joys of everlasting life. Through Christ our Lord. R. Amen.

V. O God, make speed to save me.

R. O Lord, make haste to help me.

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

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

HYMN

The Lamb's high banquet we await
In snow-white robes of royal state,
And now, the Red Sea's channel past,
To Christ our Prince we sing at last.

Upon the altar of the Cross
His Body has redeemed our loss,
And tasting of his precious Blood,
Our life is hid with Christ in God.

That Paschal eve God's arm was bared,
The devastating angel spared;
By strength of hand our hosts went free
From Pharaoh's ruthless tyranny.

Now Christ our Passover is slain,
The Lamb of God that knows no stain,
And he, the true unleavened Bread,
Is truly our oblation made.

O thou from whom hell's monarch flies,
O great, O very Sacrifice,
Thy captive people are set free,
And endless life restored in thee.

For Christ, arising from the dead,
From conquered hell victorious sped,
He thrusts the tyrant down to chains,
And Paradise for man regains.

Maker of all, to thee we pray,
Fulfil in us thy joy today;
When death assails, grant, Lord, that we
May share thy Paschal victory.

To thee who, dead, again dost live,
All glory, Lord, thy people give,
All glory to the Father be
And spirit blest, eternally. Amen.

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

1	Psalm 149	Job 23,1-12 John 1,43-end	17	15	2 Samuel 23,1-5 Colossians 2,20-end
2	115	Exodus 32,15-34 Luke 3,1-14	18	8	2 Kings 2,1-15 Revelation 5
3	116	Exodus 33 Luke 3,15-22	19	131	Numbers 20,1-13 Luke 7,11-17
4	85	Exodus 34,27-end Luke 4,1-13	20	85	Numbers 21,4-9 Luke 7,18-35
5	40	Exodus 35,20-end Luke 4,14-30	21	47	2 Samuel 23,1-5 Ephesians 1,15-end
6	84, 86	Exodus 40,17-end Luke 4,31-37	22	18	Numbers 22,1-35 Luke 7,36-end
7	147 v. 1-12	Zechariah 4,1-10 Revelation 21,1-14	23	68	Numbers 23,1-12 Luke 8,1-15
8	105	Numbers 9,15-end Luke 4,38-end	24	36	Numbers 23,13-end Luke 8,16-25
9	97	Numbers 11,1-33 Luke 5,1-11	25	46	Numbers 24 Luke 8,26-39
10	99	Numbers 12 Luke 5,12-26	26	96	Isaiah 6,1-8 Matthew 13,31-33
11	100	Numbers 13,17-end Luke 5,27-end	27	48	Numbers 16,9-15 John 16,1-15
12	66	Numbers 14,1-25 Luke 6,1-11	28	67	Joel 2,21-end Acts 2,14-21
13	128	Numbers 14,26-end Luke 6,12-26	29	81	Joshua 1 Luke 9,18-27
14	36 v. 5-10	Zechariah 8,1-13 Revelation 21,22-end	30	134	Joshua 2 Luke 9,28-36
15	129	Numbers 15,1-21 Luke 6,27-38	31	29	Joshua 3 Luke 9,37-50
16	130	Numbers 16,36-end Luke 6,39-end			

Each reading ends with these words:

V. This is the word of the Lord.

R. Thanks be to God.

MAGNIFICAT

Ant: I will not leave you orphans, alleluia; I go away, and come again unto you, alleluia, and your heart shall rejoice, alleluia.

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

From this day all generations will call me blessed;+
the Almighty has done great things for me*
and holy is his name.

He has mercy on those who fear him,*
from generation to generation.

He has shown strength with his arm*
and has scattered the proud in their conceit,
Casting down the mighty from their thrones*
and lifting up the lowly.

He has filled the hungry with good things*
and sent the rich away empty.

He has come to the aid of his servant Israel,*
to remember his promise of mercy,
The promise made to our ancestors,*
to Abraham and his children for ever.

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

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

Ant: I will not leave you orphans, alleluia; I go away, and come again unto you, alleluia, and your heart shall rejoice, alleluia.

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

Almighty God, who alone can order the unruly wills and affections of sinful men: Grant unto your people, that they may love the thing which you command, and desire what you promise; that so, among the sundry and manifold changes of the world, our hearts may surely there be fixed, where true joys are to be found. 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, alleluia, alleluia.

R. Thanks be to God, alleluia, alleluia.

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.

ACT OF CONSECRATION TO THE HOLY SPIRIT

On my knees before the great multitude of heavenly witnesses, I offer myself, soul and body to You, Eternal Spirit of God. I adore the brightness of Your purity, the unerring keenness of Your justice, and the might of Your love.

You are the Strength and Light of my soul. In You I live and move and am. I desire never to grieve You by unfaithfulness to grace and I pray with all my heart to be kept from the smallest sin against You.

Mercifully guard my every thought and grant that I may always watch for Your light, and listen to Your voice, and follow Your gracious inspirations. I cling to You and give myself to You and ask You, by Your compassion to watch over me in my weakness.

Holding the pierced Feet of Jesus and looking at His Five Wounds, and trusting in His Precious Blood and adoring His opened Side and stricken Heart, I implore You, Adorable Spirit, Helper of my infirmity, to keep me in Your grace that I may never sin against You. Give me grace, O Holy Spirit, Spirit of the Father and the Son to say to You always and everywhere, "Speak Lord for Your servant heareth." Amen.

From the Book of Common Prayer

4th Sunday after Easter: *O ALMIGHTY GOD, who alone canst order the unruly wills and affections of sinful men: Grant unto thy people, that they may love the thing which thou commandest, and desire that which thou dost promise; that so, among the sundry and manifold changes of the world, our hearts may surely there be fixed, where true joys are to be found; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.*

This prayer originated in the Gelasian Sacramentary and passed into the Sarum Missal before being translated from Latin into English for the 1549 Prayer Book. Finally, it was revised for the 1662 Prayer Book.

The foundation for the petition recalls before God and recites the biblical teaching that he alone, and only he, is able to order the unruly wills and affections of sinful men. The “*unruly wills*” are to be tamed by “*what God commands,*” while the “*unruly affections*” by “*that which God promises.*”

We know from sacred Scripture and the experience of the saints that God the Father brings the wills and emotions/affections of sinful persons into order out of disorder, by the secret and hidden operations of the Holy Ghost. In this way human minds, hearts and wills are transformed by grace, and the change wrought in them is of such a nature that those persons in whom the Holy Ghost has so worked can only say with certainty that they know and feel that a change has taken place. They cannot tell how it occurred for that belongs to the secret operations of the Holy Spirit.

The true Christian is one who delights in and loves what God commands. He is also one who seeks to obey God’s holy law, simply because he loves God and wants to do what God declares to be good and true and right. Not only. The Christian also desires what God promises to his people and so his affections are set upon the heavenly realm where Christ rules at the Father’s right hand and where the society of angels and saints adore and praise Jesus Christ as Lord of lords and King of kings in all his authority and beauty.

The Christian who loves God’s law and desires to be with Christ in heaven will find that, in the varied and many changing circumstances of life, his central focus will be not in this world as such but on Christ Jesus in heaven, the centre of all true and lasting joy. And the more he is focused on Christ the more will he be desirous and able to love God and his law and readily and happily obey him.

This Collect is a perfectly formed prayer. All that remains is that we pray it and it is fulfilled in our lives.

The Rev’d Dr Peter Toon (+2009)

Where to find information about our Parish...?!

One of the outcome of the Ebbsfleet survey was that various people felt they did not have enough information about the Parish: how it works, who does what, what is happening and when, etc. Here are a few tips to overcome this issue:

Weekly sheet - being a third of an A4 page, it is a short enough source to read through easily. Fix it on your fridge or keep in your wallet or prayer book and it will be a useful reminder of what is happening that week. Available in church after the Sunday service (10.30am). Extra copies are left at both entrances in church for the rest of the week. Copies can be found at SPOT as well. It is also uploaded on our website every week.

Website - Give it a go as it has everything! The address is stpaulsweymouth.org You can find there all the contact details (even contact forms), the weekly sheet, a monthly calendar with services and social events, info about our existing groups, photos about our life at St. Paul's. There is a "Who is who" with photos... all you ever wanted to know about St. Paul's is only a few clicks away.

Noticeboard - Regularly updated, all important church and social events are on the Noticeboard in the cloister. It has a list of PCC members, hall Trustees, side-persons, readers, cleaners. There is the coffee rota on it and leaflets about confession and the sacramentals, various lists to add your name to it (lunches, events, day trips...). Minutes of PCC meetings and hall Trustees meetings are always published on the Noticeboard.

PCC/Trustees minutes - copies are available on the Noticeboard.

Parish Magazine - while the primary aim of the magazine to help us to learn about our faith, it also contains information about our parish life. An index of its content is always printed on the inner cover so that you can choose/skip articles which do/don't interest you.

People - perhaps the greatest source of information is talking to others. The names and contact details of the Vicar, churchwardens, trustees, PCC members are on the Noticeboard, on the website, in the magazine. There have been no reports of anyone biting off anybody's head (*certainly not literally!*) so you should feel pretty safe to ask questions, to talk to people.

The parish is happy to make these resources available for everyone—it's up to you to use them!

The power of witness: How the early Church evangelized

by Dr. R. Jared Staudt

“Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins; and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit” (Acts 2,38). Peter finishes the first Christian sermon with these words, having powerfully preached the death and resurrection of Jesus. The crowd knew what had happened to Jesus 50 days earlier, as Peter reminds them that they themselves had participated in his death. From the day of Pentecost, the Church grew consistently, with Christians breaking bread in their homes, following the teaching of the apostles, and exercising charity to those in need.

The blueprint for conversion had been set [but] despite these early successes, the synagogues quickly broke off contact with the early Church and the Roman Empire began an active, though sporadic, persecution. There had to be another way for the Church to continue to grow, and the answer would come through personal witness. Their different way of life was noticed by the surrounding pagans, and they wondered about it.

The sociologist Rodney Stark noted in his book, *The Rise of Christianity*, that Christian courage in the face of death particularly caught their attention. Christians were not only willing to die for their faith through persecution, they also accepted the risk of disease to care for the sick, even when they had been abandoned by their families. They cared for the poor, Christian and pagan alike, and treated women, children and slaves with greater dignity, including recovering abandoned newborns.

Christians clearly believed in something more powerful than any myth or philosophy and proved their faith through their actions.

Conversion began through relationships: family connections, neighbours and colleagues. Mike Aquilina describes this dynamic of the Church’s growth: “The common narrative, however, is a story of friendship. There was, as far as we know, no talk of evangelistic methods or institutional programs in the underground Church ... it seems that Christians converted the world simply by befriending their next-door neighbours and persevering in friendship.”

Likewise, Michael Green also points to how the Church’s growth “was in reality accomplished by means of informal missionaries,” engaging people in a natural and enthusiastic way “in homes and wine shops, on walks, and around market stalls ... Having found treasure, they meant to share it with others, to the limit of their ability.”

Despite persecution and derision as a marginal group, whose views contradicted the prevalent ethos of ancient culture, the Church grew by leaps

and bounds. People wanted more. They sought for meaning and purpose beyond what the myths and mystery cults could offer and found a happiness more genuine than material pleasure. They could see Christians had something they lacked. They observed it every day and began asking questions. They came to know Jesus through their conversations with Christians.

When they were ready, they were brought before the local priest for examination and, if deemed ready, they became catechumens, starting off a more serious time of preparation through instruction, prayer, and moral growth. After years of testing, they would then be examined and elected by the bishop, and they would begin an even more intense period of purification during Lent to prepare to receive the sacraments during the Easter Vigil. Only then could the new converts be admitted to the fullness of the Mass and community life within the Church.

Personal witness worked as a means of conversion even in difficult circumstances. This witness provides a model for us, as our culture begins to look more and more like the ancient world, lost and confused, seeking for greater purpose. As Christians, we can offer direction if we ourselves become true witnesses of Christ by living a different way of life.

(Published in CWR, 20 April 2023)

“Everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved.’ But how can they call on him in whom they have not believed? And how can they believe in him of whom they have not heard? And how can they hear without someone to preach? And how can people preach unless they are sent?” (Rom 10,13-15) Heavenly Father, pour forth your Holy Spirit to inspire me with these words from Holy Scripture. Stir in my soul the desire to renew my faith and deepen my relationship with your Son, our Lord Jesus Christ so that I might truly believe in and live the Good News.

Open my heart to hear the Gospel and grant me the confidence to proclaim the Good News to others. Pour out your Spirit, so that I might be strengthened to go forth and witness to the Gospel in my everyday life through my words and actions.

In moments of hesitation, remind me: If not me, then who will proclaim the Gospel? If not now, then when will the Gospel be proclaimed?

God, our Father, I pray that through the Holy Spirit I might hear the call of the New Evangelization to deepen my faith, grow in confidence to proclaim the Gospel and boldly witness to the saving grace of your Son, Jesus Christ, who lives and reigns with you in the unity of the Holy Spirit, God, for ever and ever. Amen.

Meditations on the Litany of Loretto for the month of May

by Blessed John Henry Newman

Why is May chosen as the month in which we exercise a special devotion to the Blessed Virgin?

The first reason is because it is the time when the earth bursts forth into its fresh foliage and its green grass after the stern frost and snow of winter, and the raw atmosphere and the wild wind and rain of the early spring. It is because the blossoms are upon the trees and the flowers are in the gardens. It is because the days have got long, and the sun rises early and sets late. For such gladness and joyousness of external Nature is a fit attendant on our devotion to her who is the Mystical Rose and the House of Gold.

A man may say, "True; but in this climate we have sometimes a bleak, inclement May." This cannot be denied; but still, so much is true that at least it is the month of *promise* and of *hope*. Even though the weather happen to be bad, it is the month that *begins* and heralds in the summer. We know, for all that may be unpleasant in it, that fine weather is coming, sooner or later. "Brightness and beautifulness shall," in the Prophet's words, "*appear at the end, and shall not lie: if it make delay, wait for it, for it shall surely come, and shall not be slack.*"

May then is the month, if not of fulfilment, at least of *promise*; and is not this the very aspect in which we most suitably regard the Blessed Virgin, Holy Mary, to whom this month is dedicated?

The Prophet says, "*There shall come forth a rod out of the root of Jesse, and a flower shall rise out of his root.*" Who is the flower but our Blessed Lord? Who is the rod, or beautiful stalk or stem or plant out of which the flower grows, but Mary, Mother of our Lord, Mary, Mother of God?

It was prophesied that God should come upon earth. When the time was now full, how was it announced? It was announced by the Angel coming to Mary. "*Hail, full of grace,*" said Gabriel, "*the Lord is with thee; blessed art thou among women.*" She then was the sure *promise* of the coming Saviour, and therefore May is by a special title her month.

(Card. Newman wrote meditations on 30 invocations of the Litany. Here are some of those which explain those titles of Our Lady which are not always easy to understand.)

Mirror of Justice

The word *justice*, as used by the Church has not that sense which it bears in ordinary English. By "justice" is not meant the virtue of fairness, equity, etc.; but it is a word denoting all virtues at once, a perfect, virtuous

state of soul—moral perfection; so that it answers very nearly to what is meant by *sanctity*. Therefore when our Lady is called the “Mirror of Justice,” it is meant to say that she is the Mirror of sanctity, holiness, supernatural goodness.

Next, what is meant by calling her a *mirror*? A mirror is a surface which reflects. What did Mary reflect? She reflected our Lord—but *He* is infinite *Sanctity*. She then, as far as a creature could, reflected His Divine sanctity, and therefore she is the *Mirror* of Sanctity, or, as the Litany says, of *Justice*.

Do we ask how she came to reflect His Sanctity? {32} —it was by living with Him. We see every day how like people get to each other who live with those they love. Now, consider that Mary loved her Divine Son with an unutterable love; and consider too she had Him all to herself for thirty years. Truly then she is the *Mirror* of Divine *Perfection*.

House of gold

Why is she called a *House*? And why is she called *Golden*? Gold is the most beautiful, the most valuable, of all metals. Hence it is that in Scripture the Holy City is, by a figure of speech, called Golden—to give us a notion of the wondrous beautifulness. Therefore it is that Mary too is called *golden*; because her graces, her virtues, her innocence, her purity, are of that transcendent brilliancy and dazzling perfection, so costly, so exquisite, that the angels cannot, so to say, keep their eyes off her any more than *we* could help gazing upon any great work of gold.

But observe further, she is a *golden house*, or, I will rather say, a *golden palace*. Let us imagine we saw a whole palace or large church all made of gold, from the foundations to the roof; such, in regard to the number, the variety, the extent of her spiritual excellences, is Mary.

But why called a *house* or palace? And *whose* palace? She is the house and the palace of the Great King, of God Himself. Our Lord, the Co-equal Son of God, once dwelt in her. He was her Guest; nay, more than a guest, for a guest comes into a house as well as leaves it. But our Lord was actually *born in* this holy house. He took His flesh and His blood from this house, from the flesh, from the veins of Mary. Rightly then was she made to be of pure gold, because she was to give of that gold to form the body of the Son of God.

Morning Star

This title becomes the Blessed Virgin best, and that for three reasons. First, a star is placed in high heaven. Mary now has no part in this nether

world. No change, no violence from fire, water, earth, or air, affects the stars above; and they show themselves, ever bright and marvellous, in all regions of this globe, and to all the tribes of men.

And next, Mary, like the stars, abides for ever, as lustrous now as she was on the day of her Assumption; as pure and perfect, when her Son comes to judgment, as she is now.

Lastly, it is Mary's prerogative to be the *Morning Star*, which heralds in the sun. She does not shine for herself, or from herself, but she is the reflection of her and our Redeemer, and she glorifies Him. When she appears in the darkness, we know that He is close at hand.

Seat of Wisdom



Mary has this title in her Litany, because the Son of God, who is also called in Scripture the Word and Wisdom of God, once dwelt in her, and then, after His birth of her, was carried in her arms and seated in her lap in His first years. Thus, being, as it were, the human throne of Him who reigns in heaven, she is called the *Seat of Wisdom*.

In the poet's words:—His throne, thy bosom blest, / O Mother undefiled, / That Throne, if aught beneath the skies, / Beseems the sinless Child.

Another reason is the time Mary spent in the deepest love and intimacy with her Divine Son—praying and conversing with Him. She must then in her knowledge of

creation, of the universe, and of history, have excelled the greatest of philosophers, and in her theological knowledge the greatest of theologians, and in her prophetic discernment the most favoured of prophets.

Gate of Heaven

Mary is called the *Gate of Heaven*, because it was through her that our Lord passed from heaven to earth. The Prophet Ezechiel, prophesying of

Mary, says, “*the gate shall be closed, it shall not be opened, and no man shall pass through it, since the Lord God of Israel has entered through it—and it shall be closed for the Prince, the Prince Himself shall sit in it.*”

Now this is fulfilled also in that she had a place in our Redemption. It was fitting in God’s mercy that, as the woman, Eve, began the *destruction* of the world, so woman should also begin its *recovery*, and that, as Eve opened the way for the fatal deed of the first Adam, so Mary should open the way for the great achievement of the second Adam, even our Lord Jesus Christ. Hence Mary is called by the holy Fathers a second and a better Eve, as having taken that first step in the salvation of mankind which Eve took in its ruin.

Tower of ivory

A tower is a fabric which rises higher and more conspicuous than other objects in its neighbourhood. Thus, when we say a man “towers” over his fellows, we mean to signify that they look small in comparison of him.

This quality of greatness is instanced in the Blessed Virgin. Though she suffered more keen and intimate anguish at our Lord's Passion and Crucifixion than any of the Apostles by reason of her being His Mother, yet consider how much more noble she was amid her deep distress than they were. When our Lord underwent His agony, they slept for sorrow. They could not wrestle with their deep disappointment and despondency; they could not master it; it confused, numbed, and overcame their senses. And soon after, when St. Peter was asked by bystanders whether he was not one of our Lord's disciples, he denied it.

Nor was he alone in this cowardice. The Apostles, one and all, forsook our Lord and fled, though St. John returned. Nay, still further, they even lost faith in Him, and thought all the great expectations which He had raised in them had ended in a failure. How different this even from the brave conduct of St. Mary Magdalen! and still more from that of the Virgin Mother! It is expressly noted of her that she *stood* by the Cross. She did not grovel in the dust, but *stood upright* to receive the blows, the stabs, which the long Passion of her Son inflicted upon her every moment.

In this magnanimity and generosity in suffering she is, as compared with the Apostles, fitly imaged as a *Tower*. But towers, it may be said, are huge, rough, heavy, obtrusive, graceless structures, for the purposes of war, not of peace; with nothing of the beautifulness, refinement, and finish which are conspicuous in Mary. It is true: therefore she is called the Tower of *Ivory*, to suggest to us, by the brightness, purity, and exquisiteness of that material, how transcendent is the loveliness and the gentleness of the Mother of God.

The Seven Gifts of the Holy Spirit:

Wisdom, Understanding, Counsel, Fortitude, Knowledge, Piety, Fear of God

The seven gifts are mentioned in Isaiah 11,1-3 where the prophet talks about the coming Messiah: “*One shall be born, on whom the spirit of the Lord will rest; a spirit of wisdom and of understanding, a spirit of counsel and of might, a spirit of knowledge and of piety, and ever fear of the Lord shall fill his heart.*” A deeply biblical doctrine of hallowed antiquity yet very few Christians would be able to number the seven gifts and even fewer know what they mean.

The seven gifts of the Holy Spirit are heroic character traits that Jesus Christ alone possesses in their fullness but that he freely shares with us. These seven gifts are planted into our soul as seeds at our baptism—and it is up to us to develop them with God’s help and through his grace. The seven gifts help us to be more open to the Holy Spirit and allow him to lead us towards heaven.

- **Wisdom** is both the knowledge of and judgment about “divine things” and the ability to judge and direct human affairs in the light of divine truth.
- **Understanding** helps us to, indeed, understand better those truths that are necessary for our salvation.
- **Counsel** allows a man to be directed by God in matters necessary for his salvation.
- **Fortitude** denotes a firmness of mind in doing good and in avoiding evil, particularly when it is difficult or dangerous to do so, and the confidence to overcome all obstacles, even deadly ones, by virtue of the assurance of everlasting life.
- **Knowledge** is the ability to judge correctly about matters of faith and right action, so as to never wander from the straight path of justice, truth, and true religion.
- **Piety** is worshipping and honouring God with true affection and persons, places, and things belonging to him.
- **Fear of God** is the fear which naturally comes with love—a loving fear of offending, displeasing, or losing God whom we love (as opposed to servile fear whereby we fear punishment).

These gifts help us to overcome our limitations (fear, laziness, ignorance, etc.). Saint Thomas Aquinas teaches that these gifts are necessary for our salvation, which we cannot achieve on our own. These gifts are given to us in our Baptism but they can (and will) lie dormant in the soul unless we ask God to make them active, alive, and powerful in us. What is required of us, apart from prayer, to unlock the potential of these gifts, is love or charity.

It is easy to see the connection between love and the seven gifts. For example, we will never be able to persevere in *piety* (prayer, worship) if we do not *love* God, prayer, church, worship, etc. We can reach *wisdom* or *knowledge* only if we *love* truth. Again, without *loving* God and our neighbour, we will never have *fortitude* to make sacrifices for them.

Once these *gifts* are “unlocked” in us through love, they produce the *fruits* of the Spirit in our life: love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, generosity, faithfulness, gentleness, modesty, self-control, and chastity (Gal 5,22-23). Again, it is very easy to find fitting examples. Love unlocks the gift of fortitude (see above). Fortitude enables us to live for God and for others. This will fill us with true and lasting *goodness* and *kindness, peace* and *joy*.

This deep connection between love, gifts, and fruits is God’s amazing way to lead us towards a holy Christian life. The more we love, the more joy we find. The more joy we find, the easier it becomes to love—an ascending spiral of love, joy, holiness, goodness, grace... we just need the courage to make the first step.

The seven gifts are also designed to be used in the world for the purpose of transforming this world for Christ. Isaiah is very dear about what these gifts are to be used for: to proclaiming and building up of the kingdom of God in our world and in our time. Indeed, just imagine the power of witness of us, Christians, if we all lived in love and charity, according to the seven gifts, filled with sincere joy, peace, and goodness. None could resist Christ’s message proclaimed and lived by such witnesses...

The Vigil and Feast of Pentecost

Pentecost is the time to ask the question of ourselves: are we living according to the seven gifts? If not, it is time to “*fan the flame of that special grace which God kindled in us*” (2 Tim 1,6).

I invite you all to do two things this Pentecost:

1) Take part in the “novena”—in those nine days of preparation and prayer when we pray that the seven gifts may be renewed in our hearts. If you cannot come to church every day, do it at home.

2) On the Vigil of Pentecost (27 May this year) do some fasting and prayer—as Pius Parsch (+1954) writes: “*A vigil is always a day of preparation. The house of the soul must be cleaned and prepared for the great feast.*”—and then come to the Vigil service where we read some prophecies, rejoice in their fulfilment, bless the baptismal font, celebrate the first solemn Mass of Pentecost at which we will be singing with renewed hearts (by God’s grace!): “*Come down, O Love divine!*”

Catechism (eleventh lesson)

Jesus: our Saviour (for children)



To free us from our sins and to open the gates of heaven for us, Jesus suffered and died for us on the Cross. He did all this out of love—we must indeed love Him for he gave even his own life for our eternal happiness in heaven.

When they took off the body of Jesus from the cross, they laid him into his Mother, Mary's arms and then they buried him in a tomb. At dawn, on Easter day, Jesus rose from the dead and left the tomb (*this is called: resurrection*). He appeared to his Mother and to his disciples and after 40 days he ascended into heaven.

Q. What did Jesus do to save us? *A. To save us, Jesus Christ satisfied for our sins by suffering for us and offering Himself on the tree of the cross.*

Q. What did Jesus do after his resurrection? *A. After his resurrection, Jesus Christ stayed on earth for forty days, appeared to his disciples, and after forty days he ascended into heaven where he is seated at the right hand of God the Father.*

Do you have a Crucifix (*a Crucifix is a cross with the figure of Jesus on it*) at home, in your room? If not, ask your Parents to give you one and tell them how the Cross reminds us of Jesus' love and sacrifice.

When you say your prayers, kiss the Cross and tell Jesus: *My good Jesus, I love you very much and I know how much you love me. I thank you for all that you have done for me.*



On the Sacraments in general (for adults)

136. What is a Sacrament? *A Sacrament is an outward sign instituted by Christ to give grace.*

Three things are necessary to make a Sacrament. There must be: (1) An outward, that is, a visible, sign; (2) this sign must have been given by Our Lord; (3) it must give grace. Now, a sign is that which tells us that something else exists. Smoke indicates the presence of fire. A red light on a railroad tells that there is danger at the spot.

Therefore, the visible signs in the Sacraments tell us that there is in the Sacraments something we do not see but which they signify and give. For example, the outward sign in Baptism is the pouring of the water on the head of the person to be baptized. Water is generally used for cleaning purposes. Water, therefore, is used in Baptism as an outward sign to show that as the water cleans the body, so Baptism cleans the soul.

It is absolutely necessary that these signs be given by Jesus Christ because He gives all grace, and He alone can determine the manner in which He wishes it distributed. The Church can distribute His grace, but only in the way He wishes. Hence it cannot make new Sacraments, abolish old ones, or change them.

137. How many Sacraments are there? *There are seven Sacraments: Baptism, Confirmation, Holy Eucharist, Penance (Confession), Extreme Unction (Anointing), Holy Orders, and Matrimony.*

The life of our soul is in many ways similar to the life of our body. Our bodies must first be born, then strengthened, then fed. When sick, we must be cured: and when about to die, we must be taken care of. Then there must be someone to govern others, and there must be persons to be governed. In like manner, we are spiritually born into a new life by Baptism, we are strengthened by Confirmation, fed with the Holy Eucharist, and cured of the maladies of our souls by Penance. By Anointing we are helped in times of suffering and at the hour of death; by Holy Orders our spiritual guides are appointed by God; and by Matrimony families, with parents at the head and children to be guided by word and example, are established. Thus we have our spiritual life similar in many things to our physical or bodily life.

138. Whence have the Sacraments the power of giving grace? *The Sacraments have the power of giving grace from the merits of Jesus Christ.*

Our Lord died to obtain grace for us. He appointed the Sacraments as the chief means by which we can access this grace. Salvation and grace are offered to all but each of us must come to God and want to be saved and sanctified.

139. What grace do the Sacraments give? *Some of the Sacraments give sanctifying grace (=grace that makes us holy in God's eyes), and others increase it in our souls.*

Baptism and Penance give this sanctifying grace when there is not any of it in the soul—that is to say, they make a sinner holy and justified. But the other Sacraments are received while we are in a state of grace, and they therefore increase the quantity of it in our souls.

140. Which are the Sacraments that give sanctifying grace? *The Sacraments that give sanctifying grace are Baptism and Penance; and they are called Sacraments of the dead.*

“Of the dead.” Not of a dead person; for when a person is dead he cannot receive any of the Sacraments. Therefore, Sacraments of the dead mean Sacraments given to a dead soul, that is, to a soul in mortal (grave) sin. By abolishing sin and restoring a sinful soul to grace, these Sacraments bring our soul back to supernatural life.

141. Why are Baptism and Penance called Sacraments of the dead? *Baptism and Penance are called Sacraments of the dead because they take away sin, which is the death of the soul, and give grace, which is its life.*

142. Which are the Sacraments that increase sanctifying grace in the soul? *The Sacraments that increase sanctifying grace in the soul are: Confirmation, Holy Eucharist, Extreme Unction, Holy Orders, and Matrimony; and they are called Sacraments of the living.*

143. Why are Confirmation, Holy Eucharist, Extreme Unction, Holy Orders, and Matrimony called Sacraments of the living? *Confirmation, Holy Eucharist, Extreme Unction, Holy Orders, and Matrimony are called the Sacraments of the living because those who receive them worthily are already living the life of grace.*

145. Besides sanctifying grace, do the Sacraments give any other grace? *Besides sanctifying grace, the Sacraments give another grace, called sacramental grace.*

146. What is sacramental grace? *Sacramental grace is a special help which God gives to attain the end for which He instituted each Sacrament.*

For example, what was the end for which Penance was instituted? To forgive sins and keep us out of sin. Therefore the sacramental grace given in Penance is a grace that will enable us to overcome temptation and avoid the sins we have been in the habit of committing. When a person is ill the doctor’s medicine generally produces two effects: one is to cure the disease and the other to strengthen the person so that he may not fall back into the old condition. Well, it is just the same in the Sacraments; the grace given produces two effects: one is to sanctify us and the other to prevent us from falling into the same sins.

147. Do the Sacraments always give grace? *The Sacraments always give grace, if we receive them with the right dispositions.*

“Right dispositions”; that is, if we do all that God and the Church require us to do when we receive them. For instance, in Penance the right disposition is to confess all our mortal sins as we know them, to be sorry for them, and have the determination never to commit them again.

148. Can we receive the Sacraments more than once? *We can receive the Sacraments more than once, except Baptism, Confirmation, and Holy Orders.*

149. Why can we not receive Baptism, Confirmation, and Holy Orders more than once? *We cannot receive Baptism, Confirmation, and Holy Orders more than once, because they imprint a character in the soul.*

A character is an invisible spiritual character or mark or sign, imprinted into the soul, and remains forever, so that whether the person is in Heaven or Hell this mark will be seen. It will show that those having it were Christians, who received Baptism, Confirmation, or Holy Orders. In Heaven, these characters will shine out to their honour, and will show how well they used the grace God gave them. Should they be condemned to Hell, these characters will be to their shame and disgrace, and show how many gifts and graces God bestowed upon them, and how shamefully they wasted them all.

NOVENA TO THE HOLY SPIRIT

The Novena starts on Friday after Ascension (19th May this year). The prayer found here is to be used daily. If you wish, you can use the Act of Consecration on page 27 as well either daily or only on the first (and last) day of the Novena.

O Lord Jesus Christ, Who, before ascending into heaven, did promise to send the Holy Spirit to finish Your work in the souls of Your Apostles and Disciples, dare to grant the same Holy Spirit to me, that He may perfect in my soul the work of Your grace and Your love. Grant me:

the Spirit of Wisdom, that I may despise the perishable things of this world and aspire only after the things that are eternal,

the Spirit of Understanding, to enlighten my mind with the light of Your truth,

the Spirit of Counsel, that I may ever choose the surest way of pleasing God and gaining Heaven,

the Spirit of Fortitude, that I may bear my cross with You, and that I may overcome with courage all the obstacles that oppose my salvation,

the Spirit of Knowledge, that I may know God and know myself and grow more perfect in the science of the Saints,

the Spirit of Piety, that I may find peace and fulfilment in the service of God while serving others,

the Spirit of the Fear of the Lord, that I may be filled with a loving reverence towards God, and may dread in any way to displease Him.

Teach me, dear Lord, to be your faithful disciple and animate me in all things with Your Spirit. Amen.

The Psalms

Psalm 26: I love the habitation of thy house

In this Psalm of innocence, the just goes a great deal to dissociate himself from “sinners and bloodthirsty men” and to show his devotion to God. What is rather interesting about this Psalm is that it associates true devotion to God with the love of “the habitation” of his house. In our times when so many separate God and the Church (or church), this Psalm is a reminder that God “dwells” in the Church and none can offer true worship to him outside of it *because* God intended the Church to be his worshipping community.

Psalm 26 is also the psalm (verses 6-12) recited by the Priest during Mass, at the end of Offertory, as he washes his hands.

Verses 1-3 — Without wasting much time, the Psalmist starts with a sincere cry to God. It is evident from his prayer that he came into God’s presence after examining his conscience. His courage and boldness to declare his own innocence may give the impression of self-righteousness and of lack of humility. However, he does not attribute his innocence to himself but to the trust he has always had in God.

This prayer looses any suspect of being self-righteous if we set it in the right context. In the Old Testament God declares many a time—sometimes he even seems to trying to convince his people—his own faithfulness and justice. He is the helper of those who trust in him. His promise of faithfulness is for all those who seek him with an open heart.

A righteous man then in this context is not one whose life is blameless (there is no such man) but rather who does his best and then puts all his trust in God. Almost as if saying: I do what I can, even if it is not much, and I know that you will complement what is necessarily lacking from my effort and you will perfect what is imperfect in it.

The same trust in God makes the Psalmist confident when it comes to God’s judgement. He is almost looking forward to be tested by God who searches and knows the hearts of men. For he has no need in this case to shrink from that test even if it should penetrate the innermost recesses of his heart.

The Psalmist inevitably becomes a question-mark for us, Christians, he becomes a model of prayer we must compare ourselves with. We, too, must approach God in prayer humbly, examining our conscience and declaring, not our non-existing perfection but, God’s faithfulness and his ability to “make up” for our imperfect and limited efforts to love him and

each other as long as we are sincere with him. We humbly offer that little we have and we joyfully thank him for the gift he transforms it into.

Verses 4-5 — These verses further reveal the sincerity of the Psalmist. While implicitly he recognises (see previous verses) his own imperfection as inevitable consequence of our frail, sinful human nature, he does not use it as an excuse. He knows that only God can make us innocent and just but he also knows that our own sincere effort of fighting and avoiding sin and temptation is part of the process.

Again, he is not declaring his own (non-existing) perfection but he can say with all honesty that he avoided, if not sin (as it is impossible for us) but, at least the occasion of sin. He did not seek sinful company, he did not go to evil places... he did what we promise at every confession at the act of contrition: *“I firmly resolve with the help of Thy grace to avoid the near occasion of sin.”*

Yet another occasion to pause and to examine our own conscience: do we hate and detest sin? And do we earnestly avoid its occasion? Or, deep in our heart, we do cherish some of our “little” sins...?!

Verses 6-8 — The historic background of these verses is the ritual washing and cleansing of hands on entering the Temple and the subsequent procession around the altar when the worshipping community declared God’s wondrous deeds—their own cleansing and saving amongst them.

It is in the Temple where, in the Old Testament, God’s glory is enthroned upon the Sacred Ark, in the Holy of Holies and so it is there that his saving, cleansing, sanctifying action is fulfilled and brought to completion. This moves the Islamist to declare his own love towards the Temple in so beautiful, moving words.

In the same light should we, Christians, see our churches and the worship offered in them, as well as the Sacraments we receive there. They are the final fulfilment of God’s promises, now made realities in Jesus Christ, of his final victory over sin and death. Each Sacrament, each act of worship, every visit to a Christian church must be a source of great joy and love for us. Nowhere else can we get closer to God here on earth, nowhere else can our meeting and union with him be more real than in a Christian church, in Christian worship, and in the Sacraments.

Verses 9-12 — The Psalmist presents his petitions to God and once more he protests his innocence which he clearly attributes to God again when he asks him to redeem him. God’s faithfulness and his own (poor) efforts jointly provide a firm foundation for a life pleasing to God. The Psalm ends with a promise of continual thanks and praise of God.

Vicar

Fr Gregory Lipovsky - vicar@stpaulsweymouth.org - 07796 963703 - The Vicarage, 58 Abbotsbury Road, Weymouth, DT4 0BJ

The Vicar's day-off is Monday. With enquires about Baptisms, Weddings, Banns, or Funerals, please, contact the Vicar.

Assistant Priest

Fr Tony Ball - tonyball2008@hotmail.co.uk - 07899 027710

St. Paul's	Fleet
<u>Churchwardens</u> Jeanne James jeannejames@uwclub.net 07854 275895 Sharon Waight sharonwaight3@gmail.com 07879 681900	<u>Churchwardens</u> John Coombe john@seabarn.co.uk Karen Huntley karenhuntley67@gmail.com
<u>Parish Office</u> 01305 771217 stpweymouth@gmail.com	<u>Parish Office</u> 01305 782757 geofftaylor919@btinternet.com

S.P.O.T.

Pat Perry - 01305 750951

Parish Hall & Activities

*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! For service times and other information about our churches and services (including weddings and funerals), please visit our website:

www.stpaulsweymouth.org