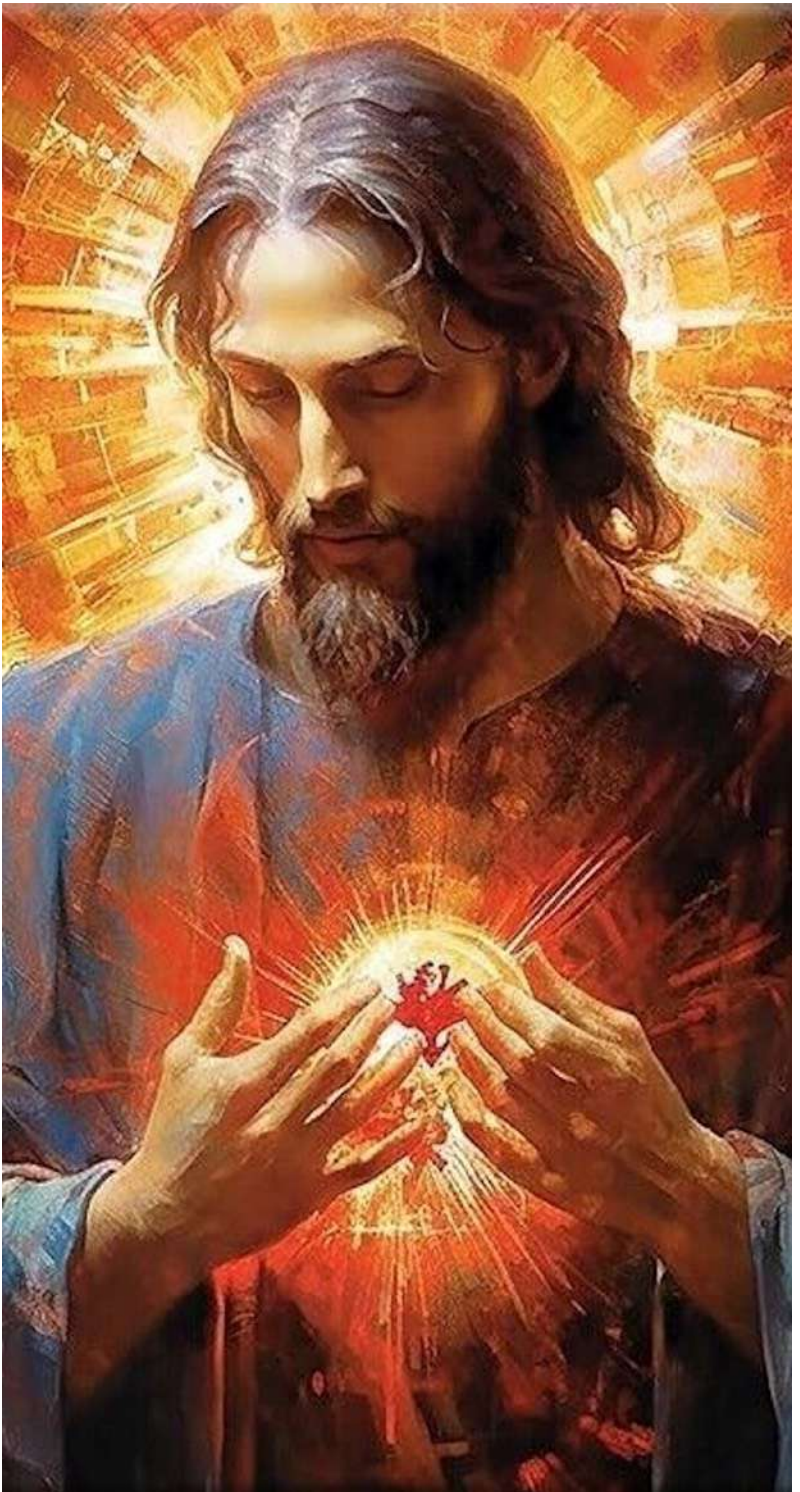


HIGH TIDE

*Parish
Magazine*

*Weymouth
St Paul
with Fleet*

JUN 2024



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*Many thanks to all who have contributed to this issue of the Parish Magazine and to Liz Evans for the proofreading. The next Magazine will be published on **Sunday 30th June**. Please, send all articles, information, news you wish to be publish by Sunday 23rd June.*

Front cover: "The Sacred Heart of Jesus"
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From the Vicar

Dearly Beloved,

As I already “confessed” it two years ago on these pages, ever since I was a child, I have had this inexplicable attraction and devotion to the Most Sacred Heart of the Lord Jesus. There is no reason why you should remember it but I wrote about this statue of the Sacred Heart which still stands by the parish church in my native town. I passed by it every day on my way to school and then on my way back home again. I just copy a paragraph from my letter to you from the June 2022 High Tide as it is still how I feel:

The statue was out of reach, certainly so for a child, yet at the same time it seemed one could embrace it with ease. I still remember the face looking down on me from above: tender, beautiful, and loving. His arms wide open. I have no idea who the artist is but he managed to capture something of the essence of the devotion to the Sacred Heart: Jesus loves us with a tender, affectionate, warm, real love and his greatest desire is that we run into his arms. His Heart, once pierced on the Cross, now beats again for ever in his glorified body in heaven, on the bosom of the Father. It beats for me. It beats for you.

Being this the month of June, traditionally dedicated to the Sacred Heart of Jesus, there will be quite a few articles about this devotion in this High Tide. Many think that devotion to the Sacred Heart is something overly sentimental and thus profoundly un-English. I believe this to be untrue.

The heart of Jesus was persecuted by Herod, betrayed by Judas, abandoned in its agony by the Apostles, deeply saddened by sin, wounded by ingratitude, pierced by a lance, buried in a tomb... and yet, it still beats. It still wants to beat with love for us. Nothing we can do will make it stop beating for us. As the Scripture says, “*If we are faithless, he remains faithful—for he cannot deny himself*” (2 Timothy 2,13).

Is it not almost crazy that God, our God, is a God who will not stop loving us whatever we do. And, hey, can't we just push “whatever” to the extreme? Wars fuelled by greed, burning corpses of children, human trafficking, people pushed into substance-abuse so that others can become rich, violence and abuse... And even amongst those who dare to confess themselves to be of his flock: how much hate, division, gossip, jealousy, and betrayal. How much ingratitude, sin, and coldness of heart.

When in the times of Noah “*the Lord saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every inclination of the thoughts of their hearts was only evil continually, the Lord was sorry that he had made man on the earth, and it grieved him to his heart.*” (Genesis 6,5-6) And so the Flood came and drowned, destroyed,

and killed every life. Only Noah found favour in God's eyes. But God's heart remembered his own love and when the Flood receded, God made a covenant with Noah: never again shall all flesh be cut off, never again shall all flesh be destroy (cf. Genesis 9,11). *"And God said, 'This is the sign of the covenant that I make between me and you and every living creature that is with you, for all future generations: I have set my bow in the clouds, and it shall be a sign of the covenant between me and the earth'"* (Genesis 9,12-13).

I do not think it would be stretching the Scriptures too far to see the raging waves of hate, war, jealousy, destruction, killing, and greed as a new Flood. This time, however, it is not brought upon us by God because he is faithful to his promises. It is brought upon us by ourselves and too great is the number of those destroyed - killed, mutilated, deprived of future and hope, impoverished, disfigured - by it.

But above this frightful and horrendous Flood of evil of our own creation, there *is* a symbol, a new one, bright and unfading, shining in the skies, a symbol of the New Covenant: the Most Sacred Heart of Jesus. Pierced, crowned with thorns, burdened with the cross yet beating and burning with living flames of unchanging, unceasing love. It is the new Ark, open wide on the cross by a soldier's lance, that alone can save us from drowning in this new flood.

A sentimental image? I don't think so. A moving one perhaps? That sounds more like it! But if so, why on earth should we be afraid of being moved by God's love to repentance, conversion, affection, and love? Why should we be reluctant to be saved? Why should we look with suspicion on the transforming power of love? Because, after all, this is what devotion to the Sacred Heart of Jesus is about: being enkindled with love, being saved, being transformed—ourselves, and, through us, the whole world.

As the liturgy puts it, the Sacred Heart *"pours out on us streams of mercy and grace"* - but we must humbly admit to being in desperate need of mercy and grace; *"is a shrine of divine bounty"* - but we need the courage to step into it; *"is a resting-place to the devout"* - but only to true devotion which doesn't content itself with words and sentiments but acts and lives accordingly; *"is a haven of salvation to the penitent"* - but we need humility to earnestly repent of every evil our hearts utter. The key, however, to all this, the starting point, the unshakeable foundation, if you will, is to recognise that the Sacred Heart of Jesus *"has never ceased to burn with love for us."* Never. NEVER! And as terribly difficult and frightening as it may sometimes be, we just have to let It love us. This is what we can learn from the devotion to the Sacred Heart.

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

Fr. Gregory 5

An introduction

(In this article, Irene Leader, who effectively is one of our newest members here at St. Paul's, introduces herself.)

Born in 1953 to a mother who was Protestant (her mother lived in Brixham, wore a bonnet, and attended 'chapel' – whatever denomination that was?) and a father who was Roman Catholic. They were going to be married in the Catholic church but during marriage preparation she had to promise to bring up any children in the Roman Catholic faith, which she was not prepared to do. So, they married in an Anglican church, and my father had to renounce his religion. I found it surprising that she was so insistent, as neither of them were practising their faith as in churchgoing. I was baptised as a baby at an Anglican church.

The first time I remember being in somewhere 'religious' was in a Methodist church hall. There was a framed picture of Jesus on the wall where I was intrigued by this man in white with gold around his head. My mother took me there to enrol in Brownies. I even had the uniform. This was lovingly put in a drawer. Taken out and looked at often, and tried on, whilst I waited for them to ask me to join, but the call never came. Eventually I grew too big for the uniform!

I said the normal childhood prayers of "God bless mummy, God bless daddy" etc, and went through everyone I could think of, every night. My parents obviously never took me to Sunday School. My sister was 6 years older than me and she started going to a church youth club in her early teens because she fancied the chap that was running it, and I went along to something called 'Pilots' running at the same time. This was at the Congregational church. I started going to their Sunday school. I must admit to not having understood much, if anything, of what they were saying, and at the end of term tests I consistently got 0.

The school I went to had assemblies each morning and I wished that I were Roman Catholic because they were allowed to stay out; however, I did learn hymns and prayers. We put our chairs up on our desks at home time and said, 'Lighten our darkness...' We had Religious Education and the only thing I remember from that was a framed picture on the wall of Jesus standing on a boat in the waves. The teacher used to occasionally point at this saying, 'when it comes to a matter of life and death, there is no such thing as an atheist.'

When I was in the fourth year there was a boy with blonde hair that played the trumpet whom I liked. I remember lying in bed and pleading with God to make him just notice me, and that if He would, that I would pray

every single night without fail, 'I promise, I promise, I promise.' The boy never did notice me – and then it didn't seem so important to pray every night!

I enlisted in the WRAF. During training we had to go to church parade every Sunday, and there was also input from a Scripture Reader (SASRA). I married in 1978 in an Anglican church. It was after this that we got to know the Padre as a friend, so I started going to the church on the camp in Germany which was Church of England and Free Churches. One embarrassing moment was when this new chap was sitting in the front row all by himself, so after the service I thought I would go and introduce myself to him and give him 'valuable' information about the church and the 'camp' and local info, etc, which I did. After I had given him my most pleasant and encouraging welcome, I wanted the ground to open when he said he was the new Station Commander.

Another embarrassing moment was when my father was unconscious and dying, I phoned the local Roman Catholic priest and told him the story of my father, and he said, 'what is it you want me to do?' I blurted out, 'I'm worried about his immortal soul!' Now I cringe at the thought of saying that. Bless him, he didn't laugh, and said he would visit him and say last rites.

When my daughter Emma was born in 1983, I remembered that my mother had insisted that we were not brought up as Roman Catholics, so I decided that I ought to know exactly what I was supposed to believe as a member of the Church of England. I thought I had better attend confirmation classes to find out. Both of my children were baptised at 3 months old.

I asked my mother if she believed in God. She said she did, but 'it was something you did not talk about.' The only time I have known her to attend church was after my father died, she went weekly to wash up after the service with a lady she knew.

I have always felt drawn to the higher end of the church as I liked Holy Communion every week and I like Liturgy, Symbolism, and Ceremony. I have always been in a church choir, and I was a bell ringer for a few years. Oh, and they didn't want me on the PCC, but thought I could be PCC Secretary for a while.

I have helped at the Sunday school, helped run children's confirmation classes, occasional preacher in another Diocese, even been the speaker at Women's World Day of Prayer! (?like why would they ask me?), plus all the other usual things that one gets involved with as part of the congregation. Obviously, I could blow my own trumpet for longer (ha-ha), but I'll stop now and give you a break!

Top facts about the month of June

Jeanne James writes:

1. The Romans called June “Junius” or Junius, but it is unclear whether this was after Juno, goddess of marriage, or whether May and June were named for the old and young: ‘maiores’ and ‘juniores’.

2. The Anglo-Saxons called June “sera monath” (dry month).

3. June is celebrated as National Smile Month in the UK and National Oceans Month in the USA.

4. In any year, no month begins on the same day of the week as June.

5. Antony and Cleopatra and Henry IV are the only Shakespeare plays that mention June.

6. “There are two seasons in Scotland: June and winter.” (Billy Connolly)

7. The Earl of Liverpool (1770-1828) and Anthony Eden (1897-1977) are the only UK prime ministers to have been born in June.

8. June was the 39th most popular name for a baby girl in 1925 in English-speaking countries but it dropped out of the top thousand in 1986. As a boy’s name, it peaked in 697th place in 1922.

9. June is the month with the longest daylight hours of the year in the Northern Hemisphere.

10. June has the shortest daylight hours of the year in the Southern Hemisphere.

11. The June birth flower is the Rose and the Honeysuckle.

Glastonbury Centenary Pilgrimage - Saturday 13 July 2024

A group from St. Paul’s will attend the pilgrimage. Please let us know (*our contact details on the back page*) if you want to join us.

12.00 noon: Solemn Mass sung in the Nave of the Abbey Church

Preacher: The Rt Revd Dr Rowan Williams

For 30 minutes after Mass there will be stations for the Sacrament of Anointing, and confessions will be heard in a suitable location.

Lunch (*individual arrangements*)

3.00 pm: Procession of the Blessed Sacrament to the Abbey for Solemn Benediction in the Nave of the Abbey Church

Preacher: The Reverend Ben Andrews, Vicar of St Theodore’s, Port Talbot

On the devotion to the Sacred Heart of Jesus

While it may seem a very sentimental practice, the devotion to the Sacred Heart of Jesus can enrich our prayer life, draw us closer to the Lord Jesus, and help us advance in our Christian life. Let us discover, in a bullet-point-type style, the history, essence, and possible fruits of this devotion.

History

- the Old Testaments is rich in referring to God's heart; Jesus himself refers to his Sacred Heart in the Gospels;
- a proper reference to Jesus' Heart is first mentioned as early as in the 2nd century by St. Justin Martyr (+165);
- Christian writers throughout centuries emphasized the pierced side of Christ as the inexhaustible source from which all graces flow;
- the blood and water flowing from Jesus' pierced side become symbols of the sacraments;
- St. Anselm (+1109) and St. Bernard of Clairvaux (+1153) talk more directly about the love of the Sacred Heart for every person;
- the Franciscan and Dominican Friars further enkindled this devotion in people's hearts and minds; the focus on the Sacred Heart moved from being a symbol of the sacraments to the symbol of Divine Love;
- St. Gertrude and St. Mechtild, two of the greatest medieval mystics, write richly for the first time about the Sacred Heart and its relation to men, to saints, and to the souls in Purgatory;
- In the 17th century a new and dangerous heresy starts spreading in France: Jansenism. Instead of God's love and mercy, it preached fear, pessimism, and scrupulosity. Frequent Holy Communion was frowned upon;
- Jesus appears many times over a period of three years (1673-5) to a French nun, St. Margaret Mary Alacoque (+1690), talking about his Divine Love and Sacred Heart. In contrast to the Jansenist heresy, Jesus' message is: "*My Divine Heart is so passionately in love with humanity that it cannot keep back the pent-up flames of its burning charity*";
- During these apparitions, Our Lord mourned the indifference and ingratitude of many; asked for frequent Holy Communion, especially on first Friday of every months; he requested that there be a Feast for His Sacred Heart in the Church; on that Feast He asked for a solemn act of reparation to be prayed publicly;
- finally, in 1856 the Feast of the Most Sacred Heart of Jesus is instituted and made universal in the Church; in 1899, Pope Leo XIII consecrated the world to the Sacred Heart.

What is the devotion to the Sacred Heart of Jesus about

- In 1928, Pope Pius XI wrote about the meaning of the vision of St. Margaret M. Alacoque: “*Jesus showed His Heart to us bearing about it the symbols of the passion and displaying the flames of love, that from the one we might know the infinite malice of sin, and in the other we might admire the infinite charity of Our Redeemer, and so might have a more vehement hatred of sin, and make a more ardent return of love for His love.*”
- In a nutshell, this devotion is about detesting sin, being sorry for it (for ours, firstly, and for those of others), offering “reparation” for all the sins and offences people commit against God’s love, and proclaiming God’s mercy and love to all (ourselves included!);
- The purpose of devotion to the Sacred Heart of Jesus is to focus our hearts on receiving and returning His love with gratitude — with all of our heart, soul, and strength — that He may be glorified.

Why the Heart?

- The Heart is only a symbol of Jesus’ (=God’s) love and the devotion to the Sacred Heart, properly understood, is about Jesus himself and his (=God’s) love;
- “His Heart, more than all the other members of His body, is the natural sign and symbol of His boundless love for the human race” (Pius XII) and its “infinite love moves us to love Him in return” (Leo XIII).

Practices linked to this devotion

- prayers (widely available in prayerbooks and on the internet);
- Holy Communion on the first Friday of every month;
- “visit” (=prayer) to the Blessed Sacrament, especially on first Fridays, with the intention of “loving Jesus back” on behalf of others as well;
- passing an hour in prayer on Thursdays at 11pm (the time of Jesus’ agony);
- having and venerating (prayers, candles, flowers...) an image of the Sacred Heart in our homes;
- prayers of consecration (of our day, life, person, family...) to the Sacred Heart;

Possible (and rightly desired) fruits of this devotion

- deeper understanding of and response to God’s love;
- emotional richness brought to our prayer-life;
- consolation, strength, conversion, and an increase of virtues (love, charity)

The promises of Jesus to those who venerate his Sacred Heart

These promises were given to all, through St. Margaret M. Alacoque, who received them during her visions”

1. I will give them all the graces necessary for their state of life. 2. I will give peace in their families. 3. I will console them in all their troubles. 4. I will be their refuge in life and especially in death. 5. I will abundantly bless all their undertakings. 6. Sinners shall find in my Heart the source and infinite ocean of mercy. 7. Tepid souls shall become fervent. 8. Fervent souls shall rise speedily to great perfection. 9. I will bless those places wherein the image of My Sacred Heart shall be exposed and venerated. 10. I will give to priests the power to touch the most hardened hearts. 11. Persons who propagate this devotion shall have their names eternally written in my Heart.

How to (and how NOT to!) understand these promises?

These promises are not an automatic guarantee of grace and salvation “in exchange” of certain merely external acts of piety performed by us. Our Lord intended that these promises would be understood in the light of the Christian faith as a whole. These promises should be interpreted in the same way as those made in the Gospels to the prayer of faith. In neither case are we dealing with a technique or recipe for gaining a hold over God. The promises are made to man only in the measure in which he surrenders himself in unreserved faith and unquestioning love to the will of God.

For example, the promises of peace and blessings for every home where an image of the Sacred Heart is exposed does not mean, “*All we need to do is put a Sacred Heart image on the wall, and we will have a peaceful, happy family.*” The image on the wall must be allowed to impress His love deep within our hearts, and remind us to let our Lord take His place at the very centre of our lives. Every time we pass the image, we might say from our hearts, “*Jesus, I trust in You. Jesus, I love you. Make my home in your heart!*” And if we then faithfully follow His command to “*love one another, even as I have loved you*” (Jn 13,34), then we are truly and fully practicing devotion to His Heart, and then (and only then) will we have true peace.

The Great Promise

Historians do not know for sure the year and date on which St. Margaret Mary received the twelfth, the greatest promise but she records it for us clearly in a letter to her former superior, Mother de Saumaise, of May, 1688: ‘One Friday at Holy Communion He said, if I am not mistaken, to me, His unworthy slave: “*I promise you in the excess of the mercy of My Heart, that Its all*

powerful love will grant to all those who receive Communion on the first Friday of nine consecutive months the grace of final repentance; they shall not die under My displeasure, nor without receiving the last Sacraments; My Divine Heart shall be their assured refuge at that last hour.” This is essentially the same promise which our Lord made in the Gospel: “He who eats my flesh and drinks my blood has eternal life, and I will raise him up at the last day” (Jn 6,54). The “new” element is the connection of His Gospel promises to His Sacred Heart.

Again, we should not interpret this as an automatic guarantee of final salvation to those who *simply* go through the motions of receiving Communion on nine First Fridays in a row. These Communions must be good communions, that is to say, received in a state of grace and with the required dispositions. They must, further, be made for the love of the Sacred Heart, in a spirit of reparation, and in such a way that they really afford Him reparation and consolation for the outrages offered to it—that is, with as much devotion, purity, love, and affection as we can muster (with His help!) for such are the Communions asked for by Jesus on the First Fridays of the month.

We can see now how these nine Communions are not a magic form but a simple means to exercise affectionate and loving prayer that will bring us to penitence and ever greater love. This way, our hearts will open up more and more to receive all the saving graces the Lord Jesus promised in the Gospels.

Also, since we do not know with absolute certainty whether we have made the nine Communions with the proper dispositions (was our affection, love, purity of heart and intention, etc. great enough?? can it ever be *enough??*), we can never have the absolute certainty of salvation. Thus this devotion is never a short-cut to heaven or a free get-out-of-jail card but a constant motivation and help to grow in our love for God. No one can do “properly” these nine Communions if their intention is to “get over with it” so that after they can become slack in devotional life, disobedient to God’s commandments, tepid in prayer, or uncaring in matters spiritual.

Behold, then, how the devotion to the Sacred Heart of Jesus, if understood and practiced correctly, leads to an increase of all virtues, especially of the virtues of love and charity, only path to salvation.

O most holy Heart of Jesus, fountain of every blessing, I adore you, I love you, and with lively sorrow for my sins I offer you this poor heart of mine. Make me humble, patient, pure and wholly obedient to your will. Grant, Good Jesus, that I may live in you and for you. Protect me in the midst of danger. Comfort me in my afflictions. Give me health of body, assistance in my temporal needs, your blessing on all that I do, and the grace of a holy death. Amen.

Sacred mingling

While the “pious devotion” to the Sacred Heart may, on the surface, seem terribly “romish”, continental, and baroque - indeed, in its current form it goes back to the private revelations a French Roman Catholic nun, St. Margaret Mary Alacoque, received from the Lord Jesus between 1673-5 - in reality it is one of the most ancient devotions rooted in the Bible (*see next article*) and present in our worship.

To have a quick overview of what the devotion to the Sacred Heart consists of, see the previous article. Here we shall briefly examine an easily overlooked, small gesture in the Mass the priest performs daily that points to the Sacred Heart. This gesture is the “sacred mingling”, the pouring of a few drops of water into the chalice, mixing it to the wine, at the Offertory.

The historic reason why a few drops of water are mixed to the wine is the least exciting one. As clear, drinkable water was difficult to access, especially in great quantities, it was a wide-spread custom to drink wine instead of water. We are talking about a very light wine, with low alcoholic content which, however, would have still made everyone drunk too quick so they further diluted it with water. This was practiced by the Romans as well as by, in our case, the Jews in Palestine in the times of Jesus. Jesus himself drank and consecrated wine mixed with water at the Last Supper too. For this reason, in imitation of what the Redeemer did, we do the same. Indeed, we know from written sources that this mingling was practiced already in 150 AD and has been in use ever since in every Liturgy, Western and Eastern alike.

There is another reason, not yet directly pointing to the Sacred Heart, which explains why the priest blesses the water with the sign of the cross before a few drops of it are mingled with the wine. The text of the blessing is as follows: *“O God, who didst wondrously create, and yet more wondrously renew the dignity of human nature: grant that by the mystery of this water and wine we may be made co-heirs of his divinity, who vouchsafed to be made partaker of our humanity, even Jesus Christ thy Son our Lord: Who liveth and reigneth with thee in the unity of the Holy Ghost, one God: world without end. Amen.”*

The symbolic-theological reason is then the Incarnation: the fact, that is, that God assumed our human nature. The eternal Son of the Father, the second Person of the Holy Trinity, became son of Mary, born in time, in our own flesh and nature, known as Jesus Christ. The wine, which is the more noble element, symbolises the divine nature into which our human nature, signified by the less noble element of water, was assumed. The infinite divinity (lot of wine) assumed the finite human nature (only a few drops of water). As God needs no blessing, the priest only blesses the water (=us).

Finally, there is yet another reason for mixing wine and water in the chalice; this time pointing explicitly to the Sacred Heart of the Lord Jesus. However, this time we must change our perspective, so to say, and look at the chalice not as the sacred vessel *into* which we pour wine and water but rather the sacred vessel *out of* which “flows” the Precious Blood mixed with water.

The preface (the prayer that leads to the *Sanctus*) of the Sacred Heart says: *“It is truly meet and just, right and for our salvation, that we should at all times, and in all places, give thanks unto Thee, O Lord, holy Father, almighty and everlasting God; Who didst will that Thine only-begotten Son, while hanging on the cross, should be pierced by a soldier’s spear, that the Heart thus opened, a shrine of divine bounty, should pour out on us streams of mercy and grace, and that what never ceased to burn with love for us, should be a resting-place to the devout, and a haven of salvation to the penitent. And therefore with Angels and Archangels...”*

We know from the Gospel of St. John, the gospel of the beloved disciple, eye-witness to the Crucifixion, that after the death of Jesus, while his Body was still on the Cross, *“one of the soldiers pierced his side with a spear, and at once blood and water came out”* (19,34). In the very moment our salvation was accomplished, in a deeply symbolic manner, God’s Heart was wide opened - and so it stays for ever! - to every sinner and that very same Heart has been ever since pouring out on our race, and through us on the whole visible creation, streams of mercy and grace. This outpouring of grace happens chiefly in the Sacraments when we are washed clean and adopted in Baptism, forgiven in Confession, consecrated in Confirmation, etc. But undoubtedly the greatest of all the Sacraments is the Eucharist where God is truly and really present under the veils of bread and wine, where the Sacrifice of the Cross is renewed on the Altar, where the only acceptable and pleasing Sacrifice of the New Testament is offered to God, and where we are fed by the Bread from heaven. What happened on the Cross - redemption, salvation, reconciliation, outpouring of mercy and grace - is made present and accessible for us at every Mass.

Surely, by now the symbolic link between the mingling of wine and water and the Sacred Heart pierced on the Cross is sufficiently clear. At every Mass the ever-living, ever-beating Heart of Jesus is made present on the Altar, in the Eucharist. Truly and really in the consecrated Bread and Wine. Symbolically in the chalice. When, after the consecration, it is elevated by the priest for us all to see and to adore, it is the very symbol of Jesus’ Heart. On the Cross it died for us so it can pour out blood and water, mercy and grace. At the Altar, raised up high by the priest, is alive again, and lives for us, so, as on the Cross, and ever since, it can pour out on us the same Blood and water, the same mercy and grace, here and now again.

Excerpts from the Homily of Pope Benedict XVI

Dear Brothers and Sisters, God's heart, as the expression of his will, is spoken of twenty-six times in the Old Testament. Before God's heart men and women stand judged. His heartfelt pain at sins of mankind makes God decide on the flood, but then he is touched by the sight of human weakness and offers his forgiveness. Yet another passage of the Old Testament speaks of God's heart with absolute clarity: it is in the eleventh chapter of the book of the Prophet Hosea, whose opening lines portray the Lord's love for Israel at the dawn of its history: "*When Israel was a child, I loved him, and out of Egypt I called my son*" (11,1). Israel, however, responds to God's constant offer of love with indifference and even outright ingratitude. "*The more I called them*", the Lord is forced to admit, "*the more they went from me*" (11,2). Even so, he never abandons Israel to the power of its enemies, because "*my heart*"—the Creator of the universe observes—"*recoils within me, my compassion grows warm and tender*" (11,8).

The heart of God burns with compassion! We are called to contemplate this mystery: the heart of a God who feels compassion and who bestows all his love upon humanity. A mysterious love, which in the New Testament is revealed to us as God's boundless and passionate love for mankind. God does not lose heart in the face of ingratitude or rejection by the people he has chosen; rather, with infinite mercy he sends his only-begotten Son into the world to take upon himself the fate of a shattered love, so that by defeating the power of evil and death he could restore to human beings enslaved by sin their dignity as sons and daughters.

But this took place at great cost—the only-begotten Son of the Father was sacrificed on the Cross: "*Having loved his own who were in the world, he loved them to the end*" (Jn 13,1). The symbol of this love is his side, pierced by a spear. The Apostle John, an eyewitness, tells us: "*one of the soldiers pierced his side with a spear, and at once there came out blood and water*" (19,34).

Let us, then, pause to contemplate the pierced Heart of the Crucified One. Saint Paul writes to the Ephesians: "*God, who is rich in mercy, out of the great love with which he loved us, even when we were dead through our trespasses, made us alive together with Christ... raised us up with him, and made us sit with him in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus*" (2,4-6). To be "in" Jesus Christ is already to be seated in heaven. The very core of Christianity is expressed in the Heart of Jesus: the Love that saves us and even now makes us live in the eternity of God. As the Evangelist John writes: "*God so loved the world that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life*" (3,16). God's heart calls to our hearts, inviting us to come out of ourselves, to forsake our human certainties,

to trust in him and, by following his example, to make ourselves a gift of unbounded love.

While it is true that Jesus' invitation to "*abide in my love*" (Jn 15,9) is addressed to all the baptized, this invitation resounds all the more powerfully for all priests. The saintly Curé of Ars said: "*the priesthood is the love of the Heart of Jesus.*" How can we fail to be moved when we recall that the gift of priestly ministry flows directly from the Sacred Heart of the Lord? Priests must grow ever closer to Jesus, who counts on them, his ministers, to spread and build up his Kingdom, and to radiate his love and his truth. Every priest must become, for the world in our time, herald of hope, reconciliation and peace!

Certainly, to be ministers at the service of the Gospel, study and careful, ongoing pastoral and theological formation are useful and necessary, but even more necessary is that "knowledge of love" which can only be learned in a "heart to heart" encounter with Christ. For it is he who calls his priests to break the bread of his love, to forgive sins and to guide the flock in his name. And for that reason they must never step back from the source of love which is his heart, pierced on the Cross.

Even our shortcomings, our limitations and our weaknesses ought to bring us back to the heart of Jesus. By contemplating Christ, sinners learn from him the "sorrow for sins" needed to bring them back to the Father. This is even more the case for sacred ministers. Nothing causes more suffering for the Church, the Body of Christ, than the sins of her pastors, especially the sins of those who become "thieves and robbers" of the sheep (Jn 10,1), lead them astray by their own private teachings, or ensnare them in the toils of sin and death?

Dear priests, the summons to conversion and to trust in God's mercy also applies to us; we too must humbly, sincerely and unceasingly implore the heart of Jesus to preserve us from the terrifying risk of endangering the very people we are obliged to save.

The heart of the saintly Curé of Ars blazed with divine love, experienced amazement at the thought of the dignity of the priest, and spoke to the faithful in touching and sublime tones, telling them that "after God, the priest is everything! Only in heaven will he fully realize what he is." Dear brothers, let us cultivate this same amazement, in order to carry out our ministry with generosity and dedication, and to maintain the true "fear of God" in our hearts: the fear, that is, that we can deprive of so much good, by our negligence or fault, the souls entrusted to our care, or that—God forbid—we can do them harm. The Church needs holy priests; ministers capable of helping the faithful to experience the Lord's merciful love, and convinced witnesses of that love.

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

Anniversaries of death

Order of Morning and Evening Prayer

Calendar for June 2024

SAT	1 st	St. Angela Merici	12pm
SUN	2 nd	1ST SUNDAY AFTER TRINITY *	10.30am
MON	3 rd	<i>Feria</i>	9am
TUE	4 th	St. Francis Caracciolo	—
WED	5 th	St. Boniface Bishop, Martyr	—
THU	6 th	St. Norbert Bishop	—
FRI	7 th	MOST SACRED HEART OF JESUS	—
SAT	8 th	<i>Of Our Lady</i>	9.30am
SUN	9 th	2ND SUNDAY AFTER TRINITY **	10.30am
MON	10 th	St. Margaret Queen, Widow	—
TUE	11 th	St. Barnabas Apostle	—
WED	12 th	St. John of San Facundo	—
THU	13 th	St. Anthony of Padua, Doctor	—
FRI	14 th	St. Basil the Great, Bishop & Doctor	—
SAT	15 th	<i>Of Our Lady</i>	9.30am
SUN	16 th	3RD SUNDAY AFTER TRINITY	10.30am
MON	17 th	St. Gregory Barbarigo, Bishop	9am
TUE	18 th	St. Ephraem, Doctor	9am
WED	19 th	St. Juliana Falconer, Virgin	10am
THU	20 th	<i>St. Silverius Pope, Martyr</i>	6pm
FRI	21 st	St. Aloysius Gonzaga	12pm
SAT	22 nd	St. Alban, Martyr	9.30am
SUN	23 rd	4TH SUNDAY AFTER TRINITY	10.30am, 5pm
MON	24 th	NATIVITY OF ST. JOHN THE BAPT.	6pm
TUE	25 th	St. William Abbot	9am
WED	26 th	Sts. John & Paul, Martyrs	10am
THU	27 th	<i>Feria (monthly requiem)</i>	6pm
FRI	28 th	<i>Vigil (Anointing)</i>	12pm
SAT	29 th	ST. PETER & PAUL, APOSTLES	9.30am
SUN	30 th	5TH SUNDAY AFTER TRINITY	10.30am, 5pm

* Solemn Mass of Corpus Christi with Procession

** Solemn Mass of The Most Sacred Heart of Jesus with prayer of Consecration

Daily Intentions



Anniversaries of death

We pray for...

- 1st Shrine of Walsingham - *Rosetta Guess, Gwen Uphill*
- 2nd Our Parish - *Chris Biles, Charles Powell*
- 3rd Our Servers - *Frances Ball, Richard Griffin*
- 4th Those who hunger - *Bill Moore, Ann Rockett, Clissy Buxton*
- 5th Our Benefactors, living or departed - *Adam Pask*
- 6th Priest, vocations - *Mark Carey*
- 7th Dying - *Arthur Freegard*
- 8th Our Cell of O.L.W.

- 9th Our Parish - *Ida Goddard*
- 10th Widows & widowers - *Ralph Evans, Joan Bearne*
- 11th Bishop Paul of Oswestry
- 12th Beechcroft - *Scott Cooper*
- 13th Preachers
- 14th Our friends - *Les Green*
- 15th Those afflicted by wars - *Dorothy Reeves, Arthur Goodwin*

- 16th Our Parish
- 17th Farmers - *Elsie Keen, Janet White*
- 18th Peace - *Angela Garrett*
- 19th Those discerning priestly vocation - *John Cohyer pr., Fred Scriven*
- 20th Persecuted Christians - *Pat Bibby*
- 21st Children, young people - *Gordon Woolveridge pr.*
- 22nd Victims of torture, persecution, injustice

- 23rd Our Parish - *Bill Evans, Philip James*
- 24th Our organists & choir - *Derek Brown, Arthur Smart, Peter Bentley*
- 25th Vocations to religious life
- 26th Our PCC - *Philip James*
- 27th Departed
- 28th Sick - *Lil Coombs*
- 29th Our Parish - *David Bowring, Thomas Goodsir, George Pryer*

- 30th Our Parish - *Jean Shakerly, Jean York*

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

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

MORNING PRAYER

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

R. And she conceived by the Holy Ghost.

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

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

V. Behold the handmaid of the Lord.

R. Be it unto me according to thy word.

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

V. And the Word was made flesh.

R. And dwelt amongst us.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

R. The Sacred Heart of Jesus, which was wounded for love of us, O come, let us worship.

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

R. O come, let us worship.

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 Sacred Heart of Jesus, which was wounded for love of us, O come, let us worship.

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

R. O come, let us worship.

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 Sacred Heart of Jesus, which was wounded for love of us, O come, let us worship.

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. The Sacred Heart of Jesus, which was wounded for love of us, O come, let us worship.

HYMN

Jesus, behind thy temple's veil,
Hid in an ark of gold,
On stones engraven, lay the law
thy finger wrote of old.

But in thy body's Temple new,
thy life-blood's throbbing shrine,
Held, upon fleshly tables graved,
The law of Love Divine.

And when that heart in death was stilled,
Each temple's veil was riven:
And lo, within thy love's red shrine,
To us to look was given.

There make us gaze and see the love
Which drew thee, for our sake,
O great High-Priest, thyself to God
A Sacrifice to make.

Thou, Saviour, cause that every soul
Which thou hast loved so well,
May will within thine open heart
In life and death to dwell.

Grant it, O Father, only Son,
And Spirit, God of grace,
To whom all worship shall be done,
In every time and place. Amen.

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

1	Psalms 8	Joshua 10,1-15 Luke 11,37-end	16	42, 43	Deuteronomy 10,12-end Acts 23,12-end
2	28	Deuteronomy 5,1-21 Acts 21,17-39(a)	17	54	Judges 8,22-end Luke 15,1-10
3	20	Joshua 14 Luke 12,1-12	18	55	Judges 9,1-21 Luke 15,11-end
4	21	Joshua 21,43-end Luke 12,13-21	19	57	Judges 9,22-end Luke 16,1-18
5	23	Joshua 22 Luke 12,22-31	20	63	Judges 11,1-11 Luke 16,19-end
6	27	Joshua 23 Luke 12,32-40	21	68	Judges 11,29-end Luke 17,1-10
7	30	Joshua 24,1-28 Luke 12,41-48	22	71	Judges 12,1-7 Luke 17,11-19
8	31	Joshua 24,29-end Luke 12,49-end	23	48	Deuteronomy 11,1-15 Acts 27,1-12
9	36	Deuteronomy 6,10-end Acts 22,22 - 23,11	24	50, 149	Malachi 3,1-6 Luke 3,1-17
10	32	Judges 2 Luke 13,1-9	25	73	Judges 14 Luke 18,1-14
11	100, 101	Jeremiah 9,23-24 Acts 4,32-end	26	76	Judges 15 Luke 18,15-30
12	34	Judges 5 Luke 13,22-end	27	77	Judges 16 Luke 18,31-end
13	41	Judges 6,1-24 Luke 14,1-11	28	78 v. 1-39	Judges 17 Luke 19,1-10
14	44	Judges 6,25-end Luke 14,12-24	29	113	Isaiah 49,1-6 Acts 11,1-18
15	51	Judges 7 Luke 14,25-end	30	56	Deuteronomy 15,1-11 Acts 27,33-end

Each reading ends with these words:

V. This is the word of the Lord.

R. Thanks be to God.

BENEDICTUS

Ant: These things were done that the Scripture should be fulfilled: They shall look on him whom they pierced.

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: These things were done that the Scripture should be fulfilled: They shall look on him whom they pierced.

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

O God, the protector of all who trust in you, without whom nothing is strong, nothing is holy: Increase and multiply upon us your mercy; that, you being our ruler and guide, we may so pass through things temporal, that we finally lose not the things eternal. Through Christ, our Lord. **R.** Amen.

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

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

R. Amen.

V. Let us bless the Lord.

R. Thanks be to God.

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

R. Amen.

Morning Prayer ends with the final Antiphon of Our Lady:

Hail, holy Queen, Mother of mercy; our life, our sweetness and our hope. To thee do we cry, poor banished children of Eve: to thee do we send up our sighs, mourning and weeping in this valley of tears. Turn then, most gracious Advocate, thine eyes of mercy toward us, and after this our exile, show unto us the blessed fruit of thy womb, Jesus. O clement, O loving, O sweet Virgin Mary!

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

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

V. Let us pray. Almighty and everlasting God, who by the cooperation of the Holy Spirit, didst prepare the body and soul of Mary, glorious Virgin and Mother, to become a worthy dwelling for Thy Son; grant that we who rejoice in her commemoration may, by her gracious intercession, be delivered from present evils and from everlasting death. Through the same Christ our Lord.

R. Amen

EVENING PRAYER

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

R. And she conceived by the Holy Ghost.

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

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

V. Behold the handmaid of the Lord.
R. Be it unto me according to thy word.

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

V. And the Word was made flesh.
R. And dwelt amongst us.

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

V. Pray for us, O holy Mother of God.
R. That we may be made worthy of the promises of Christ.

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

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

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

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

HYMN

The heav'nly Word proceeding forth,
Yet leaving not the Father's side,
And going to his work on earth
Had reached at length life's eventide.

By false disciple to be given
To foemen for his blood athirst,
Himself, the living bread from heaven,
He gave to his disciples first.

To them he gave, in twofold kind,
His very flesh, his very blood:
In love's own fullness thus designed
Of the whole man to be the food.

By birth, our fellow-man was he;
Our meat, while sitting at the board;
He died, our ransom to be;
He ever reigns, our great reward.

O saving victim, opening wide
The gate of heaven to man below,
Our foes press on from every side,
Thine aid supply, thy strength bestow.

All praise and thanks to thee ascend
Forevermore, blest One in Three;
O grant us life that shall not end
In our true native land with thee. Amen.

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

1	Psalms 10	Job 12 Romans 6,15-end	16	39	Jeremiah 7,1-16 Romans 9,14-26
2	35	Jeremiah 5,1-19 Romans 7,7-end	17	46	Job 27 Romans 11,25-end
3	11	Job 13 Romans 7,1-6	18	47	Job 28 Romans 12,1-8
4	12	Job 14 Romans 7,7-end	19	49	Job 29 Romans 12,9-end
5	13	Job 15 Romans 8,1-11	20	59	Job 30 Romans 13,1-7
6	24	Job 16 Romans 8,12-17	21	60	Job 31 Romans 13,8-end
7	25	Job 17 Romans 8,18-30	22	61	Job 32 Romans 14,1-12
8	26	Job 18 Romans 8,31-end	23	71	Judges 13,2-7.24-end Luke 1,5-25
9	37	Jeremiah 6,16-21 Romans 9,1-13	24	80, 82	Malachi 4 Matthew 11,2-19
10	29	Job 19 Romans 9,1-18	25	62	Job 38 Romans 15,1-13
11	147	Tobit 4,5-11 Acts 9,26-31	26	64	Job 39 Romans 15,14-21
12	33	Job 22 Romans 10,1-10	27	65	Job 40 Romans 15,22-end
13	38	Job 23 Romans 10,11-end	28	67	Job 41 Romans 16,1-16
14	40	Job 24 Romans 11,1-12	29	124, 138	Ezekiel 34,11-16 John 21,15-22
15	45	Job 25 & 26 Romans 11,13-24	30	52, 53	Jeremiah 11,1-14 Romans 13,1-10

Each reading ends with these words:

V. This is the word of the Lord.

R. Thanks be to God.

MAGNIFICAT

Ant: When they came to Jesus and saw that he was dead already, one of the soldiers pierced his side with a spear, and at once blood and water came out.

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: When they came to Jesus and saw that he was dead already, one of the soldiers pierced his side with a spear, and at once blood and water came out.

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

O God, the protector of all who trust in you, without whom nothing is strong, nothing is holy: Increase and multiply upon us your mercy; that, you being our ruler and guide, we may so pass through things temporal, that we finally lose not the things eternal. Through Christ, our Lord. **R.** Amen.

V. Let us pray with confidence as our Saviour has taught us: Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name; thy kingdom come; thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread. And forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive those who trespass against us. And lead us not into

temptation; but deliver us from evil. For thine is the kingdom, the power and the glory, for ever and ever. Amen.

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

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

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

Prayers to the Sacred Heart of Jesus

O most holy Heart of Jesus, fountain of every blessing, I adore you, I love you and with a lively sorrow for my sins. I offer you this poor heart of mine. Make me humble, patient, pure, and wholly obedient to your will. Grant, good Jesus, that I may live in you and for you. Protect me in the midst of danger; comfort me in my afflictions; give me health of body, assistance in my temporal needs, your blessings on all that I do, and the grace of a holy death. Within your heart I place my every care. In every need let me come to you with humble trust saying: Heart of Jesus, help me. Amen.

For Families - Dear Sacred Heart of Jesus, we renew our pledge of love and loyalty to you. Keep us always close to your loving heart and to the most pure Heart of your Mother. May we love one another more and more each day, forgiving each other's faults as you forgive our sins. Teach us how to see you in those we meet outside our home. Please help us keep our love for you always strong by frequent Mass and Communion. Thank you, dear Jesus, King and Friend of our family, for all the blessings of today. Protect us during this night. Help us all to get to heaven! Amen.

In time of distress - Holy Heart of Jesus, Sweet Sanctuary of rest, bring peace to my soul and settle my spirit, especially in the matter of I vow to place all of my worries and fears into the wound of your Sacred Heart, there to be tended to in accordance with your perfect will, which desires only the best and highest good. Your love alone is enough, and I surrender to it; clinging to the hope of a swift resolution and trusting with confidence in all of your promises. Amen.

From the Book of Common Prayer

4th Sunday after Trinity: *O God, the protector of all that trust in thee, without whom nothing is strong, nothing is holy: Increase and multiply upon us thy mercy; that, thou being our ruler and guide, we may so pass through things temporal, that we finally lose not the things eternal: Grant this, O Heavenly Father, for Jesus Christ's sake, our Lord. Amen.*

In this Collect we recognize our total dependence upon the protection, strength, holiness, mercy, providence and guidance of God our heavenly Father for the true living of the Christian life in this sinful world, and in preparation for the world to come.

We ask not only for the increase of God's mercy towards us but that it may also be multiplied. It is as though we have in mind the increase in the widow's oil in the ministry of Elijah (1 Kings 17,10-17) and the multiplication of the bread and fishes by our Lord (John 6,5-15). We are as those who have experienced God's mercy in part yet who know that they need it urgently in greater part - and need it to be not only increased but also multiplied!

The world we live in is made by God but is poisoned by sin. Thus in it we experience both blessings and temptations, encouragements and tribulation. We rise and we fall; we feel good and we feel bad. It is possible to pass through this world and be wholly absorbed by it - as we clearly see happening to many at the present time in the West. It is possible virtually to forget God as Creator, Judge and Redeemer, and live in this world as though we are responsible only to ourselves.

But we are made to enjoy and glorify God for ever; we are called to serve him in this world and the next and to enter into the next through the resurrection of the dead and the redemption of the body. We ought to see ourselves as made for eternity and not merely for this world.

We certainly need God's mercy to surround and fill us, his rule over us and his guidance known in our souls, if we are to negotiate our way through this world in such a way as always to remain citizens of heaven and disciples of Jesus Christ, the Lord of the new Jerusalem. In this world we are to live as those who reflect in their lives the character and virtue of the life that is to come, as the Gospel declares.

So our pray ends with the intense verb, "grant." Grant all this, we ask of our heavenly Father, for the sake of Jesus Christ, his Son and our Lord.

The Rev'd Dr Peter Toon (+2009)

Save the Parish Spring Conference

Gill Cox, Shelagh Hansford, Pat Perry, and Sheena Rochford write:

On Saturday 20th April four of us from St. Paul's travelled to Bristol for the Save the Parish southwest conference. This took place in the church of St. Thomas the Martyr in the parish of St. Mary Redcliffe. It was an early victim of church closures when despite a thriving congregation no new vicar was appointed in the late 1940s and was eventually closed in 1982. Although no longer a parish church, (now looked after by Churches Conservation Trust), it is still used by a Romanian Orthodox community.

The topic of the conference was 'Campaigning for the Future of our Parishes', with Andrew Rumsey, Bishop of Ramsbury, and Chris Loder MP for West Dorset as key speakers.

The conference was well attended with about 150 delegates from all over the country, of different churchmanship from evangelical and liberal to catholic but with one aim, to save the parish system from destruction by a faceless, nameless hierarchy.

There were several other speakers and a panel of delegates who are actively resisting or have been caught up in parish reorganisation in the past. The Wigan disaster is well documented whereby the Diocese of Liverpool's dream of a mega parish, which would save money and attract more people, ended up with no savings and a mass exodus of parishioners – about one third of all worshippers in the area.

One delegate from Cornwall reported that the Diocese of Truro has similar plans to get rid of clergy and have twenty-three parishes with one rural dean and a pioneer minister who doesn't work on Sundays. They will not listen to objections. He likened it to the Post Office Horizon scandal.

Two delegates from the Diocese of Lichfield reported that their vicar had retired but they were told not to advertise for a new one because the diocese couldn't afford it. But only the same week, in the Church Times there were adverts for three administrative staff in the same diocese at a total annual cost of £140,000!

The Church of England is in crisis. Too much money is siphoned off from the stipendiary fund to finance crazy projects. Stipendiary clergy are being cut while managers and oddly titled staff (eg. Project Manager Net Carbon Zero) are appointed at a huge cost. Where is God in all of this? We are a church not a corporation!

A nameless person in the Diocese of Litchfield stated that “regular eucharistic services detract clergy from mission and other works.” But what are we without the Eucharist?

We are fortunate to have Father Gregory who ministers to just two parishes. Think how it would be if the diocese decided to put the Weymouth and Dorchester deaneries under one ordained minister!

It was a most interesting and enlightening day and you can find video footage of the speakers and much, much more on www.savetheparish.com

Pope Benedict XVI's Prayer for Priests

Lord Jesus Christ, eternal High Priest,
You offered yourself to the Father on the altar of the Cross
and through the outpouring of the Holy Spirit
gave Your priestly people a share in Your redeeming sacrifice.

Hear our prayer for the sanctification of our priests.
Grant that all who are ordained to the ministerial priesthood
may be ever more conformed to You, the Divine Master.
May they preach the Gospel with pure heart and clear conscience.

Let them be shepherds according to Your own Heart,
single-minded in service to You and to the Church
and shining examples of a holy, simple and joyful life.

Through the prayers of the Blessed Virgin Mary, Your Mother and ours,
draw all priests and the flocks entrusted to their care
to the fullness of eternal life where you live and reign
with the Father and the Holy Spirit, one God, forever and ever.

From a notice board in a church porch

Sent by Eileen Galling:

“What?! Giving again?” - I said in dismay.

“Must I always be giving away?”

“Oh no” - said the Angel looking me through,

“Only as long as the Lord gives to you...”

Sheep Need Shepherds, not Managers

by The Rev'd Canon Angela Tilby

Two years ago the Bishop of St Edmundsbury and Ipswich suggested that the job of parish priest was becoming simply impossible. Many agree. Priests face an ever-increasing burden of paperwork. Parish mergers make for more travel, more headaches and less time. It is increasingly difficult to recruit volunteers. It is hard to find a churchwarden or a treasurer. The careless jibe that parish clergy, with their expensive training, have become 'key limiting factors' in the mission of the Church has not been forgotten.

While dioceses blithely dream up new structures for ministry from the comfort of their diocesan offices, the mental health of clergy on the ground is becoming more fragile. When proposals for minster schemes and hubs (such as those now operative in Truro and Leicester) are put forward everyone now knows that this means cuts and mergers, the selling off of clergy houses and the loss of services of Holy Communion. Lay ministry helps, but too often training is superficial or absent and turns out enthusiasts who have no idea of how to conduct traditional worship, and no desire to do so. I heard of one lay minister who justified his tub thumping extempore sermons by saying he was only passing on to the congregation, 'What God told me to say to you this morning'.

Meanwhile diocesan money, raised from the parishes, is spent on settlements as clergy are pushed out of their homes and job with a year's pay and a promise of a good reference so that the Bishop can appoint his or her own 'team', often increasing the number of diocesan staff in the process. All those 'mission-enablers' and 'transition-managers' who are not visiting the sick or caring for the needy.

It will be hard to reverse the trend, but it might help if our oh-so-busy bishops were to spend some time reading and studying the Ordinal. The focus on John 10 in the Prayer Book ordination service makes it clear that the priest's role is to imitate the Good Shepherd who knows his flock by name. Sheep will not listen to the voice of strangers – yet it is strangers who are now taking over.

It depresses me that some of those whom I prepared for ministry in my ten years at Westcott House have left, sometimes retraining as counsellors or therapists. These are thoughtful, prayerful, pastorally astute men and women, but they have concluded that these gifts are no longer wanted by the Church of England.

(Written for and published by the Save the Parish Movement)

What the world needs now: To burn with the love of Christ's Sacred Heart

by Fr. Charles Fox



Fire! What single word more immediately commands people's attention? No sane and moral person would ever consider yelling the word fire in a public place, for fear of causing a panic. Fire has tremendous power. It gives warmth and light, but its consuming heat also ignites virtually everything in its path.

One of the most curious and often vexing characteristics of fire is that it can be so difficult to kindle and also extremely difficult to extinguish. Countless campers have embarrassed themselves struggling to start campfires before the watchful eyes of their companions. And the difficulty of extinguishing large fires—wildfires that consume entire neighbourhoods, for example—is a grim fact of life in places like California.

The Solemnity of the Most Sacred Heart of Jesus reveals God's love as a fire that burns in the Heart of Jesus Christ. This feast day also reveals the eager desire of Jesus to spread His love over the entire face of the earth.

This is a time when many people feel imprisoned by doubt, fear, sickness, hatred, and division. Only Christ's burning love offers the ultimate, perfect treatment for these diseases of the human soul. Pope Benedict XVI once called this fire, "*Christ's own passion of love*" and "*a fire that is to be handed on.*" These designations provide an apt way of thinking about devotion to the Sacred Heart.

Most artistic depictions of the Sacred Heart show it surrounded by His Crown of Thorns, with the Cross planted atop the Heart, a lance wound clearly visible on its side, and flames bursting forth from within the Heart and burning around the Cross.

These signs of Christ's Passion and death show the exact kind of love that burns in the Heart of Jesus—crucified love, self-sacrificing love. "*No one has greater love than this, to lay down one's life for one's friends*" (John 15,13).

The late and immensely talented singer Whitney Houston once sang that "*learning to love yourself can be the greatest love of all.*" Love of self has its

place in human life, but it is not the greatest love of all. The greatest love of all is that love by which the unthinkable happened, and became the defining truth of human existence: “*For God so loved the world that he gave his only Son*” (John 3,16). God took our human flesh and allowed it to be nailed to a cross in order to rescue us from hell. That is the greatest love possible, and it is the measure of all other loves.

Thomas á Kempis, in his “*Imitation of Christ*,” wrote these words about the crucified love of God at work in the heart of a Christian disciple:

Love is an excellent thing, a very great blessing, indeed. It makes every difficulty easy, it bears a burden without being weighted and renders sweet all that is bitter. Nothing is sweeter than love, nothing stronger or higher or wider; nothing is more pleasant, nothing fuller, and nothing better in heaven or on earth, for love is born of God and cannot rest except in God.

One who is in love flies, runs, and rejoices; he is free, not bound. He does not look to the gift but turns himself above all gifts to the Giver. Love often knows no limits but overflows all bounds. Love feels no burden, thinks nothing of troubles, attempts more than it is able, and does not plead impossibility, because it believes that it may and can do all things. For this reason, it is able to do all, performing and effecting much where he who does not love fails and falls. (Book III, Chapter 5)

Going back to the difficulty of kindling a fire, it was impossible for humanity to set the fire of God’s love ablaze. This supernatural fire required a supernatural source, and so the Son of God became man, and sacrificed Himself so that in and through His humanity he could cast the fire of His love upon the earth. From His Heart the hearts of all who believe in Him become inflamed with the very same supernatural love. And the hearts of Christians are to serve as torches—or, better yet, flamethrowers—spreading the fire of Christ’s love everywhere.

In order to spread the fire of Christ’s love, however, it is necessary to believe firmly in its power. Why bother to share something of little or no use? There would be little to motivate such sharing.

But Christ’s love is of infinite worth. The love of God revealed in Jesus Christ is the centre of all things. Like any fire, the fire of Christ’s love destroys, purifies, and gives warmth and light. It destroys sin and the reign of Satan in the hearts of men. It purifies human hearts so that they become fixed on love of God and neighbour. And it brings the warmth of friendship with God and the light of His truth to a world torn by hatred and blinded by the darkness of sin, prejudice, and ignorance.

There would be no racism, no hatred, and no violence of any kind if the world were engulfed with the fire of Christ's love. The fire that burns in the Sacred Heart of Jesus can never be extinguished. But the flames among us can fade if we neglect them. These flames seek fuel in order to grow and spread. That fuel is the human heart. Hearts have grown cold and rejected God's love. That is the first cause of all sin and fear, the cause of all sorrows.

Even many Christians will draw near to the Divine Flame of the Heart of Jesus very cautiously; they just want to warm themselves a little, they don't want to get scorched with the flames. They want prayer and church only as and when they think it is enough for them. They do not want to be "caught up" too much in things pertaining to God... they have their own life and interests outside "churchy things"...

But are we really Christians, when we calculate like that? Are we really Christians, when we think that the fire of divine love which beats in the Sacred Heart can destroy anything in us, except that base dross in our natures, that worldliness, that we should want to see purged away?

It was not so that the saints understood the invitation of the Sacred Heart; they would not come near it hesitatingly and with calculation, as if to warm their hands at it. Rather, they would plunge themselves into that abyss of fire, to be refined of all that was unworthy, to be melted and moulded according to God's plan, to become, themselves, glowing reflections of its heat to kindle the cold hearts of their fellow men.

Let us think what it is we want this divine flame of the Sacred Heart to do for us when we draw near to it, as we do draw near to it every time we receive our Lord in the Holy Eucharist...

If we want to bring others to the faith, if we want to reclaim others from lives of sin, if we want to bring up our children in the love of God, then the first thing is to burn red-hot with the love of God ourselves. And then, if it be his will, we shall be able to pass the conflagration on.

The love that fills the Sacred Heart of Jesus does not grow weak with age. We might sometimes feel stale, but divine love never grows stale, and a fresh outpouring is always available to us. Christ only asks that we not hoard this treasure greedily. He showed us His love on the cross, He gives us His love in the Eucharist, and He asks us to show others the same love, to heal a broken world by giving with the same measureless, self-sacrificial generosity. There is no better way to bring people to Christ, to fulfil the mission of the New Evangelization, to which the entire Church has been dedicated.

(This essay was originally posted at CWR on 23 June 2020.)

Parish Mission Day(s)

A few years ago I was talking with then Bishop Jonathan of Ebbsfleet - now Fr. Jonathan, Roman Catholic parish priest - about the importance of Ember Days. A quick reminder for those who are not sure what Ember Days are: four times a year the Church calls us to observe these special days of prayer and fasting, sanctifying thus the times and seasons of our (Christian) life. A Wednesday, Friday, and Saturday is appointed as Ember Days in spring (the 1st week of Lent), summer (the week of Pentecost), autumn (first full week after the Feast of the Holy Cross), and winter (the 3rd week of Advent).

Ember Days were first regulated by church law during Pope Callixtus I (217-222) who ascribed the origin of these days to the Apostles themselves. As many other treasures, Ember Days, too, were made optional - practically it meant that they fell in disuse - in 1966 in the Roman Catholic Church, and in 1976 in the Church of England. Seventeen-eighteen centuries of tradition, fasting, prayer, and devotion went out the window overnight to be replaced by ... well, nothing.

I make it sure every year that our congregation knows about the Ember Days - we celebrate it liturgically, the weekly sheet contains a note about it, and I encourage all to keep some form of fasting and penance on those days. That is all I can do, the rest is up to individual people, whether or not they wish to observe those days. (*We all should!*)

A few years had gone and I (well, not me only but the Forward in Faith clergy) was having another talk with Bishop Jonathan's successor, Bishop Paul of Oswestry. He asked us to study the apostolic exhortation *Evangelii Nuntiandi* of Paul VI written in 1975. In this document the Pope emphasizes that the mission of the Church is to bring the Gospel to the world and to bring people to Christ. Everything else comes second, everything else is either the prerequisite or the consequence of this mission.

So I had to ask myself: here, at St. Paul's, are we fulfilling this essential mission of the Church - the only justification for the existence of *the* Church and of *a* church - or are we doing only the secondary things?

Long story short, putting together these two above mentioned talks and discussing it with the PCC, the idea of Mission Days emerged. Days, that is, of prayer and fasting, days of boldly and openly proclaiming the Gospel and confessing our faith to our neighbours and to whomever God wants to send in our way on that/those day(s).

The gist of these Mission Days is on the noticeboard and hopefully it gives a good idea what these days should be about.

On these Mission Days (*one day, to start with, and then hopefully we can repeat them and perhaps link them to Ember Days*) I hope every member of our congregation will spend some extra time in prayer and observe at least some partial fasting. Prayer and fasting, so often have I talked about it already, are the most powerful means for us, Christians, to obtain grace. Not because we have to “convince” God to come to our aid - he is always more ready to give than we to ask - but because Our Lord and Saviour, Jesus Christ, clearly taught us so. Prayer and fasting can close or open heavens (1 Kings 17), repel evils spirits (Mark 9,29), and obtain all necessary graces (Matthew 7).

Equally, I hope, everyone will come to be part of this day in church as well. People in pairs, following a rota, will be praying in front of the Blessed Sacrament while others, in groups and in front of the church, will say hello to passers-by and offer them a welcome, information about our faith, parish, worship, and activities, together with a cup of tea and a slice of cake. Yet another group, inside the church, will be welcoming those who “venture” in, asking if they would like to be prayed for/with, or if they would like a sort of guided tour of the church.

Leaflets will be ready to give away with some basic information about what it means to be a Christian and a churchgoer, why is it an amazing thing to believe in God, how we worship and how/when can they join us, what outreach do we do, and what social events do we have.

On the noticeboard there are already a few very good suggestions (children’s corner, history of St. Paul’s) which we will implement and I invite all to come forward with even more ideas.

I have intentionally put this little article towards the end of the Parish Magazine, after all the other theological and devotional writings. My reason for doing so is that what we want to do with these Mission Days must be founded on what we believe in. All the articles about the Sacred Heart, priesthood, church, and parish life in this issue of High Tide point to the same truth: firstly, we ourselves must be renewed in love for God and each other. Then, kindled by God’s love and aided by his grace, which, following the teaching of the Lord Jesus, we must obtain through prayer and fasting, we will become his witnesses in our own neighbourhood. Only in this way we have a chance of survival. Not because our numbers will increase. That too! I am very confident about that. Firstly and most importantly we will survive and flourish because we will be doing what we are called to do: we will be THE CHURCH, planted by God in this part of the world to proclaim his Gospel, his Love, his glory.

The date is to be discussed and probably we should be considering days during term-time when families and people are around rather than away on holiday.

Know the Bible! - Introduction

(This series of articles is not a substitute to actually reading the Bible but simply an encouragement to start reading it daily! We will look at each book.)

Christians believe that the Bible is the word of God. Not in the way Islam believes the Koran was written in heaven and given to us. However, not in a merely symbolic way either. We believe that the Holy Spirit inspired human authors to write about God and eternal truths and He made sure that there are no errors in the Holy Scripture in things pertaining to faith, morals, and truth. Whatever is necessary for our salvation, is written in the Bible, and is free from human error.

On the other hand, the human authors were not mere instruments in the “hands” of the Holy Spirit, writing “in trans” without knowing what they were doing. They may not have understood everything, and certainly not in full depths, what they wrote but their freedom as to *how* to write things down, remained. We could say as an oversimplification: the Holy Spirit “told” them *what* to write, and the human authors decided *how* to write it.

This explains why the Bible is full of different literary styles. There are poems, chronicles, descriptions, tales, visions, and many other forms of texts in the books of the Bible. We must be aware of these forms in order to understand the truth the Bible is teaching us.

For example, cautionary tales have been teaching children important truths for centuries. Now, only because in Little Red Riding Hood the wolf can speak - which we know, for fact, is impossible and indeed never happened - we do not call this tale a lie and reject it but we accept its proper methods to teach a truth - in this case how children should be wary of strangers and not venture off a safe path.

In the same way, in the Bible there are stories where not every single element is intended by the human author to be taken as historic fact. Did a serpent really talk to Eve in a human language and voice in the Garden of Eden? Most probably it did not. Does this mean that the story of Eve’s temptation is made up? Absolutely not! *How* it happened, is not important to the author, Divine or human; that story is about *what* happened, *why*, and what were the reasons and consequences. Did God create the world in seven days; and were the sun and the light created on separate days? Again, the answer is most probably not. But that is not important. What is important is that there is God, who is Creator; that everything was made by him (how and when are not questions that are important in the Bible) out of love; that there is an order in creation which reflects its Creator; etc.

That said, we must be cautious not to exaggerate the importance of literary forms. We cannot reduce the Bible to a mere collection of truths, ideals, and moral laws with no historic value. The good approach is to assume that what I described is historically true unless it is clearly not because of the literary form.

The Bible is divided in two main parts: Old and New Testament. Some find the adjective “old” derogatory and so use the expression “Hebrew Bible” for the Old Testament. However, we must note that “old” here does not mean less valuable, out of fashion, not valid, or anything of that sort. It simply means a chronological order. The Old Testament is traditionally divided, both by Jews and Christians, into three groups of books: Torah, Prophets, and Wisdom literature. The Torah is made up of the first five books, called Books of Moses (Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, Deuteronomy); the Prophets contains the four great (Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, Daniel) and twelve minor prophets.

There are seven books that are part of the Catholic and Orthodox Bible but Jews and Protestants do not accept them: Tobit, Judith, Baruch, Sirach (or Ecclesiasticus), 1 and 2 Maccabees, Wisdom. The same is true of some chapters of the books of Esther and Daniel. The Orthodox church, and only them, added a prayer (of Manasseh), 1 and 2 Esdras, 3 and 4 Maccabees, and Psalm 151 to the Bible as well.

The New Testament is composed of the four Gospels (Matthew, Mark, Luke, John), the Acts of the Apostles, fourteen letters of St. Paul, one of St. James, two of St. Peter, three of St. John, one of St. Jude, and the Book of Revelation of St. John. The Old Testament takes us from the creation of the world to ca. 430 B.C. with the prophet Malachi. The New Testament starts with the Annunciation (Matthew, Mark), or even a few months earlier, with the promise of the birth of John the Baptist (Luke) while St. John opens his Gospel with the Eternal Word dwelling with the Father since before the beginning of times.

The Bible has reached us through the Church. First came the Church and her oral tradition, and only later were many things written down. This also means that it is the Church, and more precisely the Apostles and their successors, the Bishops who have the authority to interpret the Bible.

We can conclude then that the Bible is the word of God where he talks, through human authors, about Himself, us, and our relationship with Him. The Bible was given to us so that we can learn about God and so we can love and serve him, and reach eternal life. The Bible is without doctrinal errors, and its truths are unchangeable and absolute.

Next month we will explore the Book of Genesis.

Saint of the month:
St. Aloysius Gonzaga — Finding God amid disease

21 June



The Lord can make saints anywhere, even amid the brutality and license of Renaissance life. Florence was the “mother of piety” for Luigi (or *Aloysius, the Latin version of his name he later would use and prefer*) Gonzaga despite his exposure to a society of fraud, dagger, poison, and lust. As a son of a princely family, he grew up in royal courts and army camps. His father wanted Aloysius to be a military hero.

At the age of 5, Luigi was sent to a military camp housing 3,000 soldiers to learn warfare and weaponry. He earned respect from the soldiers and often led them in marching, but he also picked up their rough language. When Luigi brought this language home, his mother promptly

corrected him. Although the incident was somewhat innocent since he didn’t know what the words he repeated meant, his mother’s rebuke had a lasting influence on him and marked a turning point in his life. From that young age, he started to cultivate piety and a greater consciousness of moral living.

At age of 7, Luigi (Aloysius) experienced a profound spiritual quickening. His prayers included the Office of Mary, the psalms, and other devotions. At age 9 he came from his hometown of Castiglione to Florence to be educated; by age 11 he was teaching catechism to poor children, fasting three days a week, and practicing great austerities. When he was 13 years old, he traveled with his parents and the Empress of Austria to Spain, and acted as a page in the court of Philip II. The more Aloysius saw of court life, the more disillusioned he became, seeking relief in learning about the lives of saints.

A book about the experience of Jesuit missionaries in India suggested to him the idea of entering the Society of Jesus, and in Spain his decision became final. Now began a four-year contest with his father. Eminent churchmen and laypeople were pressed into service to persuade Aloysius to remain in his “normal” vocation. Finally he prevailed, was allowed to renounce his right to succession, and was received into the Jesuit community.

Like other seminarians, Aloysius was faced with a new kind of penance: to do as he was told. He was obliged to eat more, and to take recreation with the other students. He was forbidden to pray except at stated times.

In 1591, a plague struck Rome. The Jesuits opened a hospital of their own. The superior general himself and many other Jesuits rendered personal service. Because he nursed patients, washing them and making their beds, Aloysius caught the disease. A fever persisted after his recovery and he was so weak he could scarcely rise from bed. Yet he maintained his great discipline of prayer. In a private revelation, he was told by the Lord Jesus that he would die three months later, during the eight-day-long Feast of Corpus Christi. That is exactly what happened. He was 23.

St. Aloysius Gonzaga is a model for servant leadership. Without a lot of fanfare and expectation of recognition or fame, Aloysius quietly and humbly cared for the abandoned, vulnerable and dying. He was clearly devoted to and at the service of others. He willingly gave up all claims to wealth and power in order to follow a call that he was convinced came from God.

Finding God in a beautiful sunset or the warm smile of a loved one is fairly easy. To discover God in festering wounds and disease is much harder. St. Aloysius Gonzaga, despite his youth, has taught us to search out God in those who need our help and care. He has taught us to look beyond the external and into the heart and spirit of our fellow humans, where we will find God's love is alive in everyone.

As a saint who fasted, scourged himself, sought solitude and prayer, and did not look on the faces of women to keep even the purity of his thoughts, Aloysius seems an unlikely patron of youth in a society where asceticism is confined to training camps of football teams and boxers, and sexual permissiveness has little left to permit. Can an overweight and air-conditioned society deprive itself of anything? It will when it discovers a reason, as Aloysius did. The motivation for letting God purify us is the experience of God loving us in prayer.

Aloysius's life shows the importance of a Christian family, of the influence of parents, of early instructions and discipline, and that of good books! At a tender age, children are most receptive to examples around them — be they good or bad... May St. Aloysius intercede for us and for our children, for the youth, that, through examples of good, holy Christian lives around them, they may come to know, to love, and to serve God.

The Psalms

Psalm 38: Suffering and guilt

This is a lament which the ancient Church rightly numbered amongst the seven penitential psalms. Its opening words are almost identical with those of Psalm 6, but lamentation and the consciousness of having sinned stand out here more clearly.

Psalm 38 is a desperate prayer for healing and so can be used when we suffer in body, mind, or spirit. The chief theological significance of Psalm 38 is the linking of sin and suffering. However, great care must be taken not to interpret great difficulties or serious illness or tragedy, as a direct result of sin in people's lives. This would not only be pastorally insensitive but theologically incorrect as well. God may allow suffering and, through his grace, turn it to our (spiritual) good, but he never positively wants any of his creatures to suffer.

The psalmist (King David) is afflicted by a previous sickness, perhaps leprosy, which he and his friends interpret as divine punishment for his sins. But more than from his sickness, he suffers above all from his feeling of guilt. On top of all this, he is also exposed to the malicious persecution of his enemies. Perhaps it is his feeling of guilt what makes him submit himself silently to this unjust persecution, trusting in God at the same time that he will have mercy upon him.

Psalm 38 unfolds in front of us a deeply affecting picture of human suffering—something we can all relate to to some extent. At the same time, this sacred text also bears witness to the power of a sincere and patient trust in God—something we all must learn to relate to...

Verses 1-2 — Oppressed by sickness, guilt, and that he feels to be God's heavy hand, the psalmist turns to God, his only hope that is still left to him. He knows that the hand that inflicted the wound on him is the only hand that can also heal that wound.

Verses 3-4 — The psalmist feels like he is surrounded by the wrath of God on the one hand, and, on the other, by the burden of his sins. Right or wrong as he might be, he sees his sickness as a well-deserved punishment for his sins.

Alas, too many of us can relate to this feeling and experience. Feelings that makes many turn away from God in hopelessness, in despair, or even in hate and anger.

Verses 5-8 — But it is precisely the utter hopelessness of his physical and mental breakdown which leads the psalmist into the only way which is still left open to him and which will not turn him away from God: the way, that is, of making an honest and humble confession before God.

He is not hiding anything. He brings into God's presence his pitiable physical and mental misery, his body broken by pain, and the distress of his heart. He is like a wounded animal seeking safety and healing. He comes into God's presence not purely to arouse God's compassion but because of that elementary need common to all believers: to pour out his heart to his God.

Verse 9 — In verse 9 the psalmist suddenly interrupts his lamentation, even if only for a brief moment, and lifts up his eyes to God. His grieved heart finally draws breath as it submits itself humbly and totally to its Creator who knows it so well. God knows all our longings, all our pain, all our hopes, and all our needs. The psalmist needs to ask nothing of God as he knows well that God sees into his heart and can fulfil all his longings.

Verses 10-12 — After this brief pause, the psalmist is overwhelmed again by his great agony. Being on the verge of fainting, it is above all his mental suffering he brings before God in these verses. To the loneliness of a man shunned by his loved ones and friends, though his greatest need at this moment is to be encouraged by a friendly look and to be helped, be it only in a small way, there is added the further affliction that he is attacked without cause and in a deceitful manner by a great number of his enemies, who not only desire his ruin but even seek to take his life.

Verses 13-20 — The psalmist admits that he submitted himself to these sufferings and persecutions because of the feeling of guilt that is in his heart. Guilt caused by the sins he himself admits of having committed. Being utterly powerless, he entrusts his cause entirely to his God, his only hope and help left to him. God knows that he, the psalmist, was striving for what is good, even if often he failed to achieve it. The psalmist's prayer is that God triumphs and the psalmist's own enemies who render him evil for good.

We can see now the psalmist standing in God's presence in genuine contrition and without any complacency or vindictiveness, confessing his guilt, sincerely repenting of his sins, earnestly resolved to do what is good, with renewed hope and trust in God. Behold, the image of a good Christian, the image of a good confession...

Having relieved his heart of its burden through prayer and having entrusted his affliction to the grace of God, he can now dare to ask God for his help and can hope to find his salvation wholly in his communion with him.

(Based on "The Psalms — A Commentary" by Artur Weiser)

Vicar

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

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<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 or 0330 0162953

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