

HIGH TIDE

*Parish
Magazine*

*Weymouth
St Paul
with Fleet*

JUN 2025



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The Dean of Salisbury Cathedral spent months in Gaza and Israel as part of a group of international observers. He will be talking about his experience at Holy Trinity (Weymouth). All are invited.

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A practicing Catholic Christian shares his experience of prayer and meditation in the context of consoling the Heart of Jesus. The article gives us some insight into that mystical connection there is between the hours of Christ's passion and agony, and our prayers recited now, in 2025...

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For centuries the first Friday of every month had an importance that, beginning in the 1970s, slowly faded away. In this article we can find some simple explanation about this particular form of devotion and a few words on its importance.

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Does it make sense to talk about consoling the Heart of Jesus who now dwells in heaven in perfect joy and glory? And can we, mere mortals, console somehow the Divine Heart? Does God really need our consolation? A hopefully interesting article based on the private revelations received from Jesus by St. Faustina.

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Confession has never been very popular... and, if possible, even less it is in our days. What a shame! What a loss! We cannot even imagine how much we are missing out on if we do not receive this Sacrament, a gift of God's love and wisdom. In this article we can find answers to some simple, basic questions about Confession.

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

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

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Most of us are familiar with images of the Sacred Heart but its details (crown of thorns, flames, etc.) may not be that easy to understand for everyone. This short article gives a few

very simple explanations about the various symbols surrounding the Sacred Heart of Jesus in traditional Christian art.

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Most of us will answer this question without any hesitation: of course He is! But if we honestly examine our hearts and thoughts, the most hidden ones, can we say that God's goodness is something we never-ever doubt, not even in times of trials and suffering...?

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Simple and delicious, a true must... if you don't mind peeling kilos of onion.

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From a real troublemaker to a great Saint and author of hundreds and thousands of hymns, prayers and sermon. This is St. Ephrem.

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Comparing the Lord Jesus to a pelican is ... surprisingly ancient and is a rather beautiful image.

*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 1st June**. Please, send all articles, information, news you wish to be published by Sunday 25th May.*

Front cover: "Jesus in the clouds" (from: AI generated)
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From the Vicar

Dearly Beloved,

Sometimes I wonder if I will be given the grace to die on a beautiful day. I mean, liturgical beautiful. A Feast of Our Lady, or of St. Joseph or of a favourite Saint of mine. We shall see. For now, I am immensely grateful that I was born in June, a month adorned with amazing Feast days.

Corpus Christi: a truly priestly Feast. St. John the Baptist, the Forerunner of Our Lord: what priest would not look upon and learn from him?! Sts. Peter and Paul, the Princes of the Apostles: all priests are ordained by the Successor of the Apostles. And there are still more.

Out of all of them the one Feast that stands out the most for me is the Feast of the Most Sacred Heart of Jesus. As a little child I was attracted by the statues of the Sacred Heart that were in the parish churches of my hometown and of my grandparents' little village. I still remember them vividly.

In my grandparents' parish church there was also a wall painting to commemorate those fallen in the First World War. Again, it is still impressed on my mind. Jesus was standing by and holding a wounded and dying soldier, showing him His Most Sacred Heart. I always thought death cannot be frightening if it finds us in His arms.

Another image of the Sacred Heart that I have always loved is the one kept in the Cathedral of Vienna. I chose it as my Ember Card for ordination and I have a copy of it in my house. A typically baroque painting but with an enormous, out-of-proportions heart. But, then, isn't it actually true? Isn't His Most Sacred Heart, and His love, out of any and every proportion?

The heart comes back in the motto of my ordination, too, in the words of Psalm 27,8: *"My heart hath said to thee: My face hath sought thee: thy face, O Lord, will I still seek."*

I also keep an image of the Sacred Heart in my wallet.

If I look back on my life (good Lord, I do sound old!) I can clearly see a pattern in it: that call coming from and attraction exercised on me by the Sacred Heart of Jesus and my poor and often failing attempts to answer it.

So yes, I am extremely happy that I was born in June. Mistaken as I might be, I take it as a special gift from Jesus' Sacred Heart to me whom he deigned to call to be his priest. One of my ways of "paying him back" a little bit is promoting devotion to the Most Sacred Heart. In all my churches and parishes I have always kept the first Friday holy adoration, litanies and votive Masses. You will have also noticed that every June parish magazine is in great part dedicated to prayers, meditations and writings to/about the Sacred Heart.

Now, call me sentimentalist, baroque or continental... but you would be wrong (well, apart from the European bit). Devotion to the Sacred Heart of Jesus is not about sentiments and it is not a baroque or European devotion, either. Actually, England was the first place where this devotion started spreading through the Catholic chaplain of the Duchess of York in the 1700s. While deeply biblical and always present in the Church, it is true that the devotion to the Sacred Heart *really* took off, so to say, at the beginning of the 18th century, shortly after the death of St. Margaret Mary Alacoque. But there was a good reason for that. Those were the decades when the Church was endangered by a most wicked heresy: the Jansenism.

Jansenist, similarly to Calvin, taught that God only chose a few to save and the rest of mankind will inevitably end up in hell. Into this blasphemous darkness arrived as refreshing light the devotion to the Sacred Heart of Jesus. A devotion that called everyone to recognise, accept and reciprocate the infinite love God has for each one of us. A love that no tongue can talk too much about, a love that no words can describe, a love that no imagination can exaggerate, a love that no other love can be compared to, a love that no mind can grasp. Again, call me a sentimentalist, baroque and continental crypto Catholic... but isn't this the devotion, isn't this the message we all must hear and our world is in so much need of?

I find nothing baroque and nothing sentimental about it. Indeed, I was very happy when after a very long search on the internet I came across the image I put on the front page of the parish magazine. I admit, big fan as I am, that most Sacred Heart images are not great, to put it mildly. The devotion is wonderful, but the art surround it is often of very poor quality. However, I truly love this image. It combines Jesus' full power, glory and majesty with his beauty, meekness and love. I think it is a powerful and beautiful image, even a moving one, without being sentimental or "weird." It is a Jesus I want by my side always and especially in my last hour.

War, consumerism, division, hate, envy, social injustice, empty churches, lukewarm Christians, indifference, fear... name any of the plagues of our times and I can tell you with confidence that the answer is the Most Sacred Heart of Jesus and our true devotion to It. Being loved unconditionally and being called to love as much as we can is the healing remedy of all our wounds.

It's almost June so mince pies will shortly appear in shops; let me then finish with a Christmas Carol: "*Who would not love Him who loves us so?*"

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

Fr. Gregory 5

EYE-WITNESS

Stories from Israel-Palestine

*Come and hear first-hand from Nick Papadopoulos,
recently returned from three months in East Jerusalem*

- *What is daily life under occupation really like?*
- *What are the implications for human rights and international law?*
- *What can be done to promote a just peace in Israel-Palestine?*

Thursday 05th June at 7pm
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Free parking Trinity Road after 6pm
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Consoling the Heart of Jesus

by Rob Marco
(originally for *The Dispatch* 7, 25 Nov 2023)

My wife and I have been listening to a good primer on mental prayer. Though I have practiced mental prayer for a number of years now, it's always good to go back for refreshers, as well as to remind ourselves of the basic essence of why we should be praying regularly in this manner: to advance in the spiritual life.

St. Alphonsus Liguori and St. Francis de Sales lay out the four steps to mental prayer which includes 1) preparation; 2) meditation/considerations; 3) affections and petitions; 4) conclusion and spiritual bouquet.

As someone who came to Christianity and the Church by way of Buddhism, a bit of unlearning was called for in my approach to prayer. In the East, “meditation” is a method of emptying the mind of thoughts and imagery as a way of learning to extinguish the ego/self.

In our Christian understanding **contemplation** is a way of resting with God that goes beyond thoughts, words, and images, with the goal being ultimate union with God. In this, we do not exterminate the self but dissolve the barriers between our will and His will, our thoughts and His thoughts.

Meditation in the Christian sense relies on the imagination to put oneself before the Lord as if he were there in a visible way. Because our bodies, our minds, and our intellect were created by God and deemed good, and because God took on human flesh in Christ and lived in time and history, we can employ these faculties (mind, intellect, will) as a way to draw closer to Him.

Reading Scripture in the way of *Lectio Divina* (Divine Reading) can help jump start meditation, as can gazing upon a crucifix or holy icon. Through the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, one may notice a word or phrase that speaks to the soul, and one can subsequently slowly work it over and digest it slowly. Likewise, a particular aspect of Christ's life or Passion, using the faculty of the imagination, may be singled out for meditation.

While at Adoration this week, I was led to focus on a physical feature of the person of Christ that had gone unnoticed in former meditations—that of his feet.

In the Gospels, we see Jesus washing his disciples' feet, teaching them that they are called to be servants of men, not masters (Mt 9,6; Mk 2,10; Jn 14,1-17). This scene appears in three of the Gospel accounts, so we know it is important. We also see Peter almost recoiling at Jesus undertaking this act (Jn

13,8); it must have been deeply embarrassing, given how filthy that feet got from walking barefoot or in sandals among dirt and dung.

In Luke's Gospel (Lk 7,36-50), we find another scene, but this time it is a sinful woman who washes, dries, and anoints Jesus' feet—not with water and a towel, but with her own tears, hair, and perfume (which perhaps had been purchased with the wages of her sin). Unlike Peter's recoiling, Jesus permits her and lauds the act. And why did he laud her? Because "*her great love has shown*" (Lk 7,47).

In my meditation, I focused my attention on the feet of Christ—both in these scenes and on the Cross. Because the Cross was elevated at Calvary, Christ's feet would have been at eye level. I saw the heavy head of the nail protruding from the small bones in his feet, one resting on the other and the stake driven through both. His feet were calloused and almost blackened with dirt and blood, and they writhed in agony. The goal of crucifixion from the Roman perspective was, in fact, to accomplish this exercise of power by reducing a man to a helpless, worm-like creature.

And so it is fitting to recall the words of the Psalmist: "*I am a worm and no man; a reproach of men and the scorn of the people*" (Ps 22,6). Christ himself quotes from Psalm 22 when he cries out, "*My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?*" (Ps 22,1).

In this meditation, I realized that the most painful scourging, the most humiliating crowning, the most exhausting marching, the most brutal torture on the Cross was all endurable even to Christ as a man. But his heart was torn and he suffered most because the love he poured out to men from the Cross was left laying fallow beneath his feet. It was not returned to him, but remained an agonizing and unrequited love.

God, by his very nature, is Love (Jn 3,16); He creates man in his own image (Gen 1,27), which means we are capable of love. But because we were created in freedom, we can withhold that love as well by an act of free will. The act of love is to do the will of the Father (Mt 21,28-32), and Christ himself says that "*He who loves me will keep my commandments*" (Jn 14,15). And what is the foremost and greatest commandment? "*You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind*" (Mt 22,37).

The love of Christ and his divine mercy burns so hot and so intensely that it "pains" him when it is left unrequited. This was communicated to St. Faustina when Christ told her, "The flames of mercy are burning Me. I desire to pour them out upon human souls. Oh, what pain they cause Me when they do not want to accept them!" (Diary, 1074).

Notice that it is not even that we do not love God, or love Him for His own sake. It is that we do not accept the love and mercy he pours out on us.

Whereas loving is active, acceptance of love—allowing ourselves to be loved—is a passive act. It asks very little, and yet it demands everything—just as the Commandment calls for loving God with all our heart, soul, and mind. When we truly love Christ, it is only because he has first loved us (1 Jn 4,19).

When my kids were babies, my favourite part of their body was their feet. I would cup them in my hand and kiss their little toes. Because they had not taken to walking yet, they were clean and wrinkly, pure and undefiled. When I reflected on this, I recalled a moving scene from *The Passion of the Christ* when Mary the Mother of God kisses the bloodied



and disfigured feet of her Son as he hangs on the Cross. She does so with the greatest tenderness, but also with the most heart-rending pain. No one loved Jesus like Mary did. Because there were so few at the foot of the Cross during her son's most agonizing moments, her consolation to him was that she sought to love him, returning his love to him when so many had abandoned him and left him alone. Maybe this is also why St. John is referred to as "*the disciple Jesus loved*," because he was there, too, in addition to Mary Magdalene, who "*loved much*."

It's a cultural cliché to borrow from The Beatles and quip that "all you need is love." But, truly, at the end of life and at our particular judgment, this will be the only thing that matters, the only thing that that isn't burned away in the refiner's fire.

We can love God because He first loved us. We can return that love and console his broken heart, a heart that seeks to find love as it goes out and comes back feeling desolate because it finds so few who truly love him. We can wash our brothers' feet because he washed ours, and we tenderly can kiss the feet of Christ because they are there before us at eye level, just as his Mother did. We have the capacity to love both God and neighbour because that love has been poured out to us. And he does not wish for it to go unrequited.

First Friday Devotion: what is it and why should we do it?

What is the First Friday devotion? — On the first Friday of the month, for nine consecutive months, go to Mass and receive Holy Communion with the intention of honouring Christ's Sacred Heart. If you are not in a state of grace, and thus unable to receive, you will also need to go to confession.

How did this devotion begin? — In 1673, a French Visitation nun named Margaret Mary Alacoque had visions of Jesus, wherein he asked the Church to honour His Most Sacred Heart. In particular, Jesus asked the faithful to receive Communion on the First Fridays, for nine consecutive months. The request was connected to a specific promise made to all who venerated the Sacred Heart.

What are the promises connected to this devotion? — Jesus promised the grace of final repentance: none will die in sin, unrepented, nor without receiving the sacraments; and his Heart will be their secure refuge in that last hour. Other promises were peace in their homes; comfort in afflictions; increase in love and devotion to Jesus; blessing on the places where an image of the Sacred Heart is exposed.

Sounds like superstition or “free ticket” to heaven... — It is not as simple as going to Mass for nine months and then clocking out, never going to Mass again and leading a sinful life! The entire purpose of this devotion is to draw a person closer to the heart of Christ. Sincere faith is required. The moment that this devotion is observed in a superstitious manner, neglecting the need to live a virtuous life, all promises are null and void. Jesus wants us to rest on his heart, like St. John, and the First Friday devotion is an opportunity for us to encounter him more than just on Sundays and to deepen our love of him. Coming to know, love and trust that we may take rest in the Sacred Heart of Jesus, and place our anxieties within, is what the First Fridays are all about.

It still sounds quite simple! — Well, it is not! How many of us receive Holy Communion absentmindedly, not paying any attention as to whether we are receiving Jesus worthily? It is easy to become so familiar with the Mass that we begin to ignore the great mystery that is taking place! Going to confession is a form of laying down pride and acknowledging our sinfulness. At the same time, we are also placing ourselves in God's hands and asking for His mercy and forgiveness. Jesus' love is too great to even imagine. And yet, so often, He is ignored or pushed to the side. This devotion is about loving Him always, more and more... Do you still think “it's easy”??

Other practices for first Fridays — It is customary to visit the Blessed Sacrament on this day for *adoration* and for private prayer. At St. Paul's the Sacrament is exposed on the Altar on the first Friday of every month, both in the morning (10am-12pm) and in the evening (5pm-7pm). Adoration is the worship of the Eucharistic Lord who is present in body, blood, soul and divinity, under the appearance of the consecrated Host.

The *Litanies* of the Sacred Heart of Jesus are most suitable prayers for this day. Again, here at St. Paul's, we pray them after Mass on the first Friday of every month. We should not recite them in an "automatic" way but rather as we pronounce each invocation, we should meditate on their meaning.

Finally, an *Act* (meaning: prayer) of reparation is traditionally said on this day, ideally while visiting the Blessed Sacrament.

Can we really console the Heart of Jesus? And does He even need this? — The comfort and solace we can bring to the Heart of Jesus is a most wonderful, and often overlooked, aspect of our faith. Theology tells us that Jesus saw us all in the depths of His soul when He was agonising in Gethsemane and later dying on the cross, and this gave Him consolation at that hour. One time St. Faustina had a remarkably vivid vision of the scourging of the Lord Jesus, and when she responded to this with sorrow and compassion, Jesus said to her in vision: "I see the sincere pain of Your heart, which brought solace to My Heart" (Diary, 445-446).

At other times, Jesus spoke to St. Faustina of His Heart as it is now, in heaven, and how works of mercy console Him even there. He told her how much comfort it brings to Him when souls visit Him in the Blessed Sacrament in the tabernacle, and leave Him free to pour His graces out upon them.

How to prepare ourselves for the First Friday? — As we prepare ourselves, let us think of how much Our Lord has loved us – so much so that He gave up His life for us. Let us recall how much He has given of Himself in the Sacrament of His Body and Blood, to renew us, refresh us and to bring us eternal life and nourishment. Let us think of something else as well. Our Lord said to St. Margaret that this incredible gift of the Eucharist is so often rejected – and even despised – by those grown cold in their hearts. Let us not forget this tragedy. Let us examine and take great care how we behave on this First Friday; in what mind we present ourselves for Mass; how (if, at all!) we acknowledge His coming to us as the Priest utters the words of consecration and Our Lord becomes present on the altar; how we approach the altar, to receive our Blessed Lord in His Sacrament; and once received, how we express our gratitude.

Act of reparation: Most sweet Jesus, whose overflowing charity for men is requited by so much forgetfulness, negligence and contempt, behold us prostrate before you, eager to repair by a special act of homage the cruel indifference and injuries to which your loving Heart is everywhere subject.

Mindful, alas! that we ourselves have had a share in such great indignities, which we now deplore from the depths of our hearts, we humbly ask your pardon and declare our readiness to atone by voluntary expiation, not only for our own personal offenses, but also for the sins of those, who, straying far from the path of salvation, refuse in their obstinate infidelity to follow you, their Shepherd and Leader, or, renouncing the promises of their baptism, have cast off the sweet yoke of your law.

We are now resolved to expiate each and every deplorable outrage committed against you; we are now determined to make amends for the manifold offenses against Christian modesty in unbecoming dress and behaviour; for all the foul seductions laid to ensnare the feet of the innocent; for the frequent violations of Sundays and holydays; and the shocking blasphemies uttered against you and your Saints. We wish also to make amends for the insults to which your Church and your priests are subjected; for the profanation, by conscious neglect or terrible acts of sacrilege, of the very Sacrament of your divine love; and lastly for the public crimes of nations who resist the rights and teaching authority of the Church which you have founded.

Would that we were able to wash away such abominations with our blood. We now offer, in reparation for these violations of your divine honour, the satisfaction you once made to your Eternal Father on the cross and which you continue to renew daily on our altars; we offer it in union with the acts of atonement of your Virgin Mother and all the Saints and of the pious faithful on earth; and we sincerely promise to make recompense, as far as we can with the help of your grace, for all neglect of your great love and for the sins we and others have committed in the past. Henceforth, we will live a life of unswerving faith, of purity of conduct, of perfect observance of the precepts of the Gospel and especially that of charity. We promise to the best of our power to prevent others from offending you and to bring as many as possible to follow you.

O loving Jesus, through the intercession of the Blessed Virgin Mother, our model in reparation, deign to receive the voluntary offering we make of this act of expiation; and by the crowning gift of perseverance keep us faithful unto death in our duty and the allegiance we owe to you, so that we may all one day come to that happy home, where with the Father and the Holy Spirit you live and reign, God, for ever and ever. Amen.



On the solace and consolation we can offer to the Sacred Heart

The theme of consolation stands out most prominently in the popular “*Novena to the Divine Mercy*” (St. Faustina’s Diary, 1209-1229). In the directions Jesus gave to St. Faustina in various visions for that Novena, our Lord asked her to bring into His Heart a different group of souls each day, to immerse them in His mercy. Jesus thereby showed that His Heart is given joy, consolation, and refreshment by every act of faith and love that is marked by His grace, including intercession for the conversion of sinners and of unbelievers, the humility of souls, those who perform works of mercy, prayers offered for the suffering souls in purgatory, and by the rekindling of fervour in lukewarm souls.

The notion of consoling the Heart of Jesus has sometimes been presented in a way that makes our Lord seem as if He is emotionally fragile or filled with self-pity. What He revealed to St. Faustina, however, is that He sorrowed in the Garden and the Cross, and in a mysterious way sorrows from compassion even now, not out of unrequited love as such, but because He foresaw (and sees now) that by refusing to accept and return His love, souls were thereby harming themselves. In other words, the Lord Jesus has sorrow not for His own sake but for ours, for all the blessings that we are missing, and throwing away.

During a vision Jesus said to her: “*The flames of mercy are burning Me. I desire to pour them out upon human souls. Oh, what pain they cause Me when they do not want to accept them! The graces of My mercy are drawn by trust. The more a soul trusts, the more it will receive. Souls that trust boundlessly are great comfort to Me, because I pour all the treasures of my graces into them. I rejoice that they ask for much, because it is My desire to give much, very much*” (Diary, 1074, 1076, 1578).

In short, what St. Faustina’s Diary shows us is that our Lord’s desire for consolation for Himself is actually an expression of His selfless, self-giving love for us. What causes Him sorrow is simply our refusal to receive all the mercy and grace that he longs to shower upon us. What an awesome Saviour we have. Not only His teachings and His deeds, but even the affections of His Heart are manifestations of His pure and boundless love for each one of us!

On the Sacrament of Confession

Let's be honest, Confession is not the most popular Sacrament. However, let me ask you a simple question. Don't you like Mass or Holy Communion? Or don't you cherish Anointing (of the sick)? Well, the same Divine Wisdom and Love which, amongst others, gave us these two Sacraments, gave us Confession too. It is our privilege and duty to discover how the Sacrament of Confession is indeed a divine gift to us all.

Confession is clearly something willed by God in the Holy Scripture. 1John 1,9 mentions it (*"If we confess our sins..."*) and James 5,16 is even clearer (*"Confess your sins to each other and pray for each other so that you may be healed."*). St. James then teaches us that Confession was given for our healing.

It is also clear from the Gospels that the Lord Jesus intended confession to be a Sacrament, administered by not all Christians but by his priest. Because he knew he would not always be with the Church physically and visibly, he delegated his own power to forgive sins to other men for the sake of future generations. After his resurrection he said to the Apostles: *"Receive the Holy Spirit. If you forgive the sins of any, they are forgiven; if you retain the sins of any, they are retained"* John 20,23. Or in Matthew 18,18: *"Amen, I say to you, whatever you bind on earth shall be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven."*

But can't we simply confess our sins directly to God in prayer? Well, there is no simple answer. For some reason God wanted to delegate his power of forgiveness of sins to the Church. Why? We don't know. But since it is God who is offended by sin, it is his right to set down the conditions for forgiveness. We cannot insist of God that he forgive our sins on our own terms. The Church then, with the authority received from God, makes laws about Confession. Currently in the Church of England there is no *obligation* of sacramental confession but we are still encouraged to confess our sins to a priest if they burden our conscience (cf. Book of Common Prayer).

That said, let's remember that Confession, the gift of Divine Wisdom and Love, is for our healing. We shouldn't go to confession because we *have to* but because, having discovered its benefits, we *want to*.

So, can we confess our sins directly to God? Yes, we can. And if we do it with perfect contrition, our sins will be forgiven directly by God. This is the universal teaching of all Churches: Catholic, Anglican, or Orthodox.

Why, then, am I still arguing for going to confession? Well, because of the aforementioned benefits. Let's see them!

1) Hearing physically the words of absolution gives us greater certainty and solace. — While even in sacramental Confession we are

confessing our sins to God, absolution, by his power and authority, is pronounced by the priest, giving us an objective and external assurance of forgiveness; assurance that we could never have in private prayer. When we hear God's forgiving words to us from the lips of the priest in Confession, a burden is lifted off our shoulders and peace and joy fill our heart.

2) We will know ourselves better. — Frequent Confession makes us realise both our virtues and our sins. Sometimes pride or ignorance make us spiritually blind to our sins and faults. A good confessor will point these out to us with tender charity but very clearly. Others suffer from over-sensitive conscience which accuses them of sin where in reality there is none. Again, a good confessor will help us to combat this. Finally, every confession is a humbling but joyous occasion for us to see how badly we need God's help and grace.

3) We receive additional blessing and prayer. — If you have ever been to confession, you know that the words of absolution are surrounded by various prayers. I am sure it is never the case but should the priest be sleepy, distracted or utterly uninterested in your confession, those are still the prayers of the Church that will accompany you. Also, trust me, every good (or at least "alright") confessor prays regularly for those who come to him. Isn't it wonderful that when you approach the Throne of Mercy, you are not alone! When you combat temptation, prayer surrounds you!

4) We receive guidance. — Even if we go to a priest we don't know, he will have heard many confessions and will have enough experience to help us with some advice. Priests are especially helped by grace in those moments since so much is at stake! Sinful or uneducated as he might be, even behind the worst priest, when he administers the Sacraments, Jesus is standing with his grace. Greater still will be the benefit we receive from confession if we go to a good confessor, and we go to him regularly. Gradually he will know us almost as well as we do and he will be able to guide us better. So many Saints' confessors are remembered when we recall their lives, and for good reason.

5) We grow in holiness and other virtues. — From all that has been said it is rather clear that confessions helps us to grow in Christian holiness through grace, prayer, and guidance. Indeed, at every confession God bestows upon us special graces so that we can remain faithful to the promise of avoiding sin and the occasion of sin. Amongst all the virtues we will learn from regular confession perhaps humility stands out the most. Coming back again and again to confess the same sins can be a humiliating and frustrating experience. With prayer, however, it will become an occasion of humility of heart. What a joy, then, it is to know that "*God opposes the proud but gives grace to the humble*" (James 4,6).

6) In every Sacrament we encounter the risen Lord. — The Sacrament is no exception to this truth. On this side of heaven, the most intimate and truest encounter we can have with the Lord Jesus is in the Sacraments he gave his Church. If no other reason, this alone should prompt us to go to confessions frequently.

Let's suppose I have convinced you about the goodness and utility of confession. Your next question might be: what should I confess? And how often? I don't think I have "big sins"...

Every Church makes its own laws about what should be confessed. In the Church of England there is no specific obligation to mention any sin (mortal or venial). However, I hope it will be easy to see how confessing "everything" is the best approach to this Sacrament. Opening up our heart in humility and contrition brings to us grace, transforms our life, makes our encounter with Christ more fruitful. The priest will be able to help us better as well.

On a practical level, if you are not sure what to confess, don't worry — tell the priest, and ask him to help you. As for the frequency, it is recommended to go to Confession at least once a month or, even better, fortnightly so this Sacrament can slowly and gradually transform us.

As for the "big sins"... if confession was there only when we commit mortal sins, most practicing, good Christians, thanks to God's grace, would need it very rarely. I hope I have convinced you above that confession is a wonderful Sacrament and is so much more than simply receiving absolution for our "big sins".

Finally, when it comes to making your confession, take preparation seriously. Give it a day or two. Pray for the gift of repentance and that you can clearly see what God wants you to change in your life. Examine your life, days, thoughts, words and actions—are they something Christ would praise me for? Would he be proud of them? Would he ever make them his own? In other words: how much do I (does my life) resemble Christ?

You can always pray in your own words but if you find it difficult, you can use this prayer: *Give me light, O my God, to see what sins I have committed since my last confession, and the grace humbly to confess them. I ask you to help me to be truly sorry for them. Grant me perfect sorrow so that I may obtain forgiveness for all my sins.*

During confession: don't worry, as long as you say your sins and express your sorrow over them, you should be fine. There is no right or wrong way doing this. However, the priest will give you a simple Order of Service to help you.

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

Anniversaries of death

Order of Morning and Evening Prayer

Calendar for June 2025

SUN	1 st	SUNDAY AFTER ASCENSION	10.30am, 4pm
MON	2 nd	<i>Sts. Marcellinus, Peter & Erasmus, Martyrs</i>	12pm
TUE	3 rd	<i>Feria</i>	9am
WED	4 th	St. Francis Caracciolo	10am
THU	5 th	St. Boniface Bishop, Martyr	6pm
FRI	6 th	St. Norbert Bishop	12pm
SAT	7 th	VIGIL OF PENTECOST	9.30am
SUN	8 th	PENTECOST (WHIT SUNDAY)	10.30am, 4pm
MON	9 th	Whit Monday	12pm
TUE	10 th	Whit Tuesday	9am
WED	11 th	Whit Wednesday	10am
THU	12 th	Whit Thursday	6pm
FRI	13 th	Whit Friday	12pm
SAT	14 th	Whit Saturday	9.30am
SUN	15 th	TRINITY SUNDAY	10.30am, 4pm
MON	16 th	<i>Monthly Requiem</i>	12pm
TUE	17 th	St. Gregory Barbarigo, Bishop	9am
WED	18 th	St. Ephraem, Doctor	10am
THU	19 th	CORPUS CHRISTI	6pm
FRI	20 th	<i>St. Silverius Pope, Martyr</i>	12pm
SAT	21 st	St. Aloysius Gonzaga	9.30am
SUN	22 nd	1ST SUNDAY AFTER TRINITY *	10.30am
MON	23 rd	Vigil	12pm
TUE	24 th	NATIVITY OF ST. JOHN THE BAPT.	9am
WED	25 th	St. William Abbot	10am
THU	26 th	Sts. John & Paul, Martyrs	6pm
FRI	27 th	THE SACRED HEART (Anointing)	12pm
SAT	28 th	<i>Vigil</i>	9.30am
SUN	29 th	STS. PETER & PAUL, APOSTLES	10.30am
MON	30 th	St. Paul Apostle	12pm

* Solemn Mass of Corpus Christi with Procession

We pray for...

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

- 8th Our Parish
- 9th Beechcroft - *Ida Goddard*
- 10th Widows & widowers - *Ralph Evans, Joan Bearne*
- 11th Bishop Paul of Oswestry
- 12th Peace - *Scott Cooper*
- 13th Preachers
- 14th Our Cell of O.L.W. - *Les Green*

- 15th Our Parish - *Dorothy Reeves, Arthur Goodwin*
- 16th Departed
- 17th Farmers - *Elsie Keen, Janet White*
- 18th Those afflicted by wars - *Angela Garrett*
- 19th Those discerning priestly vocation - *John Colyer pr., Fred Scriven*
- 20th Persecuted Christians - *Pat Bibby*
- 21st Children, young people - *Gordon Woolveridge pr.*

- 22nd Our Parish
- 23rd Victims of torture, persecution, injustice - *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 Sick
- 28th Fleet Holy Trinity - *Lil Coombs*

- 29th Our Parish - *David Bowring, Thomas Goodsir, George Pryer*
- 30th Holiday makers - *Jean Shakery, 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

Until 14 June inclusive: 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 God 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.

From 15 June: **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 99	Deuteronomy 34 Luke 24,44-end	12	24	1 Kings 19,1-18 Matthew 3,13-end
2	56	Job 1 Romans 1,1-17	13	28	Ezekiel 11,14-20 Matthew 10,1-20
3	57	Job 2 Romans 1,18-end	14	43	Ezekiel 36,22-28 Matthew 12,22-32
4	63	Job 3 Romans 2,1-16	15	29	Isaiah 6,1-8 Revelation 4
5	68	Job 4 Romans 2,17-end	16	71	Job 7 Romans 4,1-12
6	70	Job 5 Romans 3,1-20	17	73	Job 8 Romans 4,13-end
7	150	Micah 3,1-8 Ephesians 6,10-20	18	75	Job 9 Romans 5,1-11
8	36 v. 5-10	Widom 9,9-17 1 Corinthians 2,6-end	19	147	Deuteronomy 8,2-16 1 Corinthians 10,1-17
9	81	Exodus 35,30-end Galatians 5,13-end	20	76	Job 11 Romans 6,1-14
10	93	Numbers 27,15-end 1 Corinthians 3	21	77	Job 12 Romans 6,15-end
11	30	1 Samuel 10,1-10 1 Corinthians 12,1-13	22	55	Deuteronomy 11,1-15 Acts 27,1-12

23	78 v. 1-39	Job 13 Romans 7,1-6	27	27	Jeremiah 30,18-24 Ephesians 3,8-19
24	50, 149	Malachi 3,1-6 Luke 3,1-17	28	83	Job 18 Romans 8,31-end
25	78 v. 40-end	Job 15 Romans 8,1-11	29	71, 113	Isaiah 49,1-6 Acts 11,1-18
26	79	Job 16 Romans 8,12-30	30	85	Job 19 Romans 9,1-18

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, who in the Heart of your Son, wounded by our sins, has mercifully bestowed upon us the boundless treasures of your love: grant, we beseech you, that we who now render Him the service of our devotion and piety, may also fulfil our duty of worthy satisfaction. Through the same 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

Until 14 June inclusive: 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 God 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.

From 15 June: **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 68	Isaiah 44,1-8 Ephesians 4,7-16	9	20	Leviticus 23,9-17 Acts 10,42-48
2	86	Joshua 1 Luke 9,18-27	10	72	Deuteronomy 26,1-11 Acts 8,14-17
3	91	Joshua 2 Luke 9,28-36	11	96	Leviticus 26,3-12 Acts 2,14-21
4	94	Joshua 3 Luke 9,37-50	12	97	Daniel 3,47-51 Acts 8,5-8
5	102	Joshua 4 Luke 9,51-end	13	98	Joel 2,23-27 Luke 5,17-26
6	104	Joshua 5 Luke 10,1-16	14	100	Joel 2,28-32 Romans 5,1-5
7	42	Deuteronomy 16,9-15 John 7,37-39	15	73	Exodus 3,1-15 John 3,1-17
8	33 v. 1-12	Exodus 33,7-20 2 Corinthians 3,4-end	16	105	Joshua 7,1-15 Luke 10,25-37

17	107	Joshua 7,16-end Luke 10,38-end	24	118	Malachi 4 Matthew 11,2-19
18	110, 111	Exodus 16,2-15 John 6,22-35	25	124	Joshua 23 Luke 12,13-21
19	23	Proverbs 9,1-5 Luke 9,11-17	26	26	Jeremiah 31,1-3 Matthew 11,25-30
20	109	Joshua 9,1-26 Luke 11,29-36	27	33	Jeremiah 31,31-33 John 19,31-37
21	114	Joshua 10,1-15 Luke 11,37-end	28	66, 67	Ezekiel 3,4-11 Galatians 2,1-8
22	50 or 57	Genesis 24,1-27 Mark 5,21-end	29	124, 138	Ezekiel 34,11-16 John 21,15-22
23	116	Joshua 14 Luke 12,1-12	30	127	Judges 2 Luke 13,1-9

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, who in the Heart of your Son, wounded by our sins, has mercifully bestowed upon us the boundless treasures of your love: grant, we beseech you, that we who now render Him the service of our devotion and piety, may also fulfil our duty of worthy satisfaction. Through the same 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.

The unique symbolism of the Sacred Heart



The **Heart** stands both for the physical heart of Jesus and His sacrificial love for humanity.

The **pierced** and bleeding heart reminds us of St. Longinus, the Roman soldier who thrust his sword into Christ's side, piercing his heart on the cross. From this blood and water gushed forth from the side of Christ and the Church, with her Sacraments, was born—like Eve from Adam's side.

The **crown of thorns** is the symbol of the crown placed on the head of Jesus to mock Him as King, and torture Him. Wrapping the crown around the heart emphasizes the fact that Christ felt His wounds to the depths of His heart. Moreover, after the resurrection, the crown of thorns becomes a crown of victory (Revelation 19,12). Finally, the points of the thorns are the many individual sins of people (our sins!) pricking the heart of Jesus.

The **cross** on the top of the heart stands for Christ's Redemptive work from the Cross that saved humanity.

The **flames** on the heart are symbolic of the burning love Christ has for all of humanity. They are also an indication that Christ's Sacrifice has fulfilled all the sacrifices (including burnt offerings) of the Old Testament. Finally, they remind us of the burning bush Moses saw: it is in the Sacred Heart of Jesus that the fullness of Godhead dwells and is revealed to us.

The **light** surrounding the heart stands for the divine light that shines in the darkness of this world. In John 8,12, Christ declares that He is the "*light of the world*." In Revelation 21,23, we are told that in the new Jerusalem there will be no light from the sun or moon because the Lamb of God—that is, Jesus—will be its source of light.

THE GOLDEN ARROW PRAYER — *May the most holy, most sacred, most adorable, most incomprehensible and unutterable name of God be always praised, blessed, loved, adored and glorified, in Heaven, on earth, and under the earth, by all the creatures of God, and by the Sacred Heart of Our Lord Jesus Christ in the Most Holy Sacrament of the Altar. Amen.*

Is God good all the time?

Irene Leader writes:

James 4,17 “*If anyone, then, knows the good they ought to do and doesn’t do it, it is sin for them.*” — That’s a real warning, isn’t it? How many times have we not done the good we know we should do? It is not only what we do but also what we fail to do – both matter to God. The Bible teaches us, that in all our conduct, we should see this is never contrary to what we know we should do. If we don’t do this, we sin with a witness – our own conscience. Firstly, by act. If we act unsuitably in our observance of the Law, we commit a sin. He who does the evil he knows should not be done, will be condemned. Secondly, by omission. Sins of omission bring us into judgement. He who does not do the good he knows should be done, will be condemned.

What is the danger? Well, apply the above to God. In theory, we *know* that God cannot sin. But how do we *feel* when He doesn’t do something we deem good or allows/causes something we deem evil? For example, how do I feel when God, who is sovereign and controls everything, allows my distress/bad fortune? Don’t we all question why did God allow it or what is He trying to teach me? Does it feel in those moments, that God *is* good and good only?!

We use God's Word for guidance and obedience. In 1 John 3,20-21 we read, “*If our hearts condemn us, we know that God is greater than our hearts, and he knows everything. Dear friends, if our hearts do not condemn us, we have confidence before God.*” I struggled with this and came to this conclusion: if we claim to follow God’s Word but act wrongly, our conscience (“heart”) should rightly condemn us. However, we also know that God, in His mercy and grace, is greater than our hearts. His knowledge and love are superior to our subjective feelings of guilt or self-condemnation. While our conscience might judge us harshly, God’s love and understanding are always more profound. Once we realise this, we will be able to quickly overcome our heart’s condemnation, and we will have confidence in God’s love.

If I reject God’s morals, standards, and values, revealed in the form of Laws and Commandments, it will bring chaos in my life. If I live by them, I will live in peace, and I should be able to admit anything about myself to God without exaggerating in my self-condemnation. The carnally minded are at enmity with God and have no value for the Commandments but the spiritually minded do have value for them and experience peace and freedom which ultimately lead to joy.

The Law and the Commandments are not a legalistic set of rules but more like a set of prescriptions on how to live life—that it, it is not enough to

observe their letter only. We do not keep them to earn something from God but so that they can transform our lives: how we walk in love, treat people, and communicate. They bring the gift of wisdom into our relationships with people. They are Divine prescriptions for life, with instructions from Him who is Wisdom Itself. Any Scriptural promise must be understood in the light of God's Word, and not in the light of human wisdom, otherwise I would be lacking of confidence in God. As if He could ever possibly let me down, or as if He wasn't good and good only.

Nothing limits God's goodness. Good "began" with God since He is Goodness Itself. As long as He exists (eternally, without beginning or end) He is good. Scripture tells us that He raises the sun and sends the rain over everyone whether they believe in Him and love Him or not (Mt 5,45). Psalm 136,1 tells us to give thanks to the Lord for He is good; for His love and mercy endures forever. So why do we accuse and question Him? We break God's heart, so to say, by speaking like this.

Although Jesus died for our sins (past, present, and future), this does not mean there are no consequences to sin. The Bible tells us that God forgives all in His mercy but does not leave the guilty unpunished (Ex 34,7b). The original Hebrew text clearly shows that it is not God who punishes. rather, by choosing to sin, man hardens his heart towards God and closes himself to his blessings. This then leads to self-condemnation, estrangement, unbelief, all along the continuum to hell.

Look at Adam and Eve. God told them not to touch the tree otherwise they would die. Satan told them it was not true. They chose to believe satan and this led first to a spiritual, supernatural death and later to physical, natural death as well. Adam and Eve were afraid God would punish them so they hid from Him. However, God responded differently: he made the first move towards them by looking for them in the garden and later he provided coverings for them. Death, spiritual or physical, was not imposed on them as punishment from God but was the "obvious" consequence of their choice. God is good, always good and good only and we don't want to "break His heart" inadvertently by the things we accuse Him of.

Since our feelings are unreliable and subjective, it is our duty to make (and to constantly renew) an act of will: to recognise and confess that God is good and only good whatever happens; that He is fair and just even if I do not understand something. We should never allow our feelings to condemn God, directly or indirectly, knowingly or subconsciously, with accusations of Him being unrighteous. From the Bible we know that He is wiser than we, and He also assured us that everything He does is for our benefit, without question (cf. Jer 29,11).

Our gardens and local wildlife

Jeanne James writes:

If you are a keen gardener, or not, you can make a real difference to local wildlife in your garden. Large or small, whether it is just a few pots on a balcony or patio, or a big grassy area, gardens, allotments, and other green areas create “stepping stones” across our towns and villages. They help wildlife find food, water, shelter, and places to breed. Here are some ideas to help wildlife in your green space however big or small.

1. Attract birds to your garden. From providing food and water to planting shrubs for shelter or putting up a nest box or two, there are many simple things you can do.

2. Set up a nectar café! Attract butterflies, moths, bats and bees by planting a variety of flowers. These are all important pollinators. Old cottage flowers are good as they are easy for the insects to feed on. Some nectar-rich plants: daisy, allium family, honeysuckle, primrose, aubretia, lavender, hebe, ivy, sweet scabious, buddleia, bluebells. Have some early and late flowering plants to prolong the nectar season for bumblebees. Try and plant several plants together so the bees can recognise them easily and visit repeatedly.

3. Make a bee hotel, following online tips!

4. Plant flowers that release scent in the evening to attract moths – bats will then be attracted by the insects that come to feed on the nectar. Jasmine, evening primrose and honeysuckle are good choices.

5. Provide plants that provide food for caterpillars (particular plants are needed to bring out the colours in the different species of butterflies). Ivy is a good plant for butterflies and caterpillars to shelter in over winter. Stinging nettles, holly, ivy, thistles and of course cabbage are good for some varieties of butterfly. Incorporate water into your garden – even just a dish of water helps the birds and a shallow dish with water just covering some small pebbles helps flying insects. If you have a larger area, build a small pond. This will attract insects, frogs and toads.

6. Go chemical free. By using chemicals to remove pests from your plants you are more than likely killing the other insects that eat the pests. There are many tips for reducing damage done by slugs and insects without using chemicals: plant sage near cabbages, build a pond to encourage toads and frogs (they will eat the slugs and snails), crush aphids with your fingers! If you encourage other wildlife to your garden such as ladybirds and hover-flies, they will eat aphids, etc! Plant a wide variety of plants, this makes your garden more resilient. Some plants repel certain insects so plant next to plants that are attractive to the pests! (Many herbs will deter insects).

French onion soup



A recipe I tried many times, always with delicious outcome, well worth trying even if it requires some effort... This is a simple version, no baked cheese on the top; this soup is about the sweet taste of onion.

Ingredients: 1 kg of white onion; 60 grams of butter; 2 tbsp of olive oil; 5-6 cloves of garlic (optional); salt; 1 teaspoon of thyme; 2-3 tbsp of flour; 2 dcl of white wine; 1 litre of vegetable

stock.

1) Peel and cut the onions into thick (2-3mm) slices and slowly fry them uncovered in the butter and the oil on medium-low heat until soft and golden brown. It may take up to an hour. Stir often and thoroughly.

2) Add the crushed and finely chopped garlic (this is optional), the thyme and the flour and fry for 3-4 minutes, stirring it often.

3) Add the white wine and wait until all the alcohol evaporates (you can tell by “sniffing” the steam).

4) Add the stock, cover and cook for 30 minutes.



Serve with toasted/cheesy baguette.



“Just” words

Gerald Duke writes:

“*Standardizzando*” is an italianised English word used to describe the developments in Italy to create a standard language. Essentially, the Italian language we understand today, is based upon the local dialect of Tuscany, understandably, a favoured haunt of Father Gregory. However, many dialects remain in use throughout the country.

The final words uttered in public by Pope Francis at Easter this year were “Cari Fratelli e Sorelle, Buona Pasqua!” There can be little doubt in his meaning when translated into English as “Dear Brothers and Sisters, Happy Easter!” His meaning and intent were simple, heartfelt and in the circumstances of his death, most poignant.

The final words of Christ and their meaning are less clear. The two Gospels of Matthew (27,46) and Mark (15,34) recite “*Eli, Eli, lema sabachthani?*” and “*Eloi, Eloi, Lema Sabachthani?*”. In both cases, this has been translated into English to mean “*My God, My God, why have you forsaken me?*” or from the King James Bible, “*My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?*” Essentially the same meaning in both cases.

The translations came from ancient Aramaic and likely to have been the language spoken by Christ. The simplicity of the words, unlike those of Pope Francis, are not a contemporary record so their correctness may be questionable.

St. Mark’s Gospel is considered the earliest text by some. Traditionally attributed to St. Mark the Evangelist, the companion of the Apostle Peter. It is dated to around 70 AD. It was used as a source by both St. Matthew and St. Luke, whose similarities to one another have led to the study of what is termed the Synoptic Problem.

Luke may have drawn his inspiration from Mark and Mathew and thought to have been written in about AD 70 to 90. He also drew from eyewitness accounts. However, he notes the final words of Christ as “*Father, into your hands I commend my spirit.*” It is clear that Luke chose not to follow the two earlier gospels but instead, took these final words from Psalms 31,5 which continue “*thou hast redeemed me, O Lord God of truth*”. Clearly, these are not the final words of Christ.

This brings us to John, a member of Jesus’s inner circle and identified often as “*the disciple whom Jesus loved.*” The style of this Gospel is different from the others. Any dating of the fourth Gospel relies on presuppositions about its doctrines or structure. Three important points might be considered in

support of an early dating for the Gospel and its accuracy as a historical source for information on the life of Jesus. First, the author associates himself with the eyewitness-tradition of John the Beloved, and although he does not explicitly mention that he is John the Beloved, a later editor added a final epilogue making the connection more obvious (see John 21,24). Second, unlike the other Gospel authors, the author of the fourth Gospel implies that he was the unnamed disciple of John the Baptist who followed Jesus early on, thus making him the earliest follower of Jesus to write a Gospel (see John 1,35–40). Third, the author is definitely not in a discussion with the other later Gospels nor does he correct them in any way, as both Matthew and Luke do to the Gospel of Mark.

With regard to Christ's final words, he records them as "*It is completed*" or traditionally, "*it is finished*" (John 19,30), or in Greek: "τετέλεσται" [tetelestai]. John wrote in Greek and questions have been raised regarding the translation into English of the word "tetelestai".

Gary Manning Jr writes: "There are many interesting claims about historical background to the New Testament, especially on social media. I tell my students that they need to find actual ancient sources that verify such claims, because there are so many of these supposed historical background facts that are just made up by modern people.

One that circulates every Easter is that τετέλεσται was often written on ancient receipts or debts with the meaning "paid in full," or "the debt is finished." So, if that is the case, then Jesus cried out "paid in full," referring to the debt of sin that is owed to God, now paid off by the cross.

So, what does τετέλεσται mean? In John, Jesus often talks about finishing the task that the Father has given him (4,34; 5,36; 17,4). Part of Jesus' task that he finished was bringing his message to people like the Samaritan woman (John 4,34). His miracles were also some of the work that he completed (5,36). Clearly the most important task was Jesus going to the cross, "*lifted up, so that everyone who believes in him will have eternal life*" (3,14).

It also seems likely that by "*It is finished*," Jesus meant that Scripture was fulfilled. John 19,28-30: "*Jesus, knowing that all things were completed [τετέλεσται, a form of τελέω], that the Scripture might be fulfilled [τελειωθῇ, a form of τελειόω], said, "I am thirsty"... then when he had taken the sour wine, he said, "It is finished" [τετέλεσται].*" That is, both Jesus' work was completed and Scripture was fulfilled."

I have considered numerous passages on the meanings of Christ's final words in John's Gospel. To my mind, this essay by Gary Manning Jr. is the most succinct. You may think otherwise!

Feast of the month: St. Ephrem the Syrian

18 June

Poet, teacher, orator, and defender of the faith, Ephrem is the only Syriac Christian recognized as a doctor of the Church. He took upon himself the special task of opposing the many false doctrines rampant at his time.

Born in Nisibis, Mesopotamia, he was baptized as a young man and became famous as a teacher in his native city. When the Christian emperor had to cede Nisibis to the Persians, Ephrem fled as a refugee to Edessa (a city in modern Turkey, near Antioch, which is now called Antakya), along with many other Christians. He is credited with attracting great glory to the biblical school there. He was ordained a deacon but declined becoming a priest. Ephrem was said to have avoided priestly ordination by feigning madness!

However, in his very early life, he was considered a troublemaker, had a quick temper, was often ready to fight and had little use for religion. One source says that while spending time in jail for a crime he did not commit, his attitude and regard for his Creator changed. He would claim he heard a voice tell him he should give up his waywardness, repent of his past indiscretions and turn to God. For the remainder of his life, he was continuously in a state of contrition for his past sins.

He had a prolific pen, and his writings best illumine his holiness. Although he was not a man of great scholarship, his works reflect deep insight and knowledge of the Scriptures. Unlike many preachers today, Ephrem's writings and sermons are always clearly focused on the life of our Lord Jesus Christ. He always thinks about His incarnation, His life, His Crucifixion, Resurrection, and Ascension even when interpreting the Old Testament. The result is that a fuller meaning of the Scriptures is unlocked.

Ephrem wrote hundreds of hymns of which 473 still exist. These hymns became extremely popular in his original Syrian language, and then in Greek, Latin, and multiple other languages in the early centuries following their composition. He would take the popular songs of the heretical groups of his days, use their melodies, and compose beautiful hymns embodying orthodox doctrine. Ephrem became one of the first to introduce song into the Church's public worship as a means of instruction for the faithful. His many hymns have earned him the title "*Harper of the Holy Spirit*."

One of his best-known works is the famous Lenten prayer: "O Lord and Master of my life, take from me the spirit of sloth, despair, lust of power and idle talk; but give rather the spirit of chastity, humility, patience and love to your servant. Yes, O Lord and King, grant that I may see my own

transgressions and not judge my brother, for blessed are You unto ages of ages. Amen.”

The last time he part took in any public affair was during the winter between 372 and 373, right before his death. There was hunger in the country and Saint Ephrem was profoundly sadden by the sufferings of the poor. The wealthy of the city refused to open their barns because they thought there was no one they could trust to make a just distribution of food and alms. For that reason the Saint offered his services, which were accepted. To the satisfaction of everybody, he administered considerable amounts of money and food that were entrusted to him; he also organized an aid service that included the provision of 300 beds to carry the sick. He knew how to hear the words of the Lord: *“For I was sick and you looked after me: I was hungry and you gave me something to eat. Take your inheritance, the kingdom prepared for you since the creation of the world”* (Mt 25, 40).

Ephrem preferred a simple, austere life, living in a small cave overlooking the city of Edessa. It was here that he died around 373.

Let’s savour a few of his many compositions. His paean to Our Lady is quite beautiful:

Blessed are you, O Mary, daughter of the poor,
who became Mother of the Lord of kings.
In your womb he has dwelt
of whose praise the heavens are full.
Blessed be your breast, which has nourished him with love,
your mouth which has lulled him
and your arms which have held him.
You have become a vehicle to bear a God of fire!

Blessed are you, O maiden,
who have borne the lion cub spoken of by Jacob.
He humbled himself and became a lamb,
destined to ascend the Cross to deliver us.
He prefigured you, the tree,
which providing the kid, spared the life of Isaac.

Blessed are you, O blessed one, since through you
the curse of Eve has been destroyed.
From you has come the light
which has destroyed the reign of darkness.

Know the Bible! - The Book of Kings (1)

Although the books of 1 and 2 Kings are two separate books in our Bibles, they were originally written as one book telling a unified story. In the previous book of Samuel, David had unified the tribes of Israel into a single kingdom. God promised that from David's line would come a messianic king who would establish God's Kingdom over the nations and fulfil the promises made to Abraham. The books of Kings tell the story of the long line of kings that came after David, but none of them live up to the promise. In fact, they run the nation of Israel right into the ground.

The books are structured into five main movements. They begin and end with a focus on Jerusalem, first with Solomon's reign and the construction of the temple (1 Kings 1-11) and ending with Jerusalem's destruction and Israel's exile to Babylon (2 Kings 18-25). The story leading up to this tragedy makes up the three centre sections. They explain how Israel split into two rival kingdoms (1 Kings 12-16), how God tried to prevent the corruption of Israel and its kings by sending the prophets (from 1 Kings 17 to 2 Kings 8), and how exile became an unavoidable consequence of Israel's sin (2 Kings 9-17).

The Book of Kings in a nutshell — Israel's prophets labour to turn people from idolatry and injustice, but the people refuse. God allows them to face the consequences of their decisions, and despite Israel's exile, a hopeful remnant suggests that God has not abandoned his promise to David.

Who wrote the Books of Kings? — Many Jewish and Christian traditions hold that Jeremiah wrote 1 and 2 Kings. However, authorship is not explicitly stated within the book.

Context — The events described in 1 and 2 Kings take place during the time of the divided kingdoms (Israel and Judah), especially in Judah's capital city of Jerusalem, and up until the Babylonian exile, which began in 587/586 B.C.

1 Kings 1-11: Solomon's Rise and Moral Failure

The opening chapters show how the kingdom of Israel passed from an aging, decrepit David to his son Solomon. David's final words to Solomon are similar to those of Moses, Joshua, and Samuel. It is a call to remain faithful to the commands of the covenant and to offer allegiance to the God of Israel alone. However, his words ring somewhat hollow, as David and Solomon then conspire to consolidate the new kingdom through a series of political assassinations. Already, the story is not off to a great start.

Solomon's brightest moments come when he asks God for wisdom to lead Israel and even completes David's dream of building a temple for the God of Israel. The story actually pauses here to describe the design of the temple in detail. Just like the tabernacle in the Torah, the gold and jewels and the depictions of angels and fruit trees all symbolize and call back to the garden of Eden—the place where Heaven and Earth meet and where God dwells peacefully among his people.

As soon as Solomon finishes the temple, he makes some really horrible choices, and his kingdom begins to fall apart. He starts marrying the daughters of other kings (hundreds of them!) for political alliances and adopting their gods and introducing their worship into Israel. He then accumulates huge amounts of wealth, builds an enormous army, and institutes slave labour for all his building projects. If you go look at God's guidelines for Israel's kings in Deuteronomy 17, Solomon breaks every one. By the time he dies, he resembles Pharaoh more than he does David.

1 Kings 12-16: The Kings of Northern Israel and Southern Judah

The next section of the book opens with Solomon's son Rehoboam mimicking his father in a sad story of greed and lust for power. He tries to increase taxes and slave labour, but, under the leadership of Jeroboam, the northern tribes of Israel rebel and secede to form their own rival kingdom. We are left with southern Judah, centred in Jerusalem with kings from the line of David, and this new northern kingdom, called Israel, whose eventual capital will be Samaria. Jeroboam also builds two new temples to compete with the one Solomon built, and he places a golden calf in each to represent the God of Israel: a tragic replay of the story of Israel's failure in Exodus 32.

From chapter 12 onwards, the story goes back and forth, from north to south, tracing the fate of both kingdoms. Each had about 20 successive kings, and as the author introduces each one, he evaluates their reign by a few criteria. Did they worship the God of Israel alone, or did they promote the worship of other gods? Did they deal with idolatry among the people? And finally, did they remain faithful to the covenant like David, or did they become corrupt and unjust? The author finds that no good kings come out of northern Israel, and from southern Judah, only eight out of 20 get a positive rating.

This connects to another strategic purpose of the books of Kings—to introduce the role of the prophets who are key figures in Israel's history. In the Bible, prophets spoke on behalf of the God of Israel and played the role of covenant watchdogs, calling out idolatry and injustice among the kings and the people. They challenged Israel to repent and follow their God.

The Psalms

Psalms 49: A riddle of life

Psalm 49, in its own words (verse 4) is a wisdom-song. Its purpose is to give an answer to one of the oldest, recurring riddles of life. The answer comes from the psalmist's own life experience and now he is ready to share this with us, disclosing his thoughts.

The whole quest of the psalm is how to be free. Free from earthly possessions, free from being subject to others, free from fear in order to having an open eye to the things which alone are to be feared and which alone are trustworthy. Our psalmist found this freedom through contemplating eternity and God who has ordained man's death—and now he invites us to do the same.

Verses 1-4 — As every didactic poem, Psalm 49 too opens with verbosity and pretentiousness as the psalmist craves a hearing from all the peoples, rich and poor alike. Understandably so since he is trying to answer a universal quest and at the centre of it are indeed the rich and the poor, and he has something to say to both of them.

What he has to say he announces as *wisdom* and *understanding*, as the result of the meditations of his heart. We can almost see the wrestling and brooding of his inner struggle he had to pay before finding the answer to his problem.

As mentioned above, these first verses are somewhat pretentious but before we could accuse the psalmist of pride or self-glory, he admits to have "*inclined his ear to a proverb*" (v. 4). In other words: the answer he found was not the fruit of his own struggle or wisdom but it was revealed to him; he received it almost as prophets receive a divine message. And so his wisdom, after all, is not human wisdom. Unlike his opponents in verse 13, the psalmist learned to listen before he decided to teach.

The mention of harp could be a hint to Elisha who once made use of the string music of a minstrel that the Spirit of God might come upon him (2 Kings 3,15).

Verses 5-6 — These verses make it clear that the whole question/problem is not theoretical but touches upon everyday life and so the answer is designed to offer a practical guidance in our conduct of life. Fear and envy are sentiments, or at least temptations, we all experience in life, and so did the psalmist. How did he overcome them? Certainly not by indulging in them—which seems such an obvious, yet such a difficult answer. He overcame them

by putting everything in the context of eternity. The root of fear and envy is the value and importance of the thing feared or envied—but don't they both disappear in the light of death and eternity?

Verses 7-9 — However much man might have tried to evade God's power in various aspects of his life, in death we all encounter it. No one and nothing can buy us out of death. God has set bound to everyone and everything and so the foolishness and powerlessness of everything is suddenly revealed in the context of eternity. Why to fear what will inevitably perish?

Verses 10-12 — But death is our teacher in other ways too. It is the great equaliser. In death all distinctions, which outwardly may carry some weight in this world, lose their significance. Whatever we accumulate during life, we leave it behind. Considering this ending, there is really no reason for being afraid of the power of men or for grudging them their wealth.

Verses 13-15 — In this second strophe of the psalm, the psalmist recapitulates what he said earlier but adds to it something important. Death is a complete failure for man not because of God but because of man's own tendency to trust in himself only. Man's self-assurance, self-confidence, and self-centredness all collapse when he dies. That's why these people descend into hell like sheep, deprived of their own will and of all hope, and death will tend them and will become their master.

How different is the life of him who trusts in God! Such life is founded on Him who has power over life and death. And God does not take into account man's wealth, power or accumulated riches but only how he lived his life and so our relationship with God is ultimately our true life. Behold the hope of faith that reaches beyond death and in doing so overcomes fear, envy and even death itself. The solution of the riddle of life is the victory of faith's hope over the power of death. How will this happen? The psalmist does not know but he is not even that interested in it. For him it suffices to have the assurance that God will take care of man after his death.

Verses 16-20 — Psalm 49 ends with an exhortation. What he has discovered about his own life and destiny, he now uses as guidance for others. The words are almost identical to the opening verses, yet we listen to them more attentively and hear them differently since now they are illuminated by the hope expressed in v. 15. Do not be afraid and do not be envious. Early power and glory will disappear. Those who hope in them are deprived of hope—and without hope is life worth living?

Symbols of Early Christian Art: the Pelican

Based on prof. László Vanyó book



St. Thomas Aquinas (1225-1274) in one of his famous Eucharistic hymns, *Adoro the devote*, refers to the Lord Jesus as “O Good Pelican.” In this month of June when we celebrate Corpus Christi, let us examine this curious title and the pelican as Christian symbol.

Though the pelican as symbol is already present in early Christian art, it will become truly popular from the 12th century onward.

In the Old Testament, pelicans are considered unclean (Lev 11,18; Deut 14,17) and thus cannot be consumed or used as sacrificial offerings. Yet, for some reason, many legends arose around the wild pelican. In prophetic writings pelicans, together with other ritually

unclean animals, populate the wasteland. *“From generation to generation it shall lie waste; no one shall pass through it for ever and ever. But the pelican and the hedgehog shall possess it; the owl and the raven shall live in it”* (Is 34,10-11). *“Herds shall lie down in it, every wild animal; the desert-pelican and the hedgehog shall lodge amongst its capitals; the owl shall hoot at the window; the raven croak on the threshold”* (Zeph 2,14).

Perhaps due to the context of so much desolation and ruin the pelican became the symbol of lament in the psalms. *“Because of my loud groaning my bones cling to my skin. I am like a pelican of the wilderness, like a little owl of the waste places. I lie awake; I am like a lonely bird on the housetop. All day long my enemies taunt me”* (Ps 102,5-8).

It was Eusebius of Caesarea (260-339), a prominent figure in early Christianity who wrote a line-by-line commentary on the Psalms, who compared for the first time the Lord Jesus to the pelican. What follows is his “scientific” and theological description of the pelican:

The pelican likes solitude and the Lord is like this bird since it shows an admirable love towards its nestlings. When the nestlings are left alone, the

serpent, to kill them, will spray his venom into the air, paying attention to the movements of air in such a way that the venom would reach and kill the nestlings. When the pelican returns from his search for food and finds his little ones dead, he knows right away how to revive them. He flies high into the skies and, wounding his own side with his beak, he covers them with the drops of his blood. This brings the nestlings back to life.

The pelican, continues Eusebius, is thus the Lord, the nestlings are our protoparents, the nest is the garden of Eden, and the serpent is the rebellious satan who sprayed his venom of disobedience on Adam and Eve, pulling them down with himself into death. Then the Lord, moved by love, when he was exalted on the Cross and his side opened with a lance, revived us, who were dead, with the drops of his life-restoring blood and with the dew of the Holy Spirit.

Physiologus, a didactic Christian text written in Greek by an unknown author in Alexandria (Egypt) in the 2nd century, contains stories introduced by natural history; stories intended to instruct in Christian faith and morals. It contains a very similar description of the pelican with the exception that the pelican, in order to revive its nestlings, feeds them with his blood and brings them back to life after they had been dead for three days.

However, Origen (185-254), perhaps the most important theologian and biblical scholar of the early Greek church, considered the pelican a symbol of unsociable and tedious people because of its sharp beak. But he was left alone with his interpretation and gradually the presumed virtues and good characteristics of the pelican prevailed.

St. Augustine (354-430), one of the greatest theologians of the Western Church, admits in his commentary on Psalm 102 that he and his church knows very little about pelicans as these animals live in Egypt. Augustine was bishop of Hippo, today's Annaba in Algeria.

A contemporary of his, St. Jerome (342-420), believed there were two basic kinds of pelican. One that lived close to waters and ate fish and another that lived in the wilderness and fed on venomous animals such as snakes, scorpions and even crocodiles! This latter belief was shared by the natural sciences of their times and contributed greatly to the development of the symbology of the pelican, the snake being the symbol of evil.

The pelican became the symbol of passion, redemption through blood, resurrection (as in bringing back to life), and love. Since it feeds and revives its nestlings by his own blood, the pelican soon became more specifically an Eucharistic symbol. I hope that, at this point, you will not find it surprising anymore why it is represented then even on one of our chasubles for Requiem Masses here at St. Paul's (*see image on previous page*).

Vicar

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The Vicar's day-off is Tuesday. With enquiries about Baptisms, Weddings, Banns, or Funerals, please, contact the Vicar. If you are in hospital, live in a care home, or are house-bound and you wish to receive Holy Communion and/or Anointing, or to make your Confession, please let the Vicar know and he will be very happy to visit you.

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