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|  | <p style="text-align: center;">The Order of St James Newsletter</p> <p style="text-align: center;">January 2017</p> |  |
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The following is extracted from the Order's Website (01/01/2017). It is published so that members may extract and use any parts for their own ministries. It is also a reminder of what we are about as an Order.

OSJ (UK) - Supporting you:

We want to help where we can and make it easy, relevant and understandable for anyone seeking our assistance.

Sometimes, people need access to the traditional services offered by churches at key or transitional points in their lives but, because they are not members of those churches or can't comply with the conditions asked of them, they are often denied.

That shouldn't be the case. Members of the Order of St James Ministry Team are there to help if they can and individually offer a number of different forms of service and unconditional ministry to those in need.

All OSJ services can generally be tailored to meet pastoral and personal needs although some restrictions may apply where sacramental and theological integrity might be compromised.

Services currently offered* but not limited to by individual members may include:

| | | |
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| Baptisms and Christening | Confirmations | Wedding Blessings** |
| Renewal of Vows | Funerals | Celebrations of Life |
| House Blessings | Home visiting | Home Communion |
| Prayer and Healing Ministry | Hospital Chaplaincy and visiting | Prison Chaplaincy and visiting |
| Trauma Counselling | Community Support | Pastoral Counselling |
| Reconciliation Services | Prayer Groups | Bible Studies |
| General Training Courses | Ordination Training Courses | The Sacrament of Forgiveness and Peace |

** Most of our services are offered without charge but some may incur service fees (e.g. Wedding Blessings, Funerals) or require costs covering. Please ask for details.*

*** Under the provisions of the Marriage (Same Sex Couples) Act 2013, OSJ members are exempted from conducting same sex marriages/wedding blessings. OSJ holds the biblically founded and traditional view that marriage is between one man and one woman and is intended to be for the procreation of children.*

For further information, please click this link ['Same Sex Marriage'](#)

OSJ (Worldwide) - Supporting Others:

Charitable giving (not just funds but time, talents and skills) is a key part of the way we all express our faith in both words and actions.

The Order of St James is a self supporting voluntary organization and, although we have very limited financial resources and have huge demands made on us, we try to do our bit too.

We are not a registered charity, nor wish to take on that role, but any donations we do receive are immediately redirected straight to the point of need, and are fully used to support projects in the communities we serve.

100% of donations are passed on, OSJ (UK) covering any transfer fees. We do not keep funds in reserve.

Current projects supported by OSJ provinces include:

The Kitale orphanage, OSJ Kenya,
The Open Door Project, OSJ India,
The Schools Feeding Programme, OSJ Philippines,
The setting up of a free online education University based
in the US by OSJ Pakistan.

Previous UK sponsored projects have included:

Fishing boats for India,
Solar panels and a safe drinking water source for the
Kitale orphanage in Kenya,
Provision of computers in other OSJ provinces,
Various project grants,
Start-up grants,
Training grants in the UK for young people,
Building refurbishment grants.

Please e-mail for details if you would like to support any of these projects. There are currently no new OSJ sponsored projects planned for the UK given present commitments. Please note that OSJ is not a registered charity.

OSJ (Worldwide) Administration:

National directors head OSJ communities (jurisdictions) in other countries and they are elected or appointed according to local need and tradition.

These OSJ jurisdictions are largely self-governing within OSJ as a family, and each is quite different. Currently OSJ operates in 11 countries.

Current OSJ International Provinces: (with contact details)

| | | |
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| OSJ UK | fr.ian.osj@gmail.com | Bishop Ian Walton |
| OSJ Executive Bishop (currently overseeing all European interests and OSJ Worldwide) | | |

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|---------------------------------------|--|----------------------|
| OSJ Wales | davidbennett0@icloud.com | Bishop David Bennett |
| OSJ National Director Designate Wales | | |

| | | |
|-----------------------------|--|-------------------|
| OSJ India | osjindia@gmail.com | Bishop John Nakka |
| OSJ National Director India | | |

| | | |
|-----------------------------------|--|-----------------|
| OSJ Philippines | john.ruffle@yahoo.com | Rev John Ruffle |
| OSJ National Director Philippines | | |

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|--------------------------------|--|-------------------------|
| OSJ Pakistan | drsamastle@hotmail.com | Rev Doctor Samson Astle |
| OSJ National Director Pakistan | | |

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| OSJ Kenya | kiberaslum_ministries@yahoo.com | Pastor Patrick Kimawachi |
| OSJ National Director Kenya (currently looking after all African interests) | | |

Countries served by OSJ members include England, Wales, Italy, Switzerland, USA, India, Pakistan, Philippines, Kenya, Uganda, Burundi.

OSJ (UK) Administration:

Structurally, nothing complicated. The Order has an executive bishop (+Ian), a newly appointed assistant bishop (+David Bennett), and an Executive Council made up of OSJ members, who collectively direct the overall ministry and organization of the Order. Their role is simply to make ministry possible.

The Order's 'Rule of Simplicity' is more about vision and attitude, about what you can do rather than what you can't do. We want you to succeed in the things God has entrusted you to do because that benefits everyone and it glorifies God.

That is it other than making sure we comply with current safeguarding requirements.

OSJ (UK) Contact:

E-mail: fr.ian.osj@gmail.com

(Fr. Ian Walton, OSJ, Executive Bishop)

Website: www.orderofstjames.info

www.orderofstjames.co.uk

Address: The Order Of St James (UK) Office
10 The Rowans
Wetherby
LS225EB

The Order's spiritual centre of ministry is St Leonard's Chapel, Hazlewood, North Yorkshire, LS24 9NJ and is in the grounds of the beautiful Hazlewood Castle.

Newsletters:

Newsletters are the way we communicate centrally and pass information on.

Anyone can access them and they are freely available to all who are interested in what we do, or wish to see that OSJ is 'for real'.

Our latest newsletter, previous editions going back to 2012 and the Order's key documents including the Order's '[Rule of Simplicity](#)' can all be downloaded by clicking this link:
<https://sites.google.com/site/orderofstjamesuk/home>

OSJ: Following the teachings of St James - Serving Christ and Community.

The work of the Order is four fold:

i. **Plant** - to faithfully and effectively plant and/or bring to fruition the Gospel of Christ

ii. **Minister** - to be available as an Order to minister to any person in need, regardless of their faith background or social circumstances,

iii. **Support** - to be available to work supportively with individuals, churches, Christian groups and the local community, where ever needed and when ever needed,

iv. **Empower** - to encourage and support others in the exercise of the ministries and spiritual gifts they have been entrusted with.

Our purpose is to encourage and make Bible based and Spirit led Christian ministry accessible at the time, point and place of need, and to make it quite simply and unconditionally available to all, no strings attached.

We may be a small group in the greater Christian family but with over 260 members working in 11 countries we do truly serve Christ and community.

OSJ: Each person matters.

Community begins with the individual. It only takes one person to make a difference. That means that each person matters.

Set that person free and they can change the community, especially if that person truly knows Christ.

That person might just be you.

Everyone (regardless of whether they go to church or not) is entrusted with spiritual gifts according to their faith and these gifts need discovering, appreciating and using for the benefit of all people.

Ask yourself, do you know what your gifts, talents and skills are? Are you being encouraged to use them?

Without them, the Church is poorer and the community you are a part of suffers.

Every person has something to offer, something to give.

We believe: the Gifts of God, for the people of God, and not just the chosen few.

OSJ is about 'people', not 'organizations':

'Organizations' (including 'churches') have their place, but they also have their limitations. They sometimes forget what they are about and, instead of becoming a means to an end, they become an end in themselves.

They fail when they think they (or their rules or traditions or practices) are more important than the people they were meant to be serving.

It is 'people' that really matter, and when an organization places itself of more value than the individual it seeks to serve, it has ceased to be of any value or relevance. (See Luke 15 v3-7)

So is 'OSJ' just another 'organization'?

We sincerely hope not.

OSJ does things a little differently. We encourage people to do what is right rather than blindly following 'the rules and regulations' of religion (the collective and socially controlled and formulated expression of a particular set of beliefs).

We encourage those who those who can think beyond denominational limitations, those who have a mind of their own and don't want to accept second best. We like visionaries and people that 'don't quite fit the norm'.

We are more about faith, personal Christian integrity, deeply cutting honesty and spiritual fulfilment, and a reliance on the Holy Spirit rather than the compliant observance (however well intended) of religious rules and behaviour patterns.

We do follow some church traditions but our actions are not dictated by them. We will break 'the rules' when needed,

especially when they keep people from the presence and love of God.

We know the importance of forgiveness, reconciliation, healing and giving people a second chances. We all make mistakes - no person or Christian community is perfect.

We also don't do 'denominations' - we are simply 'Christian', and whilst we appreciate the value of ritual, tradition, liturgy and canon we are not restricted, governed, led by or divided by these things.

Although we do have a small number of mission churches because we do support worshipping communities, all of our priests and lay members work in and as part of the local community, both offering and encouraging all forms of open ministry. For all, by all.

We encourage all members of OSJ

(1) to pray, not just for the Order of St James and its members, but for all the communities in which they serve,
based on 1 Thessalonians 5: v16-1 (ESV) "....pray without ceasing, for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you."

and

(2) we encourage all members to be actively involved in appropriate ministry whenever the opportunity arises.

based on 2 Corinthians 3: v6 (NIV) "He has made us competent as ministers the Spirit gives life."

As an Order, we simply want to support and encourage everyone we come into contact with in their walk with God and help them succeed in their ministries. That benefits everyone.

OSJ's Biblical Basis for Ministry:

We aim to serve God rather than serve organizations.¹

We also want to set people free for God ², to be the people they were created to be and to use the gifts, talents and skills they have been entrusted with by God ³, with recognition, support and encouragement ⁴, for the benefit of all.

All our work is built up on a foundation of faith, prayer and service, and we know that everyone also has a part to play, something to offer and something to value. ⁵

We do not rely on other groups to give us authentication, recognition or legitimacy either, especially those that are essentially divisive and excluding. ⁶

We don't hide behind canon, tradition or liturgy. We stand or fall by our love of God and the ministry it generates, and need no other validation. ⁷

In Luke 17: v21, Jesus said, "....the Kingdom of God **is** amongst you...." We can all make it so and perhaps we would no longer be needed as an 'organization'.

¹ *Colossians 3: v23-24 (NIV) "Whatever you do, work at it with all your heart, as working for the Lord, not for human masters, It is the Lord Christ you are serving."*

² *John 8: v32 (NIV) "Then you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free."*

³ *1 Corinthians 12: v1-11 (NIV) "Now to each one the manifestation of the Spirit is given for the common good."*

⁴ *John 13: v35 (NKJV) "By this all will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another."*

⁵ *1 Corinthians 12: v11 (NIV) "All these are the work of one and the same Spirit, and he distributes them to each one, just as he determines."*

⁶ *Mark 9: v38-40 (NIV) "Teacher," said John, "we saw someone driving out demons in your name and we told him to stop, because he was not one of us." "Do not stop him," Jesus said. "For no one who does a miracle in my name can in the next moment say anything bad about me, for whoever is not against us is for us."*

⁷ *Matthew 7: v15-20 (NIV) "You will know them by their fruits."*

Your Membership of OSJ: a quick guide.

If you are thinking about joining the Order there are some things you should know.

We will never ask you for money.

We will never ask you to do things that are contrary to Holy Scripture.

We will never ask you to compromise your conscience.

We will never ask you to leave your church or fellowship as part of your membership.

We will ask you to use your discerned gifts, talents and skills honestly and freely in the service of God and His people.

We will give you our support and encouragement.

Membership Alternatives:

Membership is open to all who truly love God as Christians and who wish to serve beyond the traditionally maintained denominational boundaries.

Because we all have busy lives, membership comes in two forms to allow for different levels of commitment.

(1) Ministry Team: (MT)

Application for Ministry Team membership is intended for priests, ministers, pastors and lay workers with defined, existing licenced or specialist ministry.

The detailed application form is designed to help applicants discern whether they are called of God to this form of open ministry.

Prospective members will be interviewed and independent references will be required. A current CRB check and full disclosure are both mandatory. The Order's Safeguarding policy applies at all times.

As a Ministry Team applicant, you may also be asked to obtain a letter of consent for your application from the pastor/minister/priest of the church or Christian community you belong to.

(2) Ministry Support Team: (MST)

Application for the Ministry Support Team is simple and straight forward.

It is intended for those people who wish to offer their support for OSJ through prayer, fellowship and promotion without taking on full time or additional ministry.

Where applicable and/or appropriate, the Order's Safeguarding policy should be observed.

Membership Costs: time and effort only

The Order of St James does not require any form of membership fee.

We feel that member's support and time are sufficient in themselves.

All our members are self-financing volunteers who give of their own time and resources so that they can make ministry available where and whenever needed.

Members are expected to take full responsibility for their actions given the freedom they are given to minister within their local community under the support, direction and authority of the Order.

Recognising All Christians:

Denominations also have their place but no one denomination represents or speaks for the whole Church. They are members of a bigger family, the 'one (inclusive) Church with Christ as its head'. (1 Corinthians 12)

There are however those churches and Christian communities who find it difficult to accept this simple bible based principle. They don't accept or recognize 'outsiders' or other communities like OSJ.

As a consequence, it can be tough going for members of the Order in making ministry available, however much needed.

Membership Qualities:

It therefore needs a special kind of person to rise above the rejection and negativity they will receive, a person who loves God so much that they will not give in, a person who wants to make a difference and knows in God they can.

Members therefore ideally need to be

unstoppably enthusiastic and prayerful Christians,
be Spirit filled and have a good grounding in Bible wisdom,
and with determination, humility and compassion
have a overwhelming desire to serve both God and His people .

Members may also might find some of the following attributes useful:

being self-motivated,
independent,
honest and have unrelenting integrity,
free and spiritually imaginative thinkers,
confident (they will have to take some hard knocks),
be totally committed and financially self-supporting,
and be prepared to get involved personally.

If you consider you have at least three of the above listed qualities, Ministry Support Team membership may be a good starting place if you would like to be a member of OSJ..

If you think you may have six or more of the above listed qualities, Ministry Team membership may be for you.

However, the most important quality any member of OSJ should have is humility. We all need to see ourselves as God sees us.

OSJ: A summary.

OSJ is not about rules or regulations, denominations, liturgies, titles or dressing up in vestments.

It is simply about service to God.

Other Groups linked to OSJ.

Chaplains at War (UK):

<https://sites.google.com/site/chaplainsatwar/home>

The Order of St James sponsors 'Chaplains at war (UK)' website and it is predominantly dedicated to those ordained men of peace and faith who went unarmed to war.

Their faith and achievements in the face of extreme adversity and man's inhumanity to man should never be overlooked, but be an inspiration to others. 'Lest we forget!'

'Chaplains at War (UK)' has two purposes:

1. To honour military chaplains and, by doing so, mark the contribution they have made,
2. To act as a forum for those interested in researching, recognising and/or promoting the work and role military chaplains.

'Chaplains at War (UK)' welcomes interest from all responsible parties and individuals who subscribe to these simple purposes.

'Chaplains at War (UK)' is sponsored and administered by The Order of St James (UK) for educational and research purposes only.

'Chaplains at War (UK)' is non-political in outlook and is an educational non-profit making volunteer group.

It is not the intention of the 'Chaplains at War (UK)' web site, whether explicitly or implicitly, to give a general assent to armed conflict as a primary means of resolution.

It does not and will not support or condone the incitement or promulgation of acts of terrorism, extremism, religious fundamentalism or the repression of basic human rights and freedoms.

'Chaplains at War (UK)' does not support armed conflict originating or resulting from religious difference, intolerance or persecution, or using religion as a means of promulgating or justifying war, terrorism or other armed social upheaval.

'Chaplains at War (UK)' does not and will not support the denial, covering up or the deliberate misinterpretation of fact concerning war crimes, acts of terrorism, subjugation, mass murder, crimes against humanity and genocide.

Human consciousness should be led towards enlightenment by learning the truth and acting upon it, not driven into further darkness by deceits, lies and untruths.

The Order's Newsletter:

The OSJ Newsletter is the principle point of communication for the Order of St James (UK) and OSJ (Worldwide).

All members may contribute to newsletters and articles of interest are also drawn from other churches and printed with permission.

The Editorial Team:

Fr. Ian Walton, OSJ - Executive Bishop for the Order of St James.
Fr. Ian is the editor of the Order's newsletter and is the priest in charge at St Leonard's, Hazlewood, the Order's spiritual centre.

Unice Brierley, OSJ - Lay Preacher (Methodist) and a regular contributor for the Order's newsletter.

Unice has vast experience in preaching and is a great teacher and example to those less experienced in this ministry.

Rev David Startup, OSJ - Visiting preacher at a number of Baptist and United Reform Churches, and a regular contributor to the Order's Newsletter. OSJ Safeguarding Officer (shared post).

Rt Rev David Bennett, OSJ - Bishop for OSJ Wales.
Liberal Catholic background. Royal Navy and Police background.
PTSD trauma specialist and a regular contributor to the Order's newsletter.

Rev Kevin Wright, OSJ - Bishop's Chaplain.

Funeral celebrant and the priest in charge of a number of mission churches. OSJ Safeguarding Officer (shared post)

Why St James? His Importance and Legacy

The Epistle of James is probably the most misunderstood in the New Testament, and St James is likewise probably one of the most misrepresented of the key New Testament figures.

Church politics has played its part in the rewriting of the New Testament over the early years and the legacy of St James, the first bishop of Jerusalem and the brother of Jesus, has been consistently undervalued and undeservedly ignored. St Paul's writings suited the increasingly Roman politics of the time, but not so the writings of St James. St Paul was a Roman, St James a Jew.

Nevertheless, these events have helped protect the integrity of the oldest and most intact and reliable of the Epistles.

What we see in the Epistle of St James is the expression of faith leading to works and then change. Real faith naturally expresses itself in 'works', the selfless outward expression of the love of God, led by the Holy Spirit and demonstrated in action. Works are a by-product of an active faith and are led by the Holy Spirit. Works are not in themselves the end product or the goal.

Their purpose is to lead people to God, not to glorify the person doing them. And as St James stated, faith without works is an empty faith.

The church has made much over the theological differences between faith and works. Despite popular opinion, there is no overall conflict between the teachings of St Paul and St James either, rather a subtle harmony, but St Paul is certainly not backwards in taking every opportunity to up his prominence and importance against the Jerusalem Church which was held in such regard, a stumbling block in his search for recognition, authority and power. In that regard, St James along with the Jerusalem church leaders, had to be found wanting if St Paul wanted his way.

In those early years in Jerusalem after the death and resurrection of Jesus, the Spirit endued disciples began to put into action the teachings of Jesus and they found of their own voice and expression of faith as they transitioned from a purely Jewish outlook to one which accepted and welcomed the many Gentiles who responded to the Gospel of Christ.

As a community it was very well respected and continued to grow under the leadership of St James, assisted by Mary (mother of Jesus) and Mary Magdalene, but as other Christian communities grew beyond Jerusalem, it was not without its critics or enemies who were envious of its supposed position and power.

Over the years, St James along with Mary, (the mother of Jesus) and Mary Magdalene, have had such bad press as to destroy the prominence of the Jerusalem church and to bulk up St Paul's reputation. Rome strengthened its position over Jerusalem as the political climate changed, especially following the fall of Jerusalem in A.D. 70. Emerging Christianity became the victim of personal and group politics in the form of the emerging denominations, and there were many schisms as each vied for overall power. Some of the early founding fathers were declared heretics, their followers persecuted and killed, and many early letters and documents were destroyed in an attempt to hide the dissent that existed. Even the Gospels and the Epistles were rewritten and/or edited in part.

However, what was left in the almost ignored and untouched Epistle of St James is of relevance to us as individuals. It remains the oldest and most original writing of the New Testament, even pre-dating the Gospels according to some sources. It takes us right back to the early beginnings of the real Church and focuses on what was really important. Not just 'faith', but 'faith resulting in action'.

What was radical in the Epistle of St James was that everyone was involved, everyone had responsibility and everyone had the chance to make a difference. They had responsibility and much was expected of them. They had, 'ownership', direction and purpose, and were far from passive in expressing their love of God.

It builds directly on the teachings of Jesus, as an example consider 'the parable of the talents' found in Matthew 25, v14-25, and Luke 19 v12-19. 'Talents' were not buried under mountains of rules, regulation, canon or tradition. They were meant to be used.

We have lost that. Now it seems we find we have given over our Christian heritage to organizations that rule over us and paid professionals who absolve us of our Christian responsibilities. As long as we do what we are told without question and put our money in the collection box, we will go to Heaven. That is not true and certainly not good enough.

The Holy Spirit is challenging people not to accept this situation any more, and they in turn are challenging the church organizations that have let them down so badly. Where they get no satisfaction, the outcome is that they will leave and the churches will empty.

That does not mean that 'the Church' is dying. It is changing.

The Church is 'people', not organizations. People will still have their faith even if they don't go to a church, and they will still live according to their faith. It is the churches led by self absorption and self interest that are dying. They have had their chances.

So how do we as an Order respond to and engage those who have become disillusioned and disengaged, or those who have never even have heard or understood the Good News of Jesus Christ? How do we support and encourage them?

We need to go back to the first principles outlined in the Gospels and particularly those found in the Epistle of St James.

There are only two things any of us need to do to the best of our abilities and understanding: to love God, and to love our neighbours as ourselves. God has already prepared us for this task as we have been given the Holy Spirit to guide and empower us. It starts wherever we are with whatever we are doing. It usually starts with a smile, and how simple is that.

Every one called of God has a ministry, a spiritual gifting, a skill and has a place, a value, and without which the whole Church (and subsequently the whole community) suffers. We recognise and encourage the use of those gifts.

For all of us, the first principle is, if you see something is wrong, or that there is a need, then it is your responsibility to deal with it. It is not someone else's responsibility. It is yours. God brought it to your attention for you to deal with.

We are here to support you where we can if you cannot find support in your own community.

This is what the Order of St James is about - firstly in giving responsibility back to the people, and secondly in empowering them in both their Christ centred calling and ministry. The world could be a so much better place and it is up to all of us to make it so.

Why 'an Order' and not 'a Church'?

We don't need another 'church'. The world is full of both old and new churches all saying that they are the real thing and the only true way to find God.

The only true way to find God is through personal encounter, and no one 'church' has the sole rights on that, as much as they may wish to think so.

Churches may provide good teaching and provide a safe environment to meet like minded people, but their rituals and traditions and canon are no substitute for a living relationship with God.

We recognise that, but sometimes the churches in question don't. That is why your presence in the church and/or community you are a part of is important, so your voice can be heard and change can be made.

Being an Order, it means that people can stay where they are, doing the things they do and make changes from within what already exists.

It also means they can have support and encouragement where perhaps none exists, to do what God is calling them to do.

The Order's Spiritual centre:

St Leonard's Chapel, Hazlewood, Tadcaster, North Yorkshire. The Chapel is around 900 years old and is remarkable for its brightness, acoustics and peacefully spiritual atmosphere.

Regular public service are held here and are listed on the 'Services' page.

The chapel was also dedicated as a shrine to the 40 Martyrs during the period when the Carmelites used Hazlewood as a monastery. The painting over the chapel's altar is a celebration of the steadfast faith of those who died during the persecution of Roman Catholics.

So who was St Leonard?

According to the building report provided by English Heritage, the figure above the porch is that of St Leonard to whom the chapel is dedicated. Not many people know who St Leonard was, so here is a potted history.

St Leonard was born towards the end of the fifth century near the town of Orleans, France. He was the son of a Frankish nobleman, a high-ranking officer in the army of the king, Clovis I.

At fourteen years of age, St Leonard went to the monastery of Micy in Orleans and, on completion of his studies, entered Holy Orders, eventually succeeding Saint Remy at Rheims.

St Leonard's holiness attracted sick people to him. It is recorded that they obtained their recovery and spiritual enlightenment.

The king heard of this and asked Leonard to become chaplain to his court. However, Leonard's zeal for saving souls made him refuse this tempting offer. Preferring solitude, he chose to retire in isolation to the region of Aquitaine. Finally, reaching the forest of Pauvin just north of the town of Limoges, he built himself a cell and lived on vegetables and fruit.

At first, he devoted himself to prayer and contemplation but, as a man of compassionate disposition, he later befriended prisoners and captives of war.

In one account of St Leonard's life, it is also reported that Theodebert, King of Austria and grandson of Clovis I, while hunting with his couriers in the area, became distraught when his pregnant young wife, Queen Wisigarde, who was accompanying him, went into premature labour and was having serious difficulties. The royal doctor despaired of her life.

St Leonard arrived at her side and fell to prayer on her behalf. Through his prayers of intercession, the Queen recovered and gave birth to a healthy child. The king's gratitude was expressed by offering St Leonard the estate of Pauvin, where he was joined

by young men wishing to share his monastic life and form a community. Over time, a flourishing monastery was built on this estate in honour of Our Lady of the Forest.

Leonard changed the name of Pauvin to Noblat in the King's honour. It was from here that he carried out his work of evangelisation, preaching the Gospel across the whole region.

As reports of his characteristic holiness and miracles spread, sick people were brought to him and many went back home cured. Clovis I promised to release every prisoner St Leonard converted. Many of those released in this way joined his ever-growing community.

St Leonard's pastorate continued to grow until his death on 6 November, 559 A.D.

St Leonard's fame spread as details of his life and miracle-working became known.

It was reported that prisoners who invoked Leonard's aid discovered that their chains and shackles miraculously fell from them

(Although probably based on the incident in Acts regarding St Paul, Charles Wesley's words for 'And can it be,' (circa 1735) certainly resonate with the stories regarding St Leonard and also with the work of OSJ.)

| | |
|---|---|
| 1. And can it be that I should gain An interest in the Saviour's blood? Died He for me, who caused His pain— For me, who Him to death pursued? Amazing love! How can it be, That Thou, my God, shouldst die for me? Amazing love! How can it be, That Thou, my God, shouldst die for me? | 2. 'Tis mystery all: th'Immortal dies: Who can explore His strange design? In vain the firstborn seraph tries To sound the depths of love divine. 'Tis mercy all! Let earth adore, Let angel minds inquire no more. 'Tis mercy all! Let earth adore; Let angel minds inquire no more. |
| 3. He left His Father's throne above So free, so infinite His grace— Emptied Himself of all but love, And bled for Adam's helpless race: 'Tis mercy all, immense and free, For O my God, it found out me! 'Tis mercy all, immense and free, For O my God, it found out me | 4. Long my imprisoned spirit lay, Fast bound in sin and nature's night; Thine eye diffused a quickening ray— I woke, the dungeon flamed with light; My chains fell off, my heart was free, I rose, went forth, and followed Thee. My chains fell off, my heart was free, I rose, went forth, and followed Thee. |
| 5. Still the small inward voice I hear, That whispers all my sins forgiven; Still the atoning blood is near, That quenched the wrath of hostile Heaven. I feel the life His wounds impart; I feel the Saviour in my heart. I feel the life His wounds impart; I feel the Saviour in my heart. | 6. No condemnation now I dread; Jesus, and all in Him, is mine; Alive in Him, my living Head, And clothed in righteousness divine, Bold I approach th'eternal throne, And claim the crown, through Christ my own. Bold I approach th'eternal throne, And claim the crown, through Christ my own. |

It seems that Leonard was never at a loss for an edifying sentiment. “A fare of dry bread, eaten in the joy of a pure conscience,” he held, “is of more worth than a house abundantly furnished, where quarrels and divisions prevail.”

Yet St Leonard's death was followed by five centuries of anonymity. From the 12th century, however, his name was copiously invoked, not merely throughout France, but in various parts of Europe.

In England, there were 177 churches dedicated to St Leonard, many of them in Kent and Sussex. There were also several dedications in the West Midlands, notably at Bridgnorth and Bilston, and also here in Yorkshire.

Also, monasteries, hospitals and hermitages were dedicated to him in France, Italy, England, Scotland and, not least, in Bavaria. At York, the largest medieval hospital in northern England, run by the Augustinians, was dedicated to St Leonard.

Noblat is identified as the Saint's home town and the church there became a great pilgrimage shrine. The Saint was invoked both by women in labour and by prisoners of war. Relics of Saint Leonard are placed above the main altar in the church of Saint Leonard de Noblat, at the place where his hermitage once stood.

St Leonard's Chapel at Hazelwood also has one relic of the saint which is housed in the tabernacle on the altar. This was obtained from a monastery in Belgium by the Order of St James when St Leonard's chapel was re-consecrated for Christian, rather than denominational, use.



St Leonard's Chapel,
Hazlewood Castle, Yorkshire,
LS24 9NJ

OSJ Services 2017



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communion service lasting between 20 and 30 minutes.

All are very welcome and all may receive.

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We use a non-alcoholic wine so children may take part too.
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Servant Leadership: the way we prefer to do things.

Traditionally, leaders have been valued for their communication and decision making skills, but mostly for their ability to deliver results in what ever way they can.

That doesn't always make for good leadership or for good people. 'Success' often comes with a human cost and is rarely questioned.

All too often these leaders are goal orientated, exclusively single minded, creators of an environment in which they personally can flourish, and see people as dispensable collateral.

Success (whether in terms of power, personal recognition or financial reward) is everything, and by any means. Personal honesty, integrity, morality, loyalty to work colleagues, suppliers and customers, and a whole host of other things we value are rarely things that would trouble the successful leader so long as the job got done and the targets achieved.

This may be seen as 'good' for business or politics but it may not be 'good' for society as a whole.

Occasionally we find these kind of leaders also running our churches and the Christian communities we belong to.

So is there an alternative to this kind of leadership?

The Servant-leader's primary motivation and purpose is to encourage and enable others to succeed, and it benefits the whole community as a direct consequence. They are primarily visionaries and enablers who speak with authority but are not authoritarian.

Servant-leaders are those who lead by example, encourage, support, give value and importance to those around them, offer direction and choices rather than dictate, bring people together rather than divide them, and are not manipulators but persuaders. They are people of honesty and integrity, not in it for themselves, community minded, unafraid to face up to problems and injustice and create a better future for all.

They want to and make a real difference but on the basis of 'what can I do for you' to achieve success rather than 'what can you can do for me'. Not only that, but Servant-leadership can occur at any level with in the structure of the community, from global leadership to specific areas of delegated responsibility or interest, from top to bottom. It is not bound by hierarchical structure.

Effective servant-leadership is best evidenced by the cultivation of servant-leadership in others. By nurturing a more participatory and empowering environment, and encouraging the effective use of the gifts, talents and skills of those around them, the Servant-leader creates a more effective, motivated and better supported community.

It is said that (Servant)-leaders enable others to act, not by hoarding the power they have but by giving it away.

Servant-leadership breaks away from the traditional top down organizational pyramid and promotes flexible, delegated organizational structures, and many see it as a forward-looking replacement for the old model for leadership.

What has been shown is that at whatever level of community or organizational structure Servant-leaders appear, they become the movers and shapers of the community to which they belong, and frequently its uncomfortable moral and spiritual conscience.

So what defines a 'Servant-leader'?

The following 12 characteristics of Servant-Leadership have been identified by Larry Spears, CEO of the Greenleaf Centre for Servant Leadership, and he views them as being absolute attributes required of Servant-leaders.

This list is by no means exhaustive or intended as definitive, but it serves to communicate the potential of this kind of leadership.

These twelve characteristics are being presented **in summary** in a specifically Christian context. There is obviously a lot more behind this but it will give you some idea of the importance of this concept. The Servant-leadership model is very much evidenced in the Gospels in the way Jesus did things.

The Twelve Characteristics of Servant-leadership:

1. Listening

God gave us two ears and one mouth as a reminder to listen more than we speak. One of the characteristics of the Servant-leader is the ability to listen.

Servant-leaders listen intently to God and to those around them. They do not pre-judge but approach things with open minds, recognizing that their own perceptions may be flawed or fall short of the mark. They set aside their own self-interests in discerning, identifying and clarifying the will of God and then acting upon it.

Servant-leaders also seek to discover and be aware of what the people they serve really think and believe. Servant-leaders can appear confrontational at times, especially when people won't face reality or deny there are problems when they are blatantly self-evident, or when faced with half truths and cover ups.

Servant-leaders are rarely 'judgmental' but they do need to identify and build on the often inconvenient and uncomfortable foundations of truth so things can be made better. Confidentiality applies.

Servant-leaders seek to listen receptively to what is being said and look at what is being done (rather than just what is being said) and they put great value in honesty, truth and integrity.

Their style of listening is more about discerning what is actually being communicated rather than just hearing the spoken word.

(Servant-leaders are often very good at interpreting body language and 'reading between the lines'.)

One of the skills of the Servant leader is the ability to look beyond the prejudices, the politics, the rhetoric and the divisions to see where problems exist and where solutions can be found. Impartiality is essential.

Servant-leaders constantly look to the Holy Spirit and much of their ministry is build upon their ability to discern.

2. Empathy

Servant-leaders strive to understand and empathize with others.

It starts with the premise that people want and need to be accepted and recognized for their special and unique spiritual gifts, talents and skills. Servant-leaders are instinctively inclusive and know how to encourage and build people up and build links between them.

Servant-leaders rely on the good intentions of the people they work with and not reject them as people, even when forced to reject or call into question the behavior or performance of those around them.

They will not tolerate disruptive behaviour, but they will remain supportive as they know that making mistakes and errors of judgment are part of the learning process.

It can be said that the Servant leader sees that the individual and the community hold equal importance even though they may occasionally be at odds with one another.

3. Healing

'Learning to heal is a powerful force for transformation and integration. One of the great strengths of servant-leadership is the potential for healing one's self and others.' (Source unknown.)

In his book, 'The Servant as Leader', Greenleaf writes, 'there is something subtle communicated to those being served and led if, implicit in the compact between the servant-leader and led is the understanding that the search for wholeness is something that they have.'

Servant-leaders have the potential to be and are healers of broken people and divided communities.

Healing brings about wholeness and a sense of place, belonging and purpose. It values people and gives them a sense of worth.

One of the great strengths of servant-leadership has is the ability to recognize damaged relationships, to identify root causes and symptoms, and to bring about or enable their healing.

It is not just something Servant-leaders recognize in others but they also have the grace to recognize these things within their own lives and in their relationships with the people around them.

It is also especially true where it comes to their relationship with God. Servant-leaders are not perfect and need to remember this.

4. Awareness

General awareness, and especially self-awareness, strengthens the servant-leader and keeps their feet firmly planted on the ground and their lives rooted in God.

Making a commitment to foster self awareness can be disturbing rather than reassuring—one never knows what one may discover.

Self awareness is not a giver of solace – it's just the opposite, but without it, where would we be and on what basis could we rightly move forward?

When it comes to general awareness, Servant-leaders have a strong understanding of what is going on around them.

They are aware of the subtle changes in relationships, particularly when it comes to reactions to situations and decisions. They will also be aware that they may know only some of the facts.

They will seek to anticipate potential problems, have possible resolutions in place, and keep everyone focused on what is important. Nothing will ever allowed to become 'personal'.

Servant-leaders will be aware of what is going on and will rarely be fooled.

5. Persuasion

The effective servant-leader builds group consensus through gentle but clear and persistent persuasion, rather than applying positional authority, or threats, bribery or coercion.

Servant-leaders seek to convince others, rather than force compliance or apply repressive measures.

This particular element offers one of the clearest distinctions between the traditional authoritarian model and that of the servant-leader.

Personality and the building of strong personal relationships are the keys they use to unlock closed doors.

The servant-leader is effective at discerning and building consensus within groups, but can accept, accommodate and find room for individual differences of opinion.

6. Vision

Servant-leaders seek to nurture and encourage their communities to "dream great dreams."

Servant-leaders have a vision for the community they are part of, the ability to look at where the community is and where it could be. Servant-leaders generate enthusiasm for and encourage change.

They encourage ownership of the vision by the whole community and inspire everyone to give something of their selves to bring it to fruition.

Servant-leaders do not own the vision and recognize it is not their personal property. However, they do hold and direct the delicate balance between aspiration and reality, the vision and the present moment.

Servant-leaders recognize and accept that the day-to-day realities of life have to be dealt with but they are also responsible for keeping the vision alive and dynamic and providing the inertia to drive it onwards.

7. Foresight

Foresight is a characteristic that enables Servant-leaders to understand lessons from the past, the realities of the present, and the likely consequence of decisions in or regarding the future.

It is deeply rooted in the informed, spiritually discerning, intuitive and problem solving mind.

It is also related to listening to the community and listening to God. Discernment is not just an individual gift. Often a group within the community, or the community itself, can have the stewardship of the gift of discernment. There are even situations where those from outside the community may have discernment. Servant leaders need to be able to read the signs from without the community as well as from within it.

The Servant-leader also needs to keep in tune with God as the vision can, with the best of intentions, become an end in itself.

8. Stewardship

Servant-leaders are often characterized by a strong sense of stewardship.

Stewards are concerned not only for the members of the community they are a part of, but also the community and its organization as a whole. They also care about the community's impact on and relationship with the rest of society.

Every person and resource matters to the good steward, and that also includes the recognitions, development and use of individual gifts, talents and skills found within the community for the good of both the individual and the whole community. It may ironically includes encouraging people to do less so that they can truly blossom.

Stewardship is not a permanent role and this needs to be recognized by the Servant-leader as well as the community they serve. Servant-leaders encourage others to step forward and take on responsibility.

A good Servant-leader also know when to step down and let someone else take responsibility

9. Growth

Servant-leaders are committed to helping members of their community and the community itself develop and grow.

Servant-leaders have a strong commitment to the personal, relational, intellectual and spiritual growth of the people around them, and they enable and delegate.

They recognize that all people have something to offer and given the appropriate opportunities, support and encouragement can excel and make an outstanding and sometimes unexpected contribution to the whole community.

Servant-leaders work hard to help people develop in a number of ways. Servant-leaders recognize others' developmental needs and actively find ways to help them reach their true potential.

If that includes asking the community to change the way it does things, then that becomes a part of the Servant-leader's remit.

10. Building Community

The global trend to shift power from local communities to large governing institutions and organizations has adversely affected our view of the world we live in and the way we fit in it.

It has left many people feeling as if they have simply become a troublesome statistic rather than a valued and cared for person.

To a certain extent it has also removed our need to take responsibility and be responsible for our own actions away from us.

These large organizations tell us what to do and think and how to behave. As they get bigger, we become less and less involved in the decision making that shapes our lives and communities and we no longer have that sense of ownership, or place, or even being valued.

Size, on this occasion, is definitely not everything.

Servant-leaders have a strong sense of 'community' and see 'community' as an interdependent and unified body rather than a collective of independent and separate groups acting under one governing body.

Servant-leaders work hard to foster and engender a sense of unity, of belonging and interdependence in its members. They seek to strengthen both the individual and the community because they are mutually supportive and give strength and purpose to the other.

Servant-leaders are those people who want to create within us a sense of place, belonging, value and worth that our lives may be full and fulfilled, and make society a better place for all where each of us is recognized, not just for who we are, but for who we can become.

However, communities can become victims of their own success and become ineffective and unmanageable if they become too big. As tempting as it is to play the numbers game when it comes to defining what success is in the eyes of the world, Servant-leadership is also about keeping things manageable.

11. Calling

The kind of person that is keen on giving instruction to others, or who wants to be recognized or seen in a leadership role, or who is intent in promoting their own agenda, or is domineering, has a lot to learn before they can take on the role of Servant-leader.

Servant-leaders are willing to sacrifice self-interest for the good of the community. That does not mean they will sacrifice their faith or will compromise it. Far from it. It is what drives them.

Servant-leaders have a natural desire to serve others. They are 'hands on', intuitive and highly pro-active.

The Servant-leader desires to make a difference for others within the community and will pursue opportunities to make a difference and to impact the lives of any or all who are part of the community but never for their own gain.

They will often begin by seeing an unmet need and act upon it without asking or making a fuss, or expecting any thanks or recognition for what they have done.

Their actions are not always welcomed and can be interpreted by some as being quite provocative by implication and anti-authoritarian.

The Servant-leader's calling to serve is deeply rooted and value-based, and has little regard for the status quo if it stops something from getting done.

12. Nurturing the Spirit

The Servant-leader is someone who understands the deep human need to be a recognized, valued and active part of the community.

The Servant-leader nurtures the individual's spirit through honest praise and supportive recognition.

Any criticism or advice given by a Servant-leader should be on the basis of building people up, not destroying them or writing them off as useless.

The Servant-leader is led by the Holy Spirit and is well grounded in Holy Scripture and well able to encourage and strengthen faith in others.

However, they do need to be aware that they too need the support and encouragement of others so that they can sustain their role as Servant-leader and remain effective.

The Servant-leader, despite their role and calling, remains an ordinary member of the community too, and is entitled to the same amount of care as all other members.

Servant-leaders are just as flawed and just as fallible as those they seek to serve. Servant-leaders sometimes have a tendency to carry the whole community on their shoulders if left unattended. They need nurturing and supporting, and occasionally to be made to time off as part of their own pastoral care.

Attributes of the Servant-Leader:

The required or essential characteristics that identify the Servant-leaders are seen by those in the know to include these attributes:

- | | | |
|---------------|-----------------|----------------|
| 1. Vision | 2. Honesty | 3. Integrity |
| 4. Trust | 5. Service | 6. Modelling |
| 7. Pioneering | 8. Appreciation | 9. Empowerment |

Other attributes that complement and enhance the above (but are not essential) may also include:

- | | | |
|-------------------|-----------------|-------------------|
| 10. Communication | 11. Credibility | 12. Competence |
| 13. Stewardship | 14. Visibility | 15. Influence |
| 16. Persuasion | 17. Listening | 18. Encouragement |
| 19. Teaching | 20. Delegation | |

Some of the Biblically Based Dynamics of Servant-Leadership

Essentially these are found in **1** Corinthians **13**, verses 4-8(a), James **1**, v2-8, v19-20, **3** v13-14, v17-18, and exemplified in the Gospels, and particularly in the Gospel of Luke.

Look at the pastoral ministry of Jesus as source material and consider how Jesus demonstrated the model of Servant-leadership as He ministered to people.

It wasn't the only model he used but it was certainly very evident.

So who is a Servant-leader?

Every one has the potential to be a Servant-leader. It is not a permanent role and will last only for as long as any need(s) exists. It is not a big deal and is a natural part of Christian life.

Some are Servant-leaders without recognizing it. They see a better way forward, a problem that needs resolving, an immediate need, and deal with it without any thought of self. Title, or some form of recognition or personal benefit, has nothing to do with it.

There are no courses, no certificates, no associated vestments. I would go so far as to say if you give yourself or desire the title of 'Servant-leader', you have grossly misunderstood the whole concept, not that it is the only form of leadership.

It is purely about serving God and Community in the best possible way that you can in Godly humility.

If you see something that needs doing, or the need for a change or growth in the community you are part of, then you have already taken the first step. You are already being called to this kind of service.

If so, you have a simple choice to make. Are you willing take the risk and act upon it without thought for yourself? Think on that.

+Ian

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It's that time of year again in particular when John the Baptist figures highly in the ministry of Jesus. I think we can be forgiven perhaps if we remember him because he had his head chopped off....but we all know there's a lot more to it than that! How does John fit in, where did he come from?

His name was divinely given. It was to be "John" (Lk. 1:13), which derives from a Hebrew term signifying "Jehovah is gracious."

He was known familiarly as "the Baptist" (bearing no relation to the modern sect), which simply means "a person who administers the rite of immersion" (see Mt. 3:1; 11:11; etc.).

The importance of John in the divine scheme of things probably is summed up best in the testimony of Jesus himself. "Among them that are born of women there has not arisen a greater than John the Baptist" (Mt. 11:11).

John was born to aged Jewish parents, Zacharias and Elizabeth, who were of a priestly family (Lk. 1:5). Interestingly, John's mother, Elizabeth, was related to Mary, the mother of Jesus

(Lk. 1:36). This devout couple lived in the “hill country” of Judea (Lk. 1:39), perhaps Hebron, a priestly city of the region.

Luke has a wonderful summary statement of the character of this Hebrew couple.

“And they were both righteous before God, walking in all the commandments and ordinances of the Lord blameless” (Lk. 1:6).

On the occasion of Zacharias’ exercise of his duty of burning incense in the temple at Jerusalem (a once-in-a-lifetime event for a priest), the angel Gabriel appeared to the elderly gentleman, informing him that his prayers had been heard, and that his wife would bear a son (Lk. 1:13).

One must necessarily infer that Zecharias had prayed for a son in earlier times, though Elizabeth was barren, and both of them now were advanced in age (Lk. 1:7). Clearly, John’s conception was miraculous. Incidentally, he was about six months older than Jesus (Lk. 1:26).

It was foretold that this child would be filled with the Spirit of God, even from birth, and that he would be reared under the strict code of the Nazirite (cf. Num. 6:1-21), an indication of the solemnity of his role in preparing the way for the world’s Redeemer.

The Scriptures don't say anything as to the deaths of John's parents — though *legend* has it that Zacharias was slain by Herod the Great, forcing Elizabeth to flee with her baby into the wilderness area of Judea.

Well, John the Baptist can best be summed up as the Prophet with the Old testament in one hand and the New Testament in the other. Plain but Powerful. Through his own ministry he helped make the transition from the LAW of the OT to the GRACE of the NT.

John was rather a unique individual. He wore odd clothes- his coat was made of camel hair and he ate strange food- locusts and wild honey. he preached to Judeans who flocked to see him. His message too was unusual and different, though he never wished to be considered any different from any one else but felt he must do God's work. He knew he had a part to play and OBEYED God by telling people about the coming of their Messiah.

He was so different from other preachers and leaders of his day. He was not afraid of being outspoken. he told it as it was.

He did not look for praise, only that God was praised and worshipped. he preached God's law and lived it. Not easy.....

In spite of his dishevelled appearance John spoke with amazing authority and gripped his audience. His TRUTHFUL speaking, which was quite obvious to the crowd, challenged and encouraged them to turn away from their sinful ways and REPENT of their sins. John would baptise them with water as a symbol of their repentance - being washed clean to start again, this time with God's help. He attracted many - they came in their hundreds...

God's TRUTH persuaded many to repent and others to take an instant dislike to John. Deep resentment of him and his message led to a conspiracy to kill him.

We must remember the remarkable ministry of John the Baptist included the Baptism of Jesus in the Jordan River. John did not lack boldness as he challenged even Herod to repent of his sins. In approximately 29 AD, Herod Antipas had John the Baptist arrested and put in prison. Later John was beheaded through a plot devised by Herodias, the illegal wife of Herod and ex-wife of his brother, Philip.

Clearly, God does not guarantee an easy or safe life to those of us who serve Him...!

John the Baptists LEGACY however, as we know, was massive and far reaching...

John had delivered, He had been successful. He had preached God's law and lived it.

The ONE whom John had foretold, was already on the move. John had completed his God given mission...

The Kingdom of Heaven came to Earth when God Himself entered human history as a man in the form of Jesus. Right now, Jesus lives and reigns in the hearts of Christian believers but the Kingdom will not be entire until all EVIL in the world is judged and eradicated.

John the Baptist expected people to change their attitudes and behaviour and not just utter or mutter some words of remorse. he said in effect that they, the people had to put their money where their mouth was. God looks deeper and beyond what we say to what we think and do, He knows us better than anyone, He knows the secrets of our hearts.

It's far better for us to admit and accept, then and try to do better than pretend that we have arrived...and fall short. God knows.

God's message hasn't changed - people will eventually be judged for their "unproductive" lives. I know what is meant by this and I'm sure we all do. "Agape" or sacrificial love towards others is one of the most challenging parts of a Christian's life.

How often do we feel we must help the elderly or the infirm get to coffee morning when we are growing the same way ourselves? How often would we rather be doing something else?

I'm sure Jesus felt the same way too as he struggled on a wooden cross at the hands of others - for our salvation.

DO WE PRACTISE WHAT WE PREACH - DO WE TALK THE TALK AND WALK THE WALK?

We try I'm sure...but could we try harder? I'm sure I could...but it's not easy.

How productive are we for God, I wonder?

When we come to realize that God has given us a specific purpose for our lives, we can move forward with confidence, fully trusting the One who called us. Like John the Baptist, we don't have to fear living with a radical focus on our God-given mission.

Can there be any greater joy or fulfilment in this life, than to know God's pleasure and reward awaits us in heaven?

It's not what happens to us in our lives - it's how we deal with it that matters. Undoubtedly, moments after his beheading John the Baptist must have heard his master say, "Well done!".

Standing up for the TRUTH is surely more important than life itself...

Rev David Startup, OSJ.



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Non-alcoholic wine so that children may be an active part of services if they wish.
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The Order of St James Newsletter

March 2017

faithworks
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One Church? A Lesson From Early Christianity.

A brief look at the historic development of Christianity growing from a Jewish sect to what we now know as Christianity demonstrates that it was hardly a smooth transition and fraught with division. Although unity was desired, it was substantially lacking in reality.

From the outset, it was (and still is) quite clear that 'the one Church' as a unified organizational concept was going to be unworkable although there were many attempts. Each new attempt seemed to cause more problems than it resolved.

Church unity is not something that can be agreed or 'legislated' for. There is too much in the way of power and politics for individual churches and denominations for real and lasting unity to become a reality. As a managerial or organizational top down concept it is inevitably doomed to failure because there is too much to lose, too much to give up and too many familiar practices (and prejudices) to set aside for 'the greater good'. Differences get buried rather than resolved, only to appear later and compromises inevitably produce inequalities that fester. Such a man-made unified church would always be subject to schism and would never be at peace with itself.

Until we think differently about what 'the one Church' is, nothing will change. Unity cannot be gained through, sustained or maintained by legislation alone or be forced. Perhaps it is God's way of reminding us that the ways of man are always going to be deeply flawed however well intended.

So what about 'the one Church'? Can it be a reality and has God already given us the means for this seemingly impossible task?

I believe God has. It is Spirit driven and implanted within us already.

It is much more a bottom up model, based on individual relationships between individual Christians, reaching across the differences of practice and belief, bound by the realization that we are called to love all people, especially those who disagree with the things we hold precious. It is more about 'being' rather than 'agreeing'.

It is that realization that God loves those people just as much as He loves us, and they are just as much worthy of our love as God himself is. To deny them is to deny God.

'See how they love one another,' is the defining principle. (John 13 v34-35)

Unity begins with the daily and ongoing relationships that develop between individual Christians (regardless of their denominational affiliations) and the understanding that each is bound to the other by the love and grace of God.

Denominations have their place but they have their limitations and I guess that this is something we should perhaps keep in mind in our relationships with other people. Remember, it is the Godly quality of our day to day relationships we shall be judged on by God rather than the denomination we subscribe to.

Denominations (however well intended) divide, and loving faith unifies. That's how it always has been and that is the way it seems it will always be.

Have things changed over time from those early days of Christianity? Judge for yourself but I would go as far as suggesting we are no further forward than we were when we started. We have been looking in the wrong place.

The following short perceptions by a small number of academics give personal interpretive overviews of the available historical evidence, but you may wish to do further independent research and come to your own conclusions. The abstracted material is acknowledged and ascribed where known in accordance with copyright law .

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AN ACCOUNT FROM ACTS OF THE EARLY CHRISTIAN CHURCH

Professor Harold W. Attridge: New Testament Yale Divinity School

The Book of Acts records or reports that there was a special event that took place at Pentecost, which would have been the next pilgrimage festival after the Passover at which Jesus died. And at that time the disciples of Jesus were gathered together in Jerusalem unsure of what their future would be, when all of a sudden the spirit took hold of them and enabled them to speak in tongues, and that speaking of tongues is understood by the author of the Book of Acts to mean speaking in all of the languages of the world. So with the power of the spirit behind them, the disciples of Jesus immediately began a missionary campaign and started bringing people into the fold, converting them to belief in Christ. And from that time forward the mission moved ahead in the rather smooth way, directed by the spirit and by all of the apostles who acted in concert with one another and agreement with one another.....

The historical reality is probably much more complex.

The Christian movement probably began not from a single centre but from many different centres where different groups of disciples of Jesus gathered and tried to make sense of what they had experienced with him and what had happened to him at the end of his public ministry.

Each of those groups probably had a very different take on what the significance of Jesus was. Some of them understanding his death and the resurrection experience, if they focused on it, in terms of exaltation. Others understanding it in terms of a resuscitation of the corpse of Jesus, others not worrying very much at all about the resurrection of Jesus, but concentrating on his teaching and trying to propagate that.

We can see, even in the canonical text, in the Book of Acts, that there were different groups that were in competition with one another. Those who insisted more strongly on observance of Jewish laws in the Torah competed with those who were more open to admission of gentiles without imposing the burden of the Torah on them.

There were others who we meet again in the Book of Acts, who apparently stood in continuity with the activity of John the Baptist and did not know the baptism that the Pauline Christians, at least, knew. So there was much more diversity in the early stages of the Christian movement than the Book of Acts suggest....

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EARLY "CHRISTIANITIES" OF THE 2ND AND 3RD CENTURIES

Holland Lee Hendrix: President, Faculty Union Theological Seminary

Christianity, or one would rather say "Christianities," of the second and third centuries were a highly variegated phenomenon. We really can't imagine Christianity as a unified coherent religious movement. Certainly there were some religious organizations.... There were institutions developing in some Christian churches, but only in some. And this was not universal by any means. We know from, for example, the literature recovered at Nag Hammadi, that Gnostic Christianity didn't have the kind of clear hierarchy that other forms of Christianity had developed. They still clung to a charismatic leadership model. And so there was a lot of variety in 2nd and 3rd century Christianity....

There were very different views of Jesus in the various types of Christianity.... Perhaps the starkest contrast was among those who considered themselves as Gnostic Christians, and those who considered themselves Christians in the old Pauline view of things.

On the one hand, Paul, and Pauline Christianity, would have placed all of the emphasis on Jesus' death and resurrection, and the saving power of that death and resurrection.

Gnostic Christianity, on the other hand, would have placed its prime emphasis on the message, the wisdom, the knowledge, the gnosis, that's where the word Gnostic comes from, the Greek word for knowledge, the knowledge that Jesus transmits, and even the secret knowledge that Jesus transmits.

So one would have on the one hand faith in the saving event of Jesus' life and death, and on the other hand knowledge as the great source of adherence to the Jesus movement on the other hand.

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DIVERSITY IN EARLY CHRISTIAN COMMUNITIES

*Professor Helmut Koester: New Testament Studies and Ecclesiastical History
Harvard Divinity School*

Christianity did not start out as a unified movement. We have to remember that the disciples were probably dispersed at a very early time.... That is, at a time where there was no fixed formulation what the set of Christian beliefs should be. What Christian rituals should be. What they should think about Jesus or what they should tell about Jesus. The sources that we have tell us that Christianity started as a very diverse movement, as the founding of churches... moved into very different cultural and language contexts....

Paul's conversion as an apostle to the gentiles may date as early as three years after Jesus' death. No later than the year 35, but probably already 32 or 33.... He was in Damascus when he was called, according to his own witness. So we have, already, within two years or three or five years, of Jesus' death probably Greek speaking communities outside of Palestine, very early in Antioch, but we have also the founding of communities in Samaria.... We have apparently more isolated Christian communities founded very early in Galilee. Paul's mission carried Christianity all the way over Asia Minor, present Turkey into Macedonia, into Greece, within 20 years. And at the end of that period, Paul already knows that there's a Christian community in Rome which he has not founded.

With this explosive spread of Christian churches, not a very slow moderate growth, getting a few new members every few years, but an explosive spread of this movement, it cannot be expected that everywhere, everybody was doing and believing the same thing, singing the same hymns and reading the same scriptures and telling the same story.

So we have a beginning with great diversity, and the slow process, particularly in the second century, to establish a greater unity among the very diverse churches.

Already a process in Paul's churches themselves, because that's why Paul writes letters, because he wants to make sure that these newly converted Christians in Ephesus and Philippi and Thessalonica and in Corinth have some unanimity in their beliefs. And his work is made even more difficult because once he had left Corinth, some people came to Corinth and told them, "Really Paul has not told you enough of the deep wisdom of the words of Jesus.

Those you have to contemplate in order to learn the wisdom that comes from Jesus," and Paul has to write back and say, "Now, I taught you nothing but Christ crucified, not Christ wisdom." So you get a conflict of different traditions also at a very early stage.

One interesting problem is simply the experience of diversity. We sometimes think that it's just such a shame that we have so many Christian denominations and so many other religions all in one country. "Wouldn't it be great if we have only one belief and one religion as it was in the time of the early Christians?"

No, it wasn't in the time of the early Christians.

The early Christians had a hard time to discuss with each other, fight with each other to establish certain patterns and criteria for the organization of community, what was important in the churches. Was it indeed important that churches established mutual responsibility for each other and care for the poor as part of their dossier? This is what they're supposed to do.

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REGIONAL DIVERSITY

L. Michael White: Professor/Director Religious Studies Program, University of Texas at Austin

We tend to think of the success of Christianity in the second and third centuries just on the eve on really when it becomes the prominent religion in the Roman

Empire as if it were just one form of religiosity, when in fact the opposite is true. Christianity was extremely diverse during this period, and we probably ought to think of it as a kind of regional diversity; that is, the Christianity of Rome was different than Christianity in North Africa in certain ways, and that was different from what we find in Egypt, and that different from what we find in Syria or back in Palestine.

We have, in effect, different brands of Christianity living often side by side, even in the same city. So, it's a great deal of diversity.

At one point in Rome,... Justin Martyr has his Christian school in one part of the city, and the Gnostic teacher Valentinus is in another school in Rome, and another so-called heretic by the name of Marcion is also in Rome just down the street somewhere.

All of these along side of the official papal tradition that developed as part of St. Peter's See in Rome, all there together. So, even within one city, we can have great diversity.

Now, what's significant about this diversity is the fact that each form of Christian tradition tended to tell the story of Jesus in different ways. The image of Jesus for Justin Martyr is rather different than that that we see for Valentinus or Marcion or others as well. And this is especially true even in other parts of the empire.

This is where we start to see a kind of proliferation of gospels ... all over the empire, and by the third and early fourth century [more] than you can actually count, and certainly more than you can easily read within a bible.

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INTERNAL SCHISMS AND THE DRIVE FOR UNITY

Professor Wayne A. Meeks: Biblical Studies Yale University

Now, the early Christians put a great emphasis upon unity amongst one another, and the odd thing is they seemed always to have been squabbling with one another over what kind of unity they were to have. The earliest documents

we have are Paul's letters and what do we find there? He is, ever and again, having defend himself against some other Christians who have come in and said, "No, Paul didn't tell it right. We have now to tell you the real thing."

So, it is clear from the very beginning of Christianity, that there are different ways of interpreting the fundamental message. There are different kinds of practice; there are arguments over how Jewish are we to be; how Greek are we to be; how do we adapt to the surrounding culture - what is the real meaning of the death of Jesus, how important is the death of Jesus? Maybe it's the sayings of Jesus that are really the important thing and not his death and not his resurrection.

Now, this runs very contrary to the view... which the mainstream Christianity has always quite understandably wanted to convey. That is, that at the beginning, everything was unity, everything was clear, everything was understandable and only gradually, under outside influences, heresies arose and conflict resulted, so that we must get back somehow to that Golden Age, when everything was okay.

One of the most difficult things which has emerged from modern historical scholarship, is precisely that that Golden Age eludes us. The harder we work to try to arrive at that first place where Christianity, were all one and everything was clear, the more it... seems a will-o'- the-wisp.

There never was this pure Christianity, different from everybody else and clear, in its contours....

The interesting thing about Christianity is that you have diversity from the beginning, and each of the diverse groups feel so keenly about their way of seeing things that obviously, they'd like everybody else to agree with them....

There seems to be a sense, [among] all of the various parties that somehow, it ought to be one group; it ought to be one people. Obviously, they inherit this from Judaism, the notion that there is one people of God, ... and yet, they're not one, they're different on all kinds of things. And the drive to obtain the truth and to manifest the truth is so strong that if one group cannot convince the others that their way is right, often times, it seems the only thing they can do is

separate, to make sure that the truth is embodied somewhere. And so the very drive for unity produces schism, and... quite ironically, the very existence of all the different schisms is testimony to the sense that there ought to be unity.

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Summary - Fr. Ian

For whatever reason, unity among all Christians seems to be the elusive goal we all seek but churches, committees and working parties seem unable to achieve things at an official level. There are just too many doctrinal, canonical and historical differences to make anything lasting practical. There is also the problems of personal power and internal church or group politics that is often more difficult to identify but it remains ever present. People can make their own will appear to be of God, even to the point of deceiving themselves.

The main problem seems to be how we interpret the idea of 'the one church' and/or church unity.

Some people think unity means being the same. This is often the case when you hear people talking about church unity. Church unity is often couched in terms of 'we want you to be like us,' or even 'if you want to be in our gang then these are the rules'. Hardly a credible base for genuine dialogue.

I believe St Paul may have been well aware of this when he wrote his first letter to the Corinthians, especially when we look at chapter 12.

Unity and Diversity in the Body

¹² Just as a body, though one, has many parts, but all its many parts form one body, so it is with Christ. ¹³ For we were all baptized by one Spirit so as to form one body—whether Jews or Gentiles, slave or free—and we were all given the one Spirit to drink. ¹⁴ Even so the body is not made up of one part but of many.

¹⁵ Now if the foot should say, “Because I am not a hand, I do not belong to the body,” it would not for that reason stop being part of the body. ¹⁶ And if the ear should say, “Because I am not an eye, I do not belong to the body,” it would not for that reason stop being part of the body. ¹⁷ If the whole body were an eye, where would the sense of hearing be? If the whole body were an ear, where would the sense of smell be? ¹⁸ But in fact God has placed the parts in the body, every one of them, just as he wanted them to be. ¹⁹ If they were all one part, where would the body be? ²⁰ As it is, there are many parts, but one body.

²¹ The eye cannot say to the hand, “I don’t need you!” And the head cannot say to the feet, “I don’t need you!” ²² On the contrary, those parts of the body that seem to be weaker are indispensable, ²³ and the parts that we think are less honourable we treat with special honour. And the parts that are un-presentable are treated with special modesty, ²⁴ while our presentable parts need no special treatment. But God has put the body together, giving greater honour to the parts that lacked it, ²⁵ so that there should be no division in the body, but that its parts should have equal concern for each other. ²⁶ If one part suffers, every part suffers with it; if one part is honoured, every part rejoices with it.

²⁷ Now you are the body of Christ, and each one of you is a part of it. ²⁸ And God has placed in the church first of all apostles, second prophets, third teachers, then miracles, then gifts of healing, of helping, of guidance, and of different kinds of tongues. ²⁹ Are all apostles? Are all prophets? Are all teachers? Do all work miracles? ³⁰ Do all have gifts of healing? Do all speak in tongues? Do all interpret? ³¹ Now eagerly desire the greater gifts.

Paul certainly highlights and celebrates 'difference' but in the context of a unified body.

He then goes on to the famous passages describing what love is particularly covering some key areas that if left unattended would result in lasting division (see in particular 13v 4 - 8). He also by implication covers issues of spiritual power bases. 1 Corinthians 13 v 1 - 3 is an ever present warning regarding the deadness of spiritual superiority of both individuals and churches.

There was also analogy of the relationship between husband and wife representing the relationship between Christ and His church. (Note the use of 'His church' rather than 'the church'.)

We have a text from the OSJ marriage service that *'Unity does not mean being the same. Unity is a oneness based on the freely given recognition of each person as an individual by the other, accepting the right to think and respond differently to different situations, but always protecting, strengthening and encouraging the relationship'.*

You can't get more different than a man and a woman - they see things differently, have different needs and priorities, think differently and behave differently, but it is their loving relationship that binds them together.

You don't have to give too much thought to the impossibility of a relationship between husband and wife being governed by external committees.

I would certainly suggest that this simple text from the OSJ marriage service holds the key to what church unity is really about, and it doesn't start with committees and working parties but with individuals coming together to celebrate their shared relationship with God. It starts with two people accepting one another as equally loved by God and then accepting and occasionally celebrating their differences without letting these things come between them. This is simple the heart of unity in the Church.

Relationships are more important than rules although rules have their place. It seems that mutual respect is a good place to start, and that being different doesn't have to mean being divided.

I believe that there is already 'one church' and that church unity already exists.

It is not something that can be legislated for.

It is essentially a grass roots movement and should remain so if it is to succeed. It puts a slightly different and quite global slant on the words 'Love never fails', whereas any joint resolution that needs putting to a vote will almost certainly be doomed to eventual failure.

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Love is.....? John 3.16

Rev David Startup, OSJ

A simple word of four letters generally used in so many ways from the love of riding a bike, a certain book, the love of a certain person - love of a certain type of beer - to a nap in the afternoon.

What does the Oxford dictionary say that Love is.....?

Well, I looked and was quite amazed at the way the word "Love" was actually dealt with.

There were so many examples of its use in everyday language but nowhere did it seem to identify what Love actually is...all the explanations seemed so "wishy washy". Plenty of examples though.....

I'm sure it went on in the past and even today some of those who wish to be dismissive of the Christian, suggest that we are a bunch of narcissists, do gooders to look good - and those unable to stand on their own two feet and have to have something or someone to hang on to.

So let's have a look at the Bible then:

Outside of a dictionary based definition there is an example of a CONSEQUENCE of love in John 3.16: For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life - and another example of Love in

ATTITUDES - 1 Corinthians 13 4 - 8 Love is patient , Love is kind.....

Frankly, we can practise most "good things" but if we do not do it with Love - then it is meaningless. Hence Duty v Love. To keep it simple then we go back to the Bible.

Well even there, four types of Love are mentioned - Phileo, brotherly love, Eros, erotic love Storge, love between family members and last but not least "Agape" God's love.

Agape Love is the type of love used most often in the New Testament. It is a word soaking up all the good things of Christianity - into God's love. It expresses a love which is sacrificial, totally unconditional and selfless.

A E Vine in his Expository Dictionary describes Agape Love beautifully:

"Agape expresses the deep and constant love and interest of a perfect being towards entirely unworthy objects, producing and fostering a reverential love in them towards the Giver, and a practical love towards those who are partakers of the same and a desire to help others to seek the giver. Simple.....In words, that we can understand.....

God loves us so deeply His heart aches for us, whether we feel for Him or not but He helps and encourages us to love Him in return, to love other Christians and to love all people in His world so as to bring them to Him as well. To love God in this way means living to please Him by putting Him first in our lives. To truly love God with all our being is the greatest commandment of all. Matthew 22.36

Agape Love is the most important.....

Do we practise agape then. There is only so much I/we even as Christians can take.....

Only two people put agape into practise 100% and we all know who that is. Having said that Jesus practised it too.

Love is so very very important in our lives - that cannot be emphasised enough- it is the result of all the spiritual "fruits" of God's Kingdom.

Knowing about all we do, giving all we have to the poor, helping Maggie to coffee morning on a Wednesday, visiting George who is quite poorly and going to four funerals in three weeks to support the bereaved and pay our respect, for just a few means nothing if we do not have love. Perhaps...and only perhaps....do we do things because we feel it's our duty or because we have love, or do the two go hand in hand - I'm not sure, what do you think?

When we actually do things for others that we personally do not want to do, is it Agape, duty, the fear of being thought badly of, or what? God knows. Only God knows.

Perhaps we do it because in our hearts we know that God wants us to do, whatever we do. And we do it because we love God.

If we don't, for how long will we feel guilty? How often do we breathe a sigh of relief when we are excused from doing something because circumstances out of our control have changed. Jesus obeyed his father to the letter. That gives me much food for thought.

Agape love is different then. *It is not a feeling*; it's a motivation for action that we are actually free to choose or reject. *Agape* is a sacrificial love that voluntarily suffers inconvenience to convenience others, discomfort to afford comfort to others - and in the case of Jesus even death for the benefit of another - expecting nothing in return. We are called to practise *agape* love, because Jesus practised it.

Indeed in the bible is said

Ephesians 5 Follow God's example therefore, as dearly loved children, and walk in the way of **love**, just as Christ **loved** us and gave himself up for us as a fragrant offering and sacrifice to God.

1 Corinthians 13 I think is the New Testament chapter on love, but there is no book that speaks more about *agape love* than 1 John - from which two important themes arise.

Firstly - is that it is not acceptable to claim we have *agape* love for God while not having it (*agape love*) for other believers. We cannot love God without loving brothers and sisters who also love Him.

The second is that it is not acceptable to have *agape* love for God if we don't **obey** Him.

It is clearly absolutely impossible to love God while ignoring what He says and going our own way - doing our own thing. The two are absolutely bound together and cannot be pulled apart, as Galatians 5:14 says: "For the whole law is fulfilled in one word: 'You shall **love** your neighbour as yourself.'"

Love for God and others must be the motivating force behind all our work for God.

We all need A pure heart A good conscience A sincere faith

God's love is that golden thread that binds and holds together the whole church, which is the body of our Lord Jesus Christ. We need to continue to work at this with increasing thoughtfulness, encouragement and selflessness. At times of heightened sensitivity in the life of any church we need to be even more sensitive to the needs, words and actions of others..... and ourselves.

Love put to the test. Agape Love.

God is patient with each and every fault each and every one of us has - and we should be patient with ourselves and with others, asking our Lord to sort whatever it is out and to forgive us - which He has already done before we ask.

Where would we be without a forgiving God? Hebrews 9:27-28

A forgiving spirit is what we must have in our hearts even before the person who has wronged us says he or she is sorry. Only Jesus is perfect.

Perhaps we all fail sometimes, especially in the area of relationships. We must look for the best, the good in people, rather than their faults and practise patience with those who have weaknesses and on that one, let's remember to look in the mirror too.

When fellowship for whatever reason breaks down amongst believers each one of us is responsible to act.

God wants everyone restored to a rightful place with him. Things don't right themselves. We are instrumental in encouraging people back to unity with each other and GOD .

Let us not forget. Because we practise "Agape Love" for God, we must share it with others.

Being a Christian is far from easy - I bet Jesus thought that too whilst hanging undeservedly and in absolute agony from a wooden Cross that Good Friday.

Christianity was born three days later with his resurrection.

Here we are today Christian Disciples practising Agape Love - Do we improve the more we learn and get to know Jesus?

As individuals - Just how Christ-like are we?

Amen.

Rev David Startup, OSJ

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Matthew 17 v 1 - 9

Unice Brierley, OSJ

The event we have just read about must have been very significant for the three disciples. Jesus had picked these three out and taken them up a high mountain and on it their perspective of Jesus must have changed completely.

Tradition says that it was Mount Tabor they were up. It is possible the choice is based on the mention of Mount Tabor in Psalm 89 verse 12, this is unfortunate as apparently Mount Tabor is in the South of Galilea and Caesarea Philippi where Jesus was is away to the north. Tabor is no more than 1,000 feet and in the time of Jesus there was a fort on the top.

The nearest mountain to where they were is Mount Harmon which is 9,200 feet high, the solitude would be much more complete there.

It is one of the great mysteries of Jesus' life as to what really happened there, and we can only bow in reverence and try to understand.

Matthew tells us that his garments became radiant glistening gleaming like burnished gold or polished steel. When the incident came to an end a cloud overshadowed them.

In Jewish history, when they talk about the power of God, he always came in a cloud.

The transfiguration did something very precious for Jesus. Jesus had to make his own decisions.

He had taken the decision to go to Jerusalem, to face and accept the cross, but he had to be sure that it was right before he could go on. On the mountain top he received double approval of his decision.

Moses and Elijah met with Jesus. Moses having been the supreme law giver of Israel To him the nation owed the laws of God and Elijah the greatest prophet. People always looked back to him as their prophet who brought to them the very voice of God. When these two figures met with Jesus, it meant the greatest of the law-givers and the greatest prophet said to him “Go on” It meant that they saw Jesus the consummation of all that they had dreamed of in the past. It meant that they saw in him what history had longed for and hoped for and looked forward to. It is as if at that moment Jesus was assured that he was on the right way because all history had been leading up to the cross.

God spoke with Jesus. As always Jesus did not consult his own wishes.

He went to God and said “What will you have me do” He put all his plans and intentions before God. And God said “You are acting as my own beloved Son should act and must act. Go on”. On the mountain of transfiguration Jesus was assured that he had not chosen the wrong way. He saw only the inevitability but the essential rightness of the cross.

It must have been a tremendous moment having confirmed that what he was doing was his fathers' will. And it did something very precious for the disciples.

They had been shattered at his statement that he was going to Jerusalem to die.

It seemed the complete opposite to what they understood of the Messiah. Weren't they, still rather hoping for someone to conquer the Romans, but what they had seen and heard was breaking their hearts.

What they had seen and heard on the mountain would give them something to hang onto even when they could not understand the Cross.

But Cross or no cross they had heard God's voice acknowledge Jesus as His Son and for the moment they had to keep this knowledge to themselves. Until the time was right.

.Have you ever had a mountain top experience through actually climbing or walking up a mountain, say in the Lake District, and the breathtaking views of God's creation take your breath away, you have experienced the wonders of God and his Universe.

Equally you may have been at a meeting or conference and the subject discussed have brought it home to you the wonders of Jesus and why he came to this planet and why he is calling us to declare his glory.

We don't have to keep it to ourselves like Peter, James and John had. Jesus had gone through the process, he died on the cross and rose again so that we can proclaim his wonders and work for his promised coming again.

We know there will be times when we are down in the depths, but are assured that whatever position we find ourselves in God is walking all the way with us.

In the mountain top experience the disciples, Peter for one, see clearly who Jesus is hence his unfortunate remarks about erecting three tents.

Mountaintop experiences are, in every sense high points.

Mark's readers would remember the story of Mount Sinai where Moses received the law, and how on descending from the mountain his face was radiant because he had been in the holy presence. They would remember how Elijah had waited on a mountainside in the cleft of a rock for God to pass by and how God spoke in a whisper. God more often than not speaks to us in a whisper, How often do we miss it, or ignore it.

When Jesus took the disciples up the mountain they probably weren't expecting anything new as Jesus often drew apart from the crowds into the hills to spend time in prayer talking to his Father in heaven, But Matthew plunges them and us into a dazzling supernatural experience where Jesus is transfigured before their eyes.

Did the disciples hear the conversation between Jesus, Moses and Elijah this we shall never know. Luke in his description of the scene has them falling asleep at one point.

In the previous chapter there is a moment of seeing when Peter declares that Jesus is the Christ and is warned to keep it secret. Jesus predicts his suffering and death and Peter contradicts him. Jesus teaches that true discipleship means taking up our cross and following him.

We learn from Luke that they had discussed with Jesus his exodus, his departure, to be fulfilled in Jerusalem. When people would be freed from the tyranny of sin able to enter into God's promises to complete the work the law and the prophet had begun – the salvation of humankind. The disciples would have loved to stay on basking in the glory, but they and we have to move on.

Our understanding of Jesus develops and changes. In childhood it is easy to accept the loving friend of children. In adolescence, doubts questions and problems of street cred may divert us. What launches us on the Christian journey or brings us back to it. A person? A conversation? An experience? Looking back we discern how God was with us. Throughout our lives, in low as well as high points.

Are we prepared to see Jesus differently as our perspectives changes? Accounts by people who have lost their sight and then have recovered it, show how they see things in a new way. Now they appreciate the wonder and the glory. Did Peter James and John feel that on the mountain.

How has our faith journey grown, with very many ups and downs, high experiences of God being with us and low disheartening happenings which, at times, have made us wonder about our faith. I know I have over my life, but I have always found that whatever the situation. God was there beside me. Do you remember the poem Footsteps ----- When there were two sets of footprints in the sand, but at times only one, when Jesus had carried them over the difficult times.

Peter voiced his desire to prolong the vision, it was probably the first thing that came into his head, but it was inappropriate. All that dazzling glory was scary, contained, tamed, domesticated.

When we experience wonder, glory or insight, we too, want to keep hold of it. We might have said "Let me get the camera. May we take it in turns to stand beside you? The special moments are signs of God's glory – in and around us always, but generally unnoticed, unappreciated.

Remembering them increases our faith and gives strength and inspiration in difficult times of trial or doubt. Like the disciples we may not share them until much later, if at all, because these precious moments may have no meaning for others or may arouse jealousy and scepticism.

On the mountain top the three Disciples cannot hold on to the God's glory They had been privileged to see what Jesus is really about. He will walk the "via dolorosa" He will suffer and die but his truth, as John's gospel makes clear, is the true moment of glory. Privilege though it was for them to have this foretaste, it is a hard lesson for us, as we leave the Epiphany and approach Lent. They and we must come down, go out and walk the way of costly love, with Jesus

Are we so confident in our faith that we can go out and proclaim our faith as the disciples did eventually after Jesus had risen from the dead. We in the season of Lent, help us to understand and proclaim its true meaning.

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Matthew 21 v 1 – 11

Mark 11 v 1 – 11

I would like you to imagine you are in Capernaum 2000 years ago a couple of weeks before the Passover, everyone was hustling about packing what they will need on the long walk to Jerusalem.

Imagine the excitement and trepidation at being away from their villages for so long. Jesus and his disciples are among the pilgrims.

Everyone sets off in good spirits it is a holiday for the majority of people, but Jesus knew that it would be his last journey amongst them and he took the opportunity to spend as much time as possible on the journey teaching

People travelled this way as it wasn't safe to travel through the Jordan valley and over the Judean mountains on their own, it was a case of safety in numbers.

Jesus spent the time healing and teaching, also each night praying to his Father for strength and peace. On his way he healed Bartimaeus the blind beggar, also he called Zacchaeus down from the tree and had a meal with him, all the time he knew he was walking to his death.

He also knew the crowd were expecting him to ride into Jerusalem and vanquish the Roman army, that is what they expected the Messiah to do, he must have anguished on how he was to approach the situation so that his followers would know the real meaning of his work and teaching.

Nearing the end of his journey they approached the village of Bethany, Jesus sent two of his disciples into the village to bring him the young donkey they would find there.

As we read, the disciples ask what they had to say if they were questioned about the colt. and the answer they had to give was "The master needs it" all this had been previously arranged,

They must have, by this time become used to being given impossible things to do, and finding them possible if only they trusted.

They had, for example acquired food to feed 5,000 and had cast their nets in a barren sea and made a wonderful catch of fish.

The colt they brought had never been ridden upon. That was fitting for an animal to be used for a sacred purpose it must never have been used for any other purpose.

As the crowd approached Jerusalem, coats were put on the donkey 's back and Jesus was helped onto the young probably frightened donkey, seeing this the other Galileans quickly understood what was happening and quickly took of their coats and spread them in front of the donkey.

The aching walkers forgot their aches and pains and quickly joined in the procession laying down their cloaks and breaking branches off the nearby trees and laying them down, making a colourful carpet for the donkey to walk over.

They sang a song about a victorious king, returning in triumph to the City of Jerusalem. The identity of their King was quite clear, this tall man riding a small donkey.

As Jesus looked towards the hostile city he said quietly under he breath, “O Jerusalem If you only knew, today could bring you peace, but your eyes are blind.

The whole picture is of a people who misunderstood. It shows a crowd of people thinking of kingship in the terms of conquest in which they had thought of it for so long.

It is oddly reminiscent of how Simon Maccabaeus entered Jerusalem 150 years before after he had defeated Israel's enemies. It was a conqueror's welcome they sought to give to Jesus, but they never dreamed of the kind of conqueror he wishes to be.

As Jesus entered Jerusalem on the colt, the very shouts and spreading their garments, breaking branches of palms trees on his path, the very hymns they were singing and greetings reflected on this “Blessed is the one who comes in the name of the Lord” is from Psalm 118.

They should have realised that in their time a conquering King rode astride a horse, but when a King came riding a donkey it meant he had come in peace. The pilgrims to Jerusalem on that day were very slow to assimilate this.

As Jesus rode through the streets on the donkey to the cheers of the crowds, there must have been the beginnings of murmurings against him which so quickly, just days later, rose to a cry for his death.

When we become aware of voices speaking out against a good person, do we have the courage to stand up for them or do we keep our heads down? As the people who had been cheering Jesus obviously did.

How would we have reacted when the extermination of Jews began in the thirties or if we had lived through apartheid in South Africa?

The only thing necessary for evil to flourish is for good men to do nothing.

Jesus had obviously chosen carefully how he would make his entrance into the Holy City, he clearly knew that the way in which he did it would speak as loudly as any words he might say at this point.

Choosing a donkey was highly significant and becomes a prophetic sign that he comes in peace.

Sometimes what people do shouts so loudly that we cannot hear what they say, we might think of the politician whose marriage is a sham talking about family values, or the driver of a huge gas guzzler talking about the dangers of global warming.

I'm sure you will be able to think of many other situations like these but beware it is always easier to spot these failings in other people than in ourselves.

At the end of the Palm Sunday reading we are left with the whole city in turmoil and the puzzled question “WHO IS THIS” hanging in the air. The crowd's reply that he is the prophet Jesus from Nazareth is only half the answer - We have to wait until Matthew's account of the crucifixion to hear the Roman centurion say “Truly this man was the Son of God” for each of us as for the centurion, the question still remains a personal one; Who do we say Jesus is.

If we HAD been there, what WOULD we have thought, would we have gone with the crowd, I suspect so, But 2000 years on, How do we approach this time of the year.

Palm Sunday is a very important day of the year, it is the beginning of Holy Week, the week leading up to Jesus; betrayal crucifixion and resurrection.

Are we spending our time preparing ourselves for this event, or are we among the crowd the Jews had rounded up to call for his Crucifixion.

If Jesus arrived in this manner today, would we be among the pilgrims welcoming him, as they did when he was riding into Jerusalem, or would we be with the Pharisees shouting hooligans , and calling for the police.

This sounds ridiculous I know, but have we given it much thought are we prepared to shout Hosannas and sing praises, or are we on the side lines ridiculing him.

Only we can answer that and I can only pray that you are fully on my side shouting Hosannas at the tops of our voices. As the chorus of the hymn in Songs of Fellowship rings out

Hosanna to the Son of David,
Hosanna to the King of Kings
Glory in the highest heaven
for Jesus the Messiah reigns.

I leave you with these thoughts!!

Unice Brierley, OSJ

-oOo-

THE PARABLES IN THE GOSPELS.

A quick and easy guide to finding the appropriate parable in the Gospels.

Compiled by Ken Murray - <http://www.churchathome.org/articles/70-parable-of-jesus-christ.html>

| Parable | Matthew | Mark | Luke | John |
|---|-------------------|---------------|--------------|--------------|
| Blowing wind like God's Spirit | | | | John 3:8 |
| Fields ripe for harvest | | | | John 4:35-38 |
| Our need of a Physician to reach God's Kingdom | Matthew 9:12-13, | Mark 2:17, | Luke 5:31-32 | |
| Bridegroom and Fasting | Matthew 9:14-17, | Mark 2:18-20, | Luke 5:33-35 | |
| No good to put new patch on old clothing | Matthew 9:16, | Mark 2:21, | Luke 5:36 | |
| New wine into new wineskins | Matthew 9:17, | Mark 2:22, | Luke 5:37-38 | |
| Like Father like Son | | | | John 5:19-20 |
| Know them by their fruits | Matthew 7:16_23, | Luke 6:39-45 | | |
| Build house on rock not sand | Matthew 7:24-27, | Luke 6:45-49 | | |
| John the Baptist – blowing reed? Soft clothing? | Matthew 11:16-19, | | Luke 7:31-35 | |

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|--|-------------------|------------------------|----------------|--|
| Wisdom's children | Matthew 11:18-19 | | | |
| Creditor & 2 Debtors – forgiveness great & small | | | Luke 7:40-47 | |
| Divided kingdom & house cannot stand | Matthew 12:25-29, | Mark 3:23-27, 14:28-33 | Luke 11:14-26) | |
| Demons can influence some people who allow them | Matthew 12:43-45 | | | |
| Sower of seed, for Kingdom of God on Earth | Matthew 13:1-23, | Mark 4:1-20, | Luke 8:4-15 | |
| Be like a city set on a hill | Matt. 5:14 | | | |
| Let your light shine | Matthew 5:15-16, | Mark 4:21-25, | Luke 8:16-18 | |
| Mystery of the seed growing for the patient husbandman | | Mark:26-29 | | |
| Mustard seed like Kingdom of God to come | Matthew 13:31-32, | Mark 4:30-34, | Luke 13:18-19) | |
| Yeast leaven like God's coming Kingdom | Matthew 13:33, | | Luke 13:20-21 | |

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|--|-------------------|--------------|---------------|--------------|
| Mystery of the hidden treasure | Matthew 13:44 | | | |
| Pearl of great price revealed | Matthew 13:45-46 | | | |
| Net cast into the sea, gathering people to God's coming Kingdom on Earth | Matthew 13:47-50 | | | |
| Householder scribe with old and new treasure | Matthew 13:51-52 | | | |
| Blind leading the blind | Matthew 15:14-20, | Mark 7:14-23 | | |
| Servant forgiven much did not forgive little | Matthew 18:23-25 | | | |
| Servant of sin freed by repentance and forgiveness through Jesus | | | | John 8:35 |
| Good Shepherd doorkeeper and false shepherd hirelings | | | | John 10:1-18 |
| Good Samaritan | | | Luke 10:25-37 | |
| Friend in need at midnight – ask and it shall be given | | | Luke 11:5-8 | |

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|--|----------------------|----------------|------------------|--|
| Ask, Seek, Knock on God's door and it will open for you | | | Luke 11:9-10 | |
| Our loving Father who provides our needs | | | Luke 11:11-13 | |
| Foolish rich man | | | Luke 12:13-22 | |
| Ravens provided their needs by God, just like us | | | Luke 12:23-24 | |
| Thief in the night – always be prepared | Matthew 24:42-51, | Mark 13:34, | Luke 12:35-40 | |
| Fruitless fig tree needing feeding with wholesome fertiliser | | | Luke 13:6-9 | |
| The narrow or difficult gate to find | | | Luke 13:24 | |
| Closed door to unrepentant people who want to sin against God's laws | | | Luke 13:25-30 | |
| Humility in taking the lowest seat not grabbing the best seat | | | Luke 14:7-14 | |

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|---|-------------------|------------|---------------|--|
| Called to the Wedding Banquet | Matthew 22:1-14 | | | |
| Counting the cost of how we build | | | Luke 14:28-33 | |
| Salt that is good and salt that loses value and taste | Matthew 5:13, | Mark 9:50, | Luke 14:34-35 | |
| Become as little children to enter the Kingdom of God | Matthew 18:3-6 | | | |
| Offensive hands and eyes spiritually speaking | Matthew 18:7-9 | | | |
| Lost sheep – watching out for the lost 1 in 100 | Matthew 18:12-14, | | Luke 15:1-7 | |
| Lost coin of 8 symbolic of one sinner who repents | | | Luke 15:8-10 | |
| The prodigal rebellious son and our loving God our Father | | | Luke 15:11-32 | |
| Unjust Steward manager of his employer | | | Luke 16:1-18 | |

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|---|-----------------|--|---------------|--------------|
| Rich man and Lazarus the humble poor man | | | Luke 16:19-31 | |
| Birds of the air are fed by God | Matthew 6:25-26 | | | |
| Consider the Lilies and amazing flowers God has created | Matthew 6:28-30 | | | |
| Faith as a grain of mustard seed | | | Luke 17:6 | |
| Profitable and unprofitable servants | | | Luke 17:7-10 | |
| Make the most of your 12 waking hours of daylight | | | | John 11:9-10 |
| Importuning persistent widow before the unjust Judge | | | Luke 18:1-8 | |
| Self-righteous Pharisee & repentant humble Tax Collector pray in the Temple | | | Luke 18:9-14 | |
| Vineyard workers fair day's pay | Matthew 20:1-6 | | | |

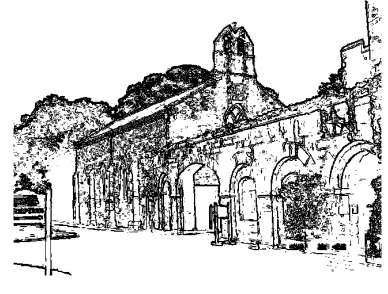
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|---|-------------------|----------------|---------------|---------------|
| Ten servants given a pound to be profitable to God | | | Luke 19:11-27 | |
| Comparison of the wheat kernel that dies to produce many good kernels | | | | John 12:23-25 |
| Walk in God's light not in the darkness of Satan, this world and human nature | | | | John 12:35-36 |
| Two sons – one faithful the other unfaithful and rebellious | Matthew 21:28-32 | | | |
| Wicked servants in God's vineyard | Matthew 21:33-46, | Mark 12:1-12, | Luke 20:9-19 | |
| Vultures and the carcass | Matthew 24:28, | | Luke 17:34 | |
| Fig tree seasons like seasons of prophecy | Matthew 24:32-35, | Mark 13:28-29, | Luke 21:29-31 | |
| Ten Virgins who slept – 5 wise & 5 foolish before Jesus return to Earth | Matthew 25:1-13 | | | |

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|--|------------------|--|--|---------------|
| Parable of the servants given five, two, and one talents | Matthew 25:14-30 | | | |
| Sheep and the Goats of the nations to be separated at Christ's return | Matthew 25:31-46 | | | |
| Christ preparing positions of Office for faithful in God's coming Kingdom | | | | John 14:2-4 |
| Jesus is the Vine and we are the branches | | | | John 15:1-8 |
| Woman in childbirth is similar to us going through trials to God's Kingdom | | | | John 16:20-22 |



St Leonard's Chapel,
Hazlewood Castle, Yorkshire,
LS24 9NJ

OSJ Services 2017



Take place on the FIRST and THIRD Sundays of each month at 6.00 p.m.

Services, unless otherwise stated take the form of a short and very gentle communion service lasting between 20 and 30 minutes.

All are very welcome and all may receive.

1st January, 2017

5th February, 2017

5th March, 2017

2nd April, 2017

7th May, 2017

4th June, 2017

2nd July, 2017

6th August, 2017

3rd September, 2017

1st October, 2017

5th November, 2017

3rd December, 2017

15th January, 2017

19th February, 2017

19th March, 2017

16th April, 2017

21st May, 2017

18th June, 2017

16th July, 2017

20th August, 2017

17th September, 2017

15th October, 2017

19th November, 2017

17th December, 2017

Non-alcoholic wine so that children may be an active part of services if they wish.

There is no requirement to be baptized or confirmed.

Additional Services:

Remembrance Sunday: 12th November 10.35 a.m.

Midnight Mass: 24th December 11.20 p.m.

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|  | <p>The Order of St James Newsletter</p> <p>April 2017</p> | <p><i>faithworks</i> affiliate</p> |
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Creating Division – ‘What denomination are you?’

This is one of the first questions I am often asked when meeting people for the first time. When I explain that I belong to an Order rather than to a specific denomination they often respond with ‘Oh!’

It’s amazing how many meanings that ‘Oh!’ has. Usually it means something like ‘so you’re not one of us then.’ It is often said in a way that has a particular tone to it, something akin to a knife being drawn from a scabbard.

The shorter and sharper the ‘Oh!’ is, the more likely it is to be an expression of judgemental disapproval and disagreement.

If it lowers a tone towards the end then it indicates you stand instantly and irrevocably condemned in the eyes of the speaker.

Given a different inflection and a slower speed, it can also mean ‘that’s sounds different, tell me more...’

There are lots of subtle variations, all with their own revealing message. It often reveals more about the person speaking than they would wish.

Put simply, it's not just what we say; it's the way that we say it.

It would always be very tempting to give a cutting response but it is rarely productive and serves to build further division. Having said that, we shouldn't allow ourselves to be trampled underfoot either. Sometimes it is quite satisfying to reply to those responses that are negative with a kindly 'is that some kind of problem?'

That equally can produce some interesting reactions – most people will immediately back down and apologise as they will want to avoid any public confrontation. It would be safe to say that people are happy to judge other people so long as they can maintain some form of personal anonymity.

Metaphorically, they are perfectly content to throw stones so long as they don't get caught out doing it.

This was something that was covered in John's Gospel.

A Woman Caught in Adultery John 8:1-11 (NLT)

8 Jesus returned to the Mount of Olives, ² but early the next morning he was back again at the Temple. A crowd soon gathered, and he sat down and taught them. ³ As he was speaking, the teachers of religious law and the Pharisees brought a woman who had been caught in the act of adultery. They put her in front of the crowd. ⁴ "Teacher," they said to Jesus, "this woman was caught in the act of adultery. ⁵ The Law of Moses says to stone her. What do you say?"

⁶ They were trying to trap him into saying something they could use against him, but Jesus stooped down and wrote in the dust with his finger. ⁷ They kept demanding an answer, so he stood up again and said, “All right, but let the one who has never sinned throw the first stone!” ⁸ Then he stooped down again and wrote in the dust.

⁹ When the accusers heard this, they slipped away one by one, beginning with the oldest, until only Jesus was left in the middle of the crowd with the woman. ¹⁰ Then Jesus stood up again and said to the woman, “Where are your accusers? Didn’t even one of them condemn you?”

¹¹ “No, Lord,” she said.

And Jesus said, “Neither do I. Go and sin no more.”

Not only do we need to wary about what we say but how we say those things and enact them. There are a couple of very good reasons to be careful as there are always consequences.

1. We need to avoid being judgemental when it comes to other people and their actions and beliefs. Even our tone of voice or body language can change the meaning of the words we say. We are not always aware of what we are doing or how we sound, especially under pressure, and it’s easy to send out the wrong message.
2. Being judgemental creates (opportunities for) division.

3. In being judgemental we put our own actions and thoughts under the public spotlight. As Christians, we need to be constantly aware that our personal actions may unintentionally portray a picture of the nature of God which is wholly inaccurate. We need to be consistent. We can't talk about a loving God if we are seen to behave in an unloving way. James 3 v 9 – 12 states ⁹ *With the tongue we praise our Lord and Father, and with it we curse human beings, who have been made in God's likeness.* ¹⁰ *Out of the same mouth come praise and cursing. My brothers and sisters, this should not be.* ¹¹ *Can both fresh water and salt water flow from the same spring?* ¹² *My brothers and sisters, can a fig-tree bear olives, or a grapevine bear figs? Neither can a salt spring produce fresh water'*
4. We certainly need to take a long hard look at our own motivation if we find ourselves being judgemental. There will be those occasions when we seek to justify our own self and our decisions, behaviour and prejudices, at the expense of others. We have already looked at one passage in the Epistle of James but he continues in chapter 3 v 13 – 18 with *'Who is wise and understanding among you? Let them show it by their good life, by deeds done in the humility that comes from wisdom.* ¹⁴ *But if you harbour bitter envy and selfish ambition in your hearts, do not boast about it or deny the truth.* ¹⁵ *Such 'wisdom' does not come down from heaven but is earthly, unspiritual, demonic.* ¹⁶ *For where you have envy and selfish ambition, there you find disorder and every evil practice.*

¹⁷ But the wisdom that comes from heaven is first of all pure; then peace-loving, considerate, submissive, full of mercy and good fruit, impartial and sincere. ¹⁸ Peacemakers who sow in peace reap a harvest of righteousness.'

5. We also need to be careful that we listen to others properly. It is all too easy to react without hearing all that is being said. Being judgemental on this basis will always lead to tears somewhere down the timeline.

In the Lord's Prayer we say,

'Forgive us our sins, as we forgive those who sin against us...'

Or in its older form,

'Forgive our trespasses, as we forgive those who trespass against us...'

On this occasion I prefer the older form, 'trespassing' also being understood as others venturing into what we think of as 'our personal territory and space, beliefs, practices and opinions'.

There can be quite a difference between what we personally think and what God actually thinks.* When we make the assumption we are right and that God agrees with us, we may actually be guilty of deceiving ourselves and denying the sovereignty of God.

This is the 'I am a child of God and every thought and opinion I have originates in Him, therefore I am always right and you should always agree with me' syndrome. **

We are all guilty of this individually at some point in our walk with God but it can equally be a collective syndrome revealing itself through small church groups all the way to whole denominations.

An example of this syndrome appears in one of the Gospels when someone obviously isn't having the best of days:

Luke 12:13-14 (NIVUK)

Someone in the crowd said to him, 'Teacher, tell my brother to divide the inheritance with me.'

Jesus replied, 'Man, who appointed me a judge or an arbiter between you?'

Then he said to them, 'Watch out! Be on your guard against all kinds of greed; life does not consist in an abundance of possessions.'

Our personal relationship with others is very difficult to hide from the public view, and from God, even if we believe we can keep things under wraps. To think otherwise is unrealistic.

We would obviously prefer to be seen in a good light, to be seen as fair, intelligent, wise and knowledgeable, but we also have to deal with our own conflicting insecurities and selfish preferences.

We have difficult daily choices to make.

We frequently find our faith compromised because we make exceptions for some people and not others, sometimes because we just want a quiet life and sometimes because we are afraid of the consequences of doing the right thing.

Even just being in the presence of some people can make us feel very insecure and we try to find ways of bringing them down to our level or belittling them just so we can feel better about ourselves.

I think this is probably why we make friends with those most like us and feel really uncomfortable in the presence of those who are different to us. They simply make us feel insecure and threatened so we build barriers of many kinds as protective walls. We even find it useful to strengthen those walls with half-truths and exaggerated prejudices. It's also just as true denominationally.

When it comes to it, we are quite flawed and rarely match even the expectations we have of other people, let alone God's hopes for us. We find it easier to justify our own position rather than try to see or understand that of others.

We may be a pretty sorry lot when we take a good look at ourselves honestly but God sees something good in us, even if we can't see it ourselves.

It was enough for God to send Jesus to die for us, and when I say 'us, it really means 'all of us', whatever we may have done or however badly we may think of ourselves.

He loves us all, including the most bitter and twisted of us.

Whatever we may think of ourselves, we are God's unfinished works of art, being constantly shaped in our lives by Him.

Even the very best of us are still works in progress, still imperfect and unfinished. God has much to do in all of us.

On this basis, no one has any excuse to look down on anyone else or treat them badly. We are all in the same boat, equal in our lostness and totally dependent on a God who loves us so perfectly.

Jesus is the ideal to which we are gradually being conformed to and perfected, the embodiment of all that is holy and good.

No, it is not an impossible hope. It is an opportunity and a reality.

For example -

John 15:15

I no longer call you servants, because a servant does not know his master's business. Instead, I have called you friends, for everything that I learned from my Father I have made known to you.

Matthew 21:21

Jesus replied, 'Truly I tell you, if you have faith and do not doubt, ... it will be done.'

⁵ *If any of you lacks wisdom, you should ask God, who gives generously to all without finding fault, and it will be given to you.*

⁶ *But when you ask, you must believe and not doubt, because the one who doubts is like a wave of the sea, blown and tossed by the wind.*

⁷ *That person should not expect to receive anything from the Lord.*

⁸ *Such a person is double-minded and unstable in all they do.*

And the purpose? To be set free by God to love.

Galatians 5:13

You, my brothers and sisters, were called to be free. But do not use your freedom to indulge the flesh; rather, serve one another humbly in love.....

and not for reward, recognition or praise. Jesus gives a warning:

Matthew 6:5

‘.... do not be like the hypocrites, for they love to pray standing in the synagogues and on the street corners to be seen by others. Truly I tell you, they have (already) received their reward in full.

Seeking the approval of man is like trying to catch the wind, and just as fleeting and fickle. In reality, it can't be trusted or relied on.

God has something much more permanent in mind. He wants us to be eternally secure in our relationship with Him and those He calls, to love and to be loved, in all of its Godly fullness.

I believe that this is all most of us really want in our lives, for where love exists, we have no reason to feel threatened, or insignificant, or worthless. Fear and uncertainty is dispelled in real love. In love we have perfect purpose, place and position too. We will find that often elusive and delightful spiritual stillness and peace that is often missing in our being. There are no negatives in love, only positives.

So what about the gobby, self-righteous, self-opinionated, judgemental and self-assured people we encounter? How should we respond to them other than with patience, prayer and love?

John 21 v 20 - 22

²⁰ Peter turned and saw that the disciple whom Jesus loved was following them. (This was the one who had leaned back against Jesus at the supper and had said, 'Lord, who is going to betray you?') ²¹ When Peter saw him, he asked, 'Lord, what about him?'

²² Jesus answered, 'If I want him to remain alive until I return, what is that to you? You must follow me.'

God will sort these people out in His own good time. We, on the other hand, should continue to focus solely on our own responsibilities and calling. There is enough in that alone.

+Ian, OSJ

** I often interview couples regarding their forth coming marriages and hear 'we would like... followed by 'wouldn't we darling'. This is usually an assumed position. We often make similar assumptions, making a decision and looking for God's approval afterwards rather than seeking His will and then enacting it.*

***This is very like another we are all familiar with, the 'God wants me to have a new camera/car/handbag/etc.' syndrome. More on this subject another time perhaps.*

In this passage we read of how Jesus came to his followers when they were gathered in the upper room and certain great notes of the Christian faith are resonantly struck.

Luke was writing to the Greek speaking world. He wanted them to know that Christ's message of God's love and forgiveness should go to all the world. We must never ignore the worldwide scope of Christ's Gospel. God wants all the world to hear the Good News of Salvation.

Have you ever been really surprised? Perhaps a party was arranged, your friends and family gathered and no-one had breathed a word to you? Or someone unexpectedly presented you with a gift or brought good news.

On my birthday a few years ago the family had arranged a meal at a restaurant, this I knew about. I thought nothing of it when our middle daughter and her husband walked in from Hexham the last to arrive, David is very tall and broad, Janice gave me a hug but David stepped aside and behind him was my friend from the South of France whom I hadn't seen for 15 years, due to her having to look after her mother, and a serious illness of her own..

They had persuaded her to visit them especially for the occasion. It certainly was a very happy shock.

The disciples must have felt like that when Jesus appeared, they had been despairing after Jesus crucifixion. They must have been flabbergasted and unable to speak immediately, finding it difficult to comprehend that it really was Jesus and not a ghost. Nothing in the Scriptures has really prepared them for this although the Old Testament points to it constantly. They had not really taken in Jesus words when he told them that he would suffer, die and rise again.

It stresses the necessity of the cross. It was to the cross that all the Scriptures looked towards. The cross was not forced on God, it was not an emergency measure when all else failed and when the scheme of things had gone wrong, It stresses the secret of power. They had to wait in Jerusalem until power from on high came upon them.

It stresses the urgency of the task. The call to repent had to go out to all the people with the offer of forgiveness. The Church was not left to live forever in the upper room, it was sent out into the world. After the upper room came the worldwide mission of the Church. The days of sorrow were past and the tidings of joy must be taken to everyone.

It stresses the secret of power. They had to wait in Jerusalem until power from on high came upon them.

.There are occasions when the Christians may seem to be wasting time, waiting in a wise passivity. Action without preparation must often fail.

There is a time to wait on God and a time to work for God.

Many days had elapsed between verses 43 and 44, because Jesus and his followers travelled to Galilee and back before he returned to heaven. In his second book Acts, Luke make it clear that Jesus spent 40 days with the disciples between his resurrection and ascension. All the while stressing and teaching the importance of his resurrection and what it meant to the world and their future mission.

Jesus opened these people minds to understand the Scripture. The Holy Spirit does this in our lives today when we study the Bible. Have you ever wondered how to understand a difficult bible passage?

Besides reading surrounding passages, asking other people and consulting reference books, pray that the Holy Spirit will open your mind to understand giving you the needed insight to put God's word into action in your life.

It is easy to make assumptions about how God works. Those of us brought up in the Church can easily assume there are certain ways to understand the Bible, to approach God in prayer, and to live our lives. But perhaps God wants to meet us in unexpected ways challenging our presuppositions with new ideas for reaching out to new believers which weren't available in Jesus time

The law of Moses, the Prophets and the Psalms is a way to describe the entire Old Testament. In other words the entire Old Testament points to the Messiah. For example his role as prophet was told in Deuteronomy 18 v 15 – 20, (The Lord your God will raise up for you a prophet like me from among your own people) His sufferings were prophesied in Psalm 22 and Isaiah 53, (He was despised and rejected by others, a man of suffering and acquainted with grief.) His resurrection was predicted in Psalm 16 v 9 –11 and Isaiah 53 10-11.

If we have not been brought up in the church we bring fresh eyes to the stories. Nevertheless we may have pre-set ideas about what is spiritual. We too need to meet God in new ways.

Peter's sermon to the people in Acts challenges assumptions. They had crucified Jesus, believing that they were doing Gods' will. Peter asks them to rethink their understanding of Scripture, and see what God was doing. Sometimes the passage is used to justify anti-Semitism but it challenges all especially Christians, who think they are doing God's will.

A chilling extract from the diary of the terrorists after 9.11 attacks on the World-Trade Centre, reveals his absolute certainty that his actions were God's will, as do all the terrorists of the Muslim faith who deliberately blow

themselves up to cause as many deaths as possible.

As Christians we cannot point an accusing finger we have only to look back through history. The Crusades, slavery, apartheid, the Holocaust, the denial of rights to women, violence and abuse against children have all been justified in God's name.

It is 200 years since William Wilberforce had a law passed condemning slavery, but it was stated in the newspapers recently that there are in fact more people in slavery today than ever before. Prophetic voices have challenged and still challenge us to rethink our assumptions, and to prepare to meet God in new ways.

However we understand the resurrection stories for the first followers of Jesus they were life-changing. Moving through fear, wonder and disbelief, they recognize God at work in unexpected ways.

We too need to move out of pre-set ways to see God at work - in unexpected people, places and times – in ways that will change our thinking and redirect our lives.

Where do you expect to meet with God? In Church? In personal prayer? In the beauty of creation? In the love of family and friends? When prayers are answered?

These are always ways in which we encounter God's presence. Today's story challenges us to meet God in unexpected ways.

As I have said previously the disciples were confused and bewildered. They had witnessed the traumatic events of Jesus' trial and crucifixion and heard the bewildering rumors of resurrection. They were discussing what had happened. In their confusion they encounter the risen Christ who says "Peace be with you"

Words are not enough to convince them.

All their senses now come into play. They see Jesus standing before them, he invites them to touch, they give him fish to eat – and presumably the smell fills the room. Only as they begin to take his presence seriously in an embodied way does he use the words and reason to convince them, of the significance of what is happening.

Encounters with God often occur in every day life. Kathy Galloway tells of Joyce a single parent, an artist on Income Support, who in her sense of life and creativity embodies, the glory in the gray enabling others to see God. Many of us know people who bring God to us – in their care for others their creativity, their ability to make a welcoming home, their gift of fun. They embody the presence of the risen Christ...

Sometimes it is not the achievement that speaks of God, but the struggle. What moves people is not only their achievement but the story of someone who has struggled and won through. We may know people who inspire us by their struggles, who have survived abuse or trauma to build their lives of confidence and trust, who battle daily against pain, who are resilient and resourceful in the face of poverty, unemployment or prejudice. Whether they know it or not they embody the trust of resurrection

Being convinced of the reality of Christ's presence is only the beginning. The disciples are called to be witnesses- to hear and see and touch and do. We too are witnesses – convincing others not only by our words, but by our lives, by sharing food, by the touch of loving hands. We the Church are called to embody the risen presence of Christ

Fay Inchfawn, writes of the days when life is a losing contest, with a thousand little things. She says

“I wrestle, how I wrestle, through the hours
Nay not with principalities and powers – Dark spiritual foes
of Gods and man's –
But with antagonistic pots and pans, With footmarks on the
hall, With smears upon the wall, with doubtful ears and
small unwashed hands. And with a babe's innumerable
demands.”

And then even in the busyness, she lays aside her work to be for a moment with God.

“With leisured feet and idle hand, I sat, I, foolish, fussy, blind as any bat, Sat down to listen. And to learn. And lo, My thousand tasks were done the better so.”

The quiet times in which we wait on God are never wasted for it is in these times when we lay aside life’s tasks that we are strengthened for the very tasks we lay aside.

Do you spend time in prayer and meditation before tackling a difficult task?

Unice Brierley, OSJ

Being part of the one church.

From the Order’s ‘Rule of Simplicity’ covering the Order’s view of its place in the One Church and its response to others within the Christian family. This has been included to follow last month’s article on unity.

1. The Order’s view and understanding of scripture is that there is one body which has Christ as its head, and the Order is but a very small part of that body, the world wide church.

2. Even though there may be substantial differences in practice and theology between the churches and groups within that body, members of the Order should not make adverse or negative comments regarding individuals, other groups, churches or their work. There is a sense in which when any part of the body of Christ is judged, then Christ, its head, is judged too. We should remember our place within the body of Christ - we are simply called to serve and have no authority to judge the work of others.
3. In respect of the work of those outside the Order, differences regarding current or historical practices and theology should be respected at all times, but not necessarily accepted or followed. To show respect for these things does not constitute or imply agreement, particularly where conflicting issues regarding actual ministry exist. Since we are bound to serve under God's commandments of love, we are already committed to dealing with need regardless of any 'man made' obstacles or objections.

4. When working with those outside the Order, members should try to confirm and build upon areas of agreement rather than build upon areas of disagreement. It is the responsibility of all members of the Order to build up the body of Christ and bring it unity wherever possible.
5. As has already been stated, members of the Order are obliged to 'work supportively with individuals, churches, Christian group and the local community, where ever needed and whenever needed'. Members may not find this easy in practice, particularly where there are very strong disagreements regarding the application of canon, current or historical practices and theology. Members' attitude in this circumstance should be (in as much as they can) to look beyond their disagreement and treat this as a matter of obedience, trust and service to Christ.
6. The Order and its members are part of the whole body of Christ. The Order on the basis of Holy Scripture therefore considers itself to be 'in communion' with all the other parts of the body. Whether this is reciprocated, in as far as the Order is concerned, is a matter for others to decide – it is not within the Order's jurisdiction.

7. In summary, members should give due respect to others but only be bound out of love to do those things that are required by God.

The facts:

In practice, members of the Order will not always find other groups and communities as supportive as they would wish. That means that they will rarely recognise our orders as priests and we will almost certainly not be allowed to share any related ministry or preach in their churches. Do not be disappointed by this lack of recognition, rather expect it and take it in your stride.

Other clergy may well be uncomfortable in our presence and be unsettled by the freedom we each have to exercise our own ministries according to need rather than 'according to the rules'. Clergy may well be suspicious of us as an Order, especially because we do things differently and may not meet their expectations or play by their rules.

Whilst we should respect the views, practices, and traditions of others, my advice to all our members is not to let this negativity hold you back. Just get on, get out, and do what God is calling you to do with confidence. Most of our ministry is not 'in church' but is out in the community where we are most needed and amongst those whom the churches have given up on, failed, or have not yet reached out to.

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Bishop North and a personal perspective on unity.

I note with sympathy the problems that Bishop North has encountered over his appointment to become the Anglican Bishop of Sheffield. The over-politicisation and ferocity of the reaction against his appointment has caused him to withdraw.

He is not anti-women, far from it, but the problem has been caused by his strong scripturally based understanding regarding the ordination of women. He is unable to support the principle and now stands accused of supporting and perpetuating an outdated minority view within the Church of England.

He is at least prepared to nail his colours to the mast rather than pay lip service to the latest theological, social and 'politically correct' trends. Whatever you may think about his opinions, at least they are honest, Bible based, and he is prepared to stand his ground regardless of cost. I find much to admire and applaud in his integrity and straight talking.

I remember the voice for the ordination of women being very quiet and small at first but there was a voice. It spoke about being heard and about the need for open discussion and church democracy. This voice sought the grace and love of the church.

The voice grew and eventually the ordination of women was proposed and accepted despite the best efforts of those who couldn't accept the abandonment of 2000 years of tradition and the reinterpretation and rewriting of the Bible.

It didn't stop there though. In the case of Bishop North, disrupting the lawful process of his appointment to a new diocese was just one part of a well-orchestrated campaign to silence and disempower any remaining opposition and discredit those who did not support the ordination of women.

This was clearly no longer 'open discussion', nor 'democracy', nor based on 'grace and love'. It was the language of power politics. It was also a very clear warning to all male clergy, particularly the bishops, not to be obstructive or there would be consequences.

It was becoming less and less about the ordination of women and more and more about who controls 'the church'. In that respect I hope the answer remains 'God' but I am less and less certain as time goes by.

It seems there are too many people and groups with similarly vested interests and their own personal agendas to take any noting of what God really wants unless it suits their purposes.

Meanwhile the whole body of Christ suffers and looks on in despair and confusion as the church tears itself apart.

It is not just an Anglican problem either, but is common to all churches to some extent, and we have had instances in OSJ.

It's not just about the ordination of women either. Anything divisive that will distract the church from its real mission will do.

You only have to look behind any theological hot-potato or controversy to discover growing divisions and bids for leadership taking place – it doesn't really matter what it is or whether there is any truth in it; it is purely a means to an end, just so long as people get their own way regardless of the damage, division and distraction it causes. And for what gain?

Now there is no area of church life that is safe from attack anymore and the church itself is under attack at every level. You may not like the idea but we need people like Bishop North.

The qualities of good leaders:

Their faith is firm, founded in Holy Writ and guided by the Holy Spirit rather than their own selfish motives and agendas. They are driven by a love of God and His people, and have nothing to hide. They are self-less rather than self-seeking. They are often outspoken and uncomfortable to be around at times. They can spot fools and deceivers, the benders of the truth. They have common sense. They have values and principles which are consistent, reasoned, based on solid foundations of Biblical truth and spiritual experience. They may not be perfect but they have something to teach us all, not just about the ordination of women but about having integrity, honesty and standing up for those things they believe to be right, about speaking out rather than being forced into silence even if there is a price to pay. They are prepared to be abandoned and crucified for what they believe and the greater good of those they serve. Their loyalty cannot be bought nor is for sale, and power means nothing to them.

They make good friends but, by virtue of their godliness, attract dangerous enemies who would destroy them. They need our prayers, support and protection.

Whether or not we agree with Bishop North on the matter of the ordination of women, we would be foolish to dismiss all of his views - being 'wrong' about one thing does not make a person 'wrong' about everything, or even make them a 'bad' person. We would all be condemned if that were the case.

Bishop North has much to say that is good and worthy, and there is no doubt his witness is a threat to those who would destroy the church, even from within, for their own personal gain. This is I fear the real reason for this attack on him and others like him. Wolves have entered into the fold and they are intent on destroying the shepherds and scattering the sheep for nothing less than their own gratification (see John 10 v 1-18).

I believe that this is the real cause of disunity in the church. Despite populist thinking, unity is not about whether we all believe the same things, but whether we sacrificially love one another in Christ. 'Difference' is not the problem, it's 'people'.

We cannot afford to think disunity is someone else's problem or that the problem will go away if we ignore it. We have no real choice - we must act before it is too late. The least we can do is pray for genuine unity and enact it out in our own lives. +lan

Adam and Eve: a study in human nature.

The Bible either contains the Word of God or it doesn't. However, if it does contain the word of God then we have no right to change even a single word and it will contain some uncomfortable and uncompromising ideas that will challenge us particularly as society becomes more 'PC'.

It's a tough call because it is what it is and there is no room for negotiation. God's word is God's word. We ignore it at our peril. However, we will often try and make the Bible fit our own desires, and to read into the text what we want it to say, rather than listen to God (unless of course, it suits our purposes). It is a dangerous presumption with massive consequences.

Genesis, chapter 3. (NIVUK)

This text is both an observation of the subtlety of evil and human nature, but it is also about responsibility and authority. If you read closely, Adam's wife may have been the first to be deceived and bite into the fruit but it is Adam who seems to face the brunt of God's judgement for failing in his responsibilities as Eve's husband.

You might consider the prophetic nature of this text as a warning for present times.

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Genesis 3:

(The text in red is an outline summary of the verses that follow.)

The word of God is challenged.

¹Now the snake was more crafty than any of the wild animals the LORD God had made.

He said to the woman, 'Did God really say, "You must not eat from any tree in the garden"?'² The woman said to the snake, 'We may eat fruit from the trees in the garden,³ but God did say, "You must not eat fruit from the tree that is in the middle of the garden, and you must not touch it, or you will die."' *(note: added to - see Genesis 2 v 15-16)*

The word of God is undermined and contradicted.

⁴'You will not certainly die,' the snake said to the woman.

The authority of God is challenged.

⁵'For God knows that when you eat from it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like *(note: not 'the same as')* God, knowing good and evil.'

Be tempted with the promise of power and personal gain.

Deny the authority of those placed above you, relinquish your own responsibilities and act in your own interests.

Convince yourself you know better than God and those with authority over you.

⁶ When the woman saw that the fruit of the tree was good for food and pleasing to the eye, and also desirable for gaining wisdom, she took some and ate it.

Get other people involved and make them your partners in crime.

She also gave some to her husband, who was with her, and he ate it.

You realise you are no longer innocent and all your sins are visible for all to see so you try to cover them up.

⁷ Then the eyes of both of them were opened, and they realised that they were naked; so they sewed fig leaves together and made coverings for themselves.

You are now totally vulnerable so you go into hiding even though you know you cannot escape.

You know it is only a matter of time before God searches for and confronts you.

⁸ Then the man and his wife heard the sound of the LORD God as he was walking in the garden in the cool of the day, and they hid from the LORD God among the trees of the garden.

Those with responsibility will be called to account first. God knows the truth and there is no point in denying it.

⁹ But the LORD God called to the man, 'Where are you?'¹⁰ He answered, 'I heard you in the garden, and I was afraid because I was naked; so I hid.'

God will confront you and your sin – He will offer you the opportunity to be honest with Him but there is no escape.

¹¹ And he said, 'Who told you that you were naked? Have you eaten from the tree from which I commanded you not to eat?'

Disassociate with and blame others for your own failings. Deny and deflect responsibility. Blame God if you can.

¹² The man said, 'The woman (*not wife*) you put here with me – she gave me some fruit from the tree, and I ate it.'

God will make you face up to the path you took to your failing even though you might give others the blame.

¹³ Then the LORD God said to the woman, 'What is this you have done?'

The woman said, 'The snake deceived me, and I ate.'

Punishment for sin is being forced to accept the consequences of your actions even if you are forgiven of your wrongdoing.

¹⁴ So the LORD God said to the snake, 'Because you have done this,

'Cursed are you above all livestock

and all wild animals!

You will crawl on your belly

and you will eat dust

all the days of your life.

¹⁵ And I will put enmity

between you and the woman,

and between your offspring and hers;

he (*note: not 'they'*) will crush your head,

and you will strike his heel.'

Sin has painful and lasting consequences – the innocent suffer too.

¹⁶ To the woman he said,

‘I will make your pains in childbearing very severe;
with painful labour you will give birth to children.

You will seek the leadership and wisdom of others and give them authority over you as you try to reconcile your actions in the light of God’s will. You place yourself in bondage.

Your desire will be for your husband,
and he will rule over you.’

You will pay the consequences of your actions – you were willingly deceived - and from henceforth, you will struggle with making even the simplest of (spiritual) decisions and acting upon them because you were willing to follow your own desires rather than God’s wishes.

‘Self’ and God will be forever at odds with one another.

You will always face uncertainty and hardship, and be continually tested until ‘self’ is brought to submission.

Nothing will be easy as it seems for our nature is to be rebellious.

¹⁷ To Adam he said, ‘Because you listened to your wife *(rather than to God Himself)* and ate fruit from the tree about which I commanded you, “You must not eat from it,”

‘Cursed is the ground because of you;
through painful toil you will eat food from it
all the days of your life.

¹⁸ It will produce thorns and thistles for you, and you will eat the plants of the field.

¹⁹ By the sweat of your brow you will eat your food until you return to the ground, since from it you were taken; for dust you are and to dust you will return.’

²⁰ Adam named his wife Eve because she would become the mother of all the living *(and thereby their sinful nature would continue to be inherited by all their progeny)*.

God is gracious and will make some sort of provision to protect those He loves from shame and destruction, and to give them some kind of hope for redemption in the future.

In the meantime, the consequences of sin have to be lived with.

Please note the subtlety of the following text.

²¹ The LORD God made garments of skin for Adam and his wife and clothed them.

²² And the LORD God said, 'The man (*note: not 'the woman' or 'they'*) has now become like one of us, knowing good and evil. He must not be allowed to reach out his hand and take also from the tree of life and eat, and live for ever.'

The consequence of trying to be equal with God always has far reaching consequences and lasting repercussions.

²³ So the LORD God banished him from the Garden of Eden to work the ground from which he had been taken. ²⁴ After he drove the man out, he placed on the east side of the Garden of Eden cherubim and a flaming sword flashing back and forth to guard the way to the tree of life.

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It is worth studying the implicit relationship between 'husband' and 'wife', and the roles they each have in this account, particularly with regard to authority and responsibility. These are not optional or negotiable. This certainly impacts on our understanding of Jesus' relationship with the Church as the Bride of Christ, and our own roles within that relationship.

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Bible References on Prayer.

The references are adapted from 'Bible Study Tools'
and have been placed in alphabetical order for ease of use.

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| 1 Chronicles 16:11 | 11 Look to the LORD and his strength; seek his face always. |
| 2 Chronicles 6:21 | 21 Hear the supplications of your servant and of your people Israel when they pray toward this place. Hear from heaven, your dwelling place; and when you hear, forgive. |
| 2 Chronicles 7:14 | 14 if my people, who are called by my name, will humble themselves and pray and seek my face and turn from their wicked ways, then I will hear from heaven, and I will forgive their sin and will heal their land. |
| Colossians 4:2 | 2 Devote yourselves to prayer, being watchful and thankful. |
| Ephesians 1:18 | 18 I pray that the eyes of your heart may be enlightened in order that you may know the hope to which he has called you, the riches of his glorious inheritance in his holy people, |
| Ephesians 6:18 | 18 And pray in the Spirit on all occasions with all kinds of prayers and requests. With this in mind, be alert and always keep on praying for all the Lord's people. |
| Hebrews 4:14 | 14 Therefore, since we have a great high priest who has ascended into heaven, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold firmly to the faith we profess. |
| James 1:7 | 7 That person should not expect to receive anything from the Lord. |
| James 4:3 | 3 When you ask, you do not receive, because you ask with wrong motives, that you may spend what you get on your pleasures. |

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| James 5:13 | 13 Is anyone among you in trouble? Let them pray. Is anyone happy? Let them sing songs of praise. |
| James 5:16 | 16 Therefore confess your sins to each other and pray for each other so that you may be healed. The prayer of a righteous person is powerful and effective. |
| Job 22:27 | 27 You will pray to him, and he will hear you, and you will fulfil your vows. |
| John 17:15 | 15 My prayer is not that you take them out of the world but that you protect them from the evil one. |
| 1 John 1:9 | 9 If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness. |
| 1 John 5:14 | 14 This is the confidence we have in approaching God: that if we ask anything according to his will, he hears us. |
| 1 John 5:15 | 15 And if we know that he hears us—whatever we ask—we know that we have what we asked of him. |
| 1 John 5:16 | 16 If you see any brother or sister commit a sin that does not lead to death, you should pray and God will give them life. I refer to those whose sin does not lead to death. There is a sin that leads to death. I am not saying that you should pray about that. |
| Luke 6:12 | 12 One of those days Jesus went out to a mountainside to pray, and spent the night praying to God. |
| Luke 11:2-4 | 2 He said to them, “When you pray, say: “ ‘Father, hallowed be your name, your kingdom come. 3 Give us each day our daily bread. 4 Forgive us our sins, for we also forgive everyone who sins against us. And lead us not into temptation.’ ” |
| Luke 18:1 | 1 Then Jesus told his disciples a parable to show them that they should always pray and not give up. |

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| Mark 11:24 | 24 Therefore I tell you, whatever you ask for in prayer, believe that you have received it, and it will be yours. |
| Matthew 5:44 | 44 But I tell you, love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you, |
| Matthew 6:7 | 7 And when you pray, do not keep on babbling like pagans, for they think they will be heard because of their many words. |
| Matthew 6:9-13 | 9 “This, then, is how you should pray: “ ‘Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name, 10 your kingdom come, your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven. 11 Give us today our daily bread. 12 And forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors. 13 And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from the evil one.’ |
| Matthew 7:11 | 11 If you, then, though you are evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your Father in heaven give good gifts to those who ask him! |
| Matthew 26:41 | 41 “Watch and pray so that you will not fall into temptation. The spirit is willing, but the flesh is weak.” |
| Philippians 4:6 | 6 Do not be anxious about anything, but in every situation, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God. |
| Proverbs 15:8 | 8 The LORD detests the sacrifice of the wicked, but the prayer of the upright pleases him. |
| Proverbs 15:29 | 29 The LORD is far from the wicked, but he hears the prayer of the righteous. |
| Psalms 17:6 | 6 I call on you, my God, for you will answer me; turn your ear to me and hear my prayer. |
| Psalms 102:17 | 17 He will respond to the prayer of the destitute; he will not despise their plea. |

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| Psalm 141:2 | 2 May my prayer be set before you like incense; may the lifting up of my hands be like the evening sacrifice. |
| Romans 12:2 | 2 Do not conform to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God's will is—his good, pleasing and perfect will. |
| Romans 12:12 | 12 Be joyful in hope, patient in affliction, faithful in prayer. |
| Romans 8:26 | 26 In the same way, the Spirit helps us in our weakness. We do not know what we ought to pray for, but the Spirit himself intercedes for us through wordless groans. |
| 1 Thessalonians 5:17 | 17 pray continually, |
| 1 Timothy 2:1-2 | 1 I urge, then, first of all, that petitions, prayers, intercession and thanksgiving be made for all people— 2 for kings and all those in authority, that we may live peaceful and quiet lives in all godliness and holiness. |
| 1 Timothy 2:8 | 8 Therefore I want the men everywhere to pray, lifting up holy hands without anger or disputing. |

Late News from OSJ Pakistan – New Church Building Project

[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=tHgYVxu-](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=tHgYVxu-A4Y)

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=S7h_uIdP-es

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=YToAuiHaAqI>

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=sGchIBepjAw>

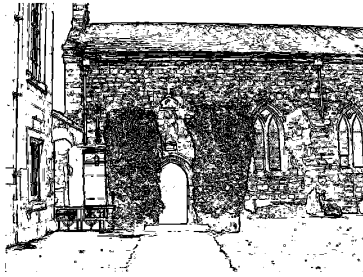
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=EovvtsRxF0I>

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=i0G6pXVMY_0

[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wW000fH-](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wW000fH-mbo)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ONi1gL1Obs>[https://www.youtube.com/](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Vhsd2DIDXhY)

[watch?v=Vhsd2DIDXhY](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Vhsd2DIDXhY)



St Leonard's Chapel,
Hazlewood Castle, Yorkshire,
LS24 9NJ

OSJ Services 2017



Services take place on the FIRST and THIRD Sundays of each month at 6.00 p.m. and, unless otherwise stated, take the form of a short communion service, lasting between 20 and 30 minutes. All are very welcome and all may receive.

1st January, 2017

5th February, 2017

5th March, 2017

2nd April, 2017

7th May, 2017

4th June, 2017

2nd July, 2017

6th August, 2017

3rd September, 2017

1st October, 2017

5th November, 2017

3rd December, 2017

15th January, 2017

19th February, 2017

19th March, 2017

16th April, 2017

21st May, 2017

18th June, 2017

16th July, 2017

20th August, 2017

17th September, 2017

15th October, 2017

19th November, 2017

17th December, 2017

We use a non-alcoholic wine so children may take part too.
There is no requirement to be baptised or confirmed.

Additional Services:

Remembrance Sunday: 12th November 10.35 a.m.

Midnight Mass: 24th December 11.20 p.m.

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|  | <p style="text-align: center;">The Order of St James Newsletter</p> <p style="text-align: center;">May 2017</p> |  |
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The Lesson of Foot Washing - Servitude

Well, Easter day has come again and gone again - to some anyway. Non believing adults will be home from their Easter break with not a thought about Jesus. Youngsters will be finishing off the last of their Easter eggs perhaps. We as Christians, remember and celebrate The Risen Jesus every day and Easter Eggs and Easter breaks to some of us are an added bonus.

Let's go back in time though, to the evening before Jesus' Crucifixion. Jesus knew too well that His time of crucifixion had come - the evening meal in the Upper Room. Sat round the table with Jesus feeling full of angst and fear looked around the table and saw proud hearts and dirty feet. So He got up and took off his outer garments and wrapped a towel around his waist, poured water in a bowl, washed His disciples feet and dried them with the towel from his waist.

Peter knew only too well that the actions of Jesus were usually carried out by slaves or servants. In those days, the lowliest household slave or servant washed the feet of the visiting guests.

Peter was puzzled as Jesus of Nazareth knelt down to wash His disciples' feet. Jesus and the 12 apostles had gathered in a private room.

Jesus had earlier instructed Peter and John to prepare their last meal together. It was during this time that Jesus introduced the symbols of the New Testament Passover: The unleavened bread would represent His broken body and the wine would signify His blood that He would lose less than a day later.

Peter was watching, closely and fascinated- as Jesus bent down to wash His disciples' feet. This was so unusual, he thought, even most strange, to see a teacher, Jesus, washing the feet of His followers. Foot washing was a common courtesy when someone came to your home.(John 1.27) It's vital that we understand the host would never wash the feet of the guests, it would have been far too humiliating. There would always be a servant available.

What was going on then?

Wasn't Jesus too good for this?

Surely it was beneath Him to humiliate or cheapen Himself in this way. As Jesus moved from one disciple to another, I suspect we could have heard a pin drop. All eyes would have followed Jesus' every move. The disciples shifted their positions and fidgetted to watch Him lift the pitcher of water and pour it into a basin. Carefully and systematically, Jesus would have moved from disciple to disciple, in turn washing each man's feet. Peter would have looked on enthralled, closely analyzing each and every move that Jesus made. Peter, all of a sudden realized it was his turn!

*As Jesus bent down to wash his feet, Peter asked, “Lord, are **You** washing **my** feet? Then comes he to Simon Peter: and Peter said to him, Lord, do you wash my feet?*

It seemed that Peter was the only one who openly questioned and clearly protested over his Master’s actions. Perhaps Peter was the only one who felt confident enough to say what all the others were thinking? His understanding of Jesus’ behaviour wouldn’t come until God gave the disciples His Holy Spirit. Only later would they understand the spiritual significance of what was a tremendous life changing act of humility by Jesus and the symbols of bread and wine He introduced during the evening.

*So Jesus responded simply, “What **I** am doing **you** do not understand now, but you will know after this” (John 13:7 Jesus answered and said to him, What I do you know not now; but you shall know hereafter.).*

Jesus was referring to the Holy Spirit, who would eventually guide the disciples’ understanding (*John 16:13 However, when he, the Spirit of truth, is come, he will guide you into all truth: for he shall not speak of himself; but whatever he shall hear, that shall he speak: and he will show you things to come*) enabling them to grasp the spiritual meaning of this physical act. Later they would understand that this ceremony represents the Christian’s humble service to God, His Church and his neighbour. Yet again, Peter’s impulsiveness showed itself. He protested at Jesus that He should *never* lower Himself to the most undignified level of a servant: *“You shall never wash my feet!” Peter said.*

To that slightly heated comment, Jesus calmly replied

“If I do not wash you, you have no part with Me” (John 13:8 Peter said to him, You shall never wash my feet. Jesus answered him, If I wash you not, you have no part with me.

Peter’s next saying mirrors our human tendency to overreact: *“Lord, not my feet only, but also my hands and my head!” (John 13:9 Simon Peter said to him, Lord, not my feet only, but also my hands and my head.*

Jesus then informed Peter: *“A person who has had a bath needs only to wash his feet; his whole body is clean **but not all of you**” (John 13:10 Jesus said to him, He that is washed needs not save to wash his feet, but is clean every whit: and you are clean, but not all.*

He made clear that the act of washing each other’s feet is not really an exercise in personal hygiene. Jesus was speaking of becoming spiritually cleansed, which would happen through His shed blood & crucifixion for the sins of us all.

One disciple in the twelve as we know then, was not clean in spirit: Judas Iscariot, would betray Jesus - and Jesus knew that, “therefore He said, *‘You are not all clean’ ” (John 13:11 For he knew who should betray him; therefore said he, You are not all clean.*

Lessons for the followers of Jesus today

What are we to learn from Jesus' symbolic act of humility?

Jesus Himself clearly explained the primary lesson of foot-washing: *“You call me Teacher and Lord, and you say well, for so I am. If I then, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you also ought to wash one another’s feet” (John 13:13-14 13 You call me Master and Lord: and you say well; for so I am. 14 If I then, your Lord and Master, have washed your feet; you also ought to wash one another’s feet.*

In other words, if Jesus is willing to humbly and unconditionally serve His followers in a lowly human task, those disciples should follow His example and be willing to perform even the most unpleasant tasks for their brothers and sisters - in fact, their own neighbours - God's family.

John, who recorded these events, later explained this attitude with a simple question: *“But whoever has this world’s goods, and sees his brother in need, and shuts up his heart from him, how does the love of God abide in him?” (1 John 3:17 But whoever has this world’s good, and sees his brother have need, and shuts up his bowels of compassion from him, how dwells the love of God in him?*

No follower of Jesus should put him or herself above serving any other person. God watches and listens to His family and blesses those who honour Him by serving as channels of His truth and examples of true spirituality.

Jesus introduced the foot-washing idea to show us that He had come to serve mankind. He had earlier made this clear to those who would follow Him: *“You know that the rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them, and those who are great exercise authority over them. Yet it shall not be so among you; but whoever desires to become great among you, let him be your servant. And whoever desires to be first among you, let him be your slave—just as the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life as a ransom for many”* (Matthew 20:25-28 25 But Jesus called them to him, and said, *You know that the princes of the Gentiles exercise dominion over them, and they that are great exercise authority on them. 26 But it shall not be so among you: but whoever will be great among you, let him be your minister; 27 And whoever will be chief among you, let him be your servant: 28 Even as the Son of man came not to be ministered to, but to minister, and to give his life a ransom for many.*

The ultimate service of Jesus for mankind was His *willingness* to give His life for us, which was to happen the next afternoon. His example of humility, service and generosity is all the more important and meaningful because of how it so markedly differs from the attitude of the rest of today's humanity.

Perhaps, in general, mankind has a natural tendency to look for ways to make others serve them. I have to be very mindful when that is said. There are lots of lovely God fearing and Jesus following people around too.

God's way, on the other hand, is unpretentious, total unconditional willingness to serve others as well as being Omnipotent, Omniscient and Omnipresent.

(Luke 6:35 But love you your enemies, and do good, and lend, hoping for nothing again; and your reward shall be great, and you shall be the children of the Highest: for he is kind to the unthankful and to the evil.

Serving others God's way demands no conditions and expects no reward:
“But love [even] your enemies, do good, and lend, hoping for nothing in return; and your reward will be great, and you will be sons of the Most High. For He is kind to the unthankful and evil”

This powerful scripture tells us much about God's character—that His approach is one of unbiased, unconditional service and Love to mankind.

Spiritual system at work

Jesus reveals to us a spiritual system that lets everyone come out ahead. It is not the way we normally, naturally think. That is why we must change to God's way, which will work forever.

Our way does not work for long. Although we may temporarily benefit, in the long run our human way of doing things traps us. Service to others lives on, but taking or serving only the self dies with those who seek to totally serve themselves.

Those who would follow Jesus Christ must ask a tough question: Will we

dedicate ourselves to Jesus' way of outgoing, humble service toward others, or will we go the way of the world, demanding and taking and serving ourselves?

Christ's example of washing His friends' feet is a reminder of that fundamental choice.

We can do three things that will help us understand and capture Jesus' attitude as He washed His disciples' feet:

1. Ask God for help in better *understanding* the practice and spirit of foot-washing.
2. Learn more about God's attitude of humility and service by reading many examples of it in our Bible, including Abraham, Ruth and Daniel.
3. *Look* for ways to serve others.

Let's keep in mind this wonderful lesson of washing others' feet, which symbolizes our serving others with humility and without imposing our own conditions. Jesus tells us to follow His example in this simple ceremony:

“For I have given you an example, that you should do as I have done to you” (John 13:15 For I have given you an example, that you should do as I have done to you.

Then He shows us the results of a selfless, serving attitude:

“If you know these things, blessed are you if you do them” (John 13:17)

We need to remind ourselves who we are talking about here:

We're talking about the Jesus, the Son of God, the Lamb of God, Prince of Peace, Living water, the Bread of Life. Our Redeemer our Righteousness. The Light of the World. The Alpha and Omega, King of Kings and Lord of Lords - yet he kneels down and washes our feet...

Surely -we must do the same. Amen

If you know these things, happy are you if you do them.

Rev David Startup, OSJ

All quotations are from the American King James Version

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SERMON on “Our Rocks and Our Stones”

I've been thinking about rocks and stones recently whilst visiting our son here in New Zealand. It is now early April 2017 as we near our most Holy season of Eastertide.

I recall to mind rocks and stones because many earthquakes occur that we outside New Zealand never learn about.

You know, rocks and stones are a frequent Biblical image, representing a number of important concepts, and some very good moral lessons.

Here are just a few in passing, but I want to comment on one of them in particular

First, there's the founding of the Universal Church: Note also the words, NOT Roman Catholic, Not Methodist, Not Anglican but simply MY CHURCH. "I tell you, you are Peter, which means 'The Rock,' and on this rock I will build my church." (Matthew 16:18)

And an important lesson about the stability we can find in following Christ: "Everyone then who hears these words of mine and acts on them will be like a wise man who built his house on rock." (Matthew 7:24)

The famous love and compassion of Christ: "Is there anyone among you who, if your child asks for bread, will give a stone?" (Matthew 7:9)

Forgiveness (we're all less than perfect, by the way, but not necessarily for the reasons you've been told in other churches): "When they kept on questioning him, he straightened up and said to them, 'Let anyone among you who is without sin be the first to throw a stone.'" (John 8:7)

Christ's resurrection itself: "Early on the first day of the week, while it was still dark, Mary Magdalene came to the tomb and saw that the stone had been removed from the tomb." (John 20:1)

And spiritual nourishment: "...all drank the same spiritual drink. For they drank from the spiritual rock that followed them, and the rock was Christ." (1 Corinthians 10:4)

But there's one more I'd like to talk about today. I think it's the most important reference to a rock or a stone for me, and for many of you who sit here today, celebrating the founding of a new, loving, welcoming, inclusive and reconciling Church in Morriston, the UK even the World.

"Jesus said to them, 'The stone that the builders rejected has become the cornerstone.'" (Matthew 21:42)

Jesus built the Christian church on stones the builders rejected on people seen by the society of his day as outcasts.

Now, Christ's contemporaries – the religious leaders of His day - were wrong to cast them out – we know that now, from the perspective of history and advances in human growth and enlightenment.

But here are some of the kinds of people cast aside in the time of Christ – people who were superstitiously thought to be possessed

by demons; people who had socially-stigmatised illnesses, like leprosy, which we now see not as a punishment from God, but simply a medically-curable infection; many different women, especially outspoken women, who were treated as property rather than as human beings.

In fact, a prominent thread of Church tradition holds – wrongly, according to modern scholarship – that Mary Magdalene was a prostitute, when it is much more likely she was a patron and financial supporter of Christ's ministry, and one of His original and most-beloved Disciples.

Christ founded His Church with, by and for these people, all while reserving His harshest words not for those cast out by society, but for the very religious leaders, and their followers, who stigmatised them.

How many of you have been rejected, treated like second-class citizens, or even as outcasts by society at large, or by prominent religious leaders? Rejected because of gender? Marital status, such as living together outside of marriage, or because of divorce and remarriage? Rejected for your theological views, or your beliefs about issues such as same sex blessings, family-planning, or stem-cell research, or your views about end-of-life issues? Rejected because of your views not accepting of papal infallibility, clergy celibacy, or ordination of women? Rejected for wanting to have a voice in how the Church is operated and administered?

How many of you have been refused a Sacrament, like Baptism, because a baby's parents weren't "properly" married in the eyes of another Church? I can tell you story after story, of my 47 years in ministry, yes 47 years as Chaplain in many roles.

The baptising of babies who had been turned away from other Catholic and Anglican churches, because the parents were too poor, not married, not married through the church, hadn't received all of their sacraments, where many parents were doctors on duty throughout the night saving lives unable to attend Church due to being delayed on duty at the hospital A&E departments. Even Police and Fire Officers on shift duties. I could continue on and on and on. How many of you have heard of children rejected for their First Holy Communion, because of a learning disability that impaired their ability to memorise prayers or responses?

For Heaven's sake! Jesus would never have permitted this behaviour if He were amongst us physically today, nor does He do so Spiritually. Jesus, you and I know, would have rebuked them quite sternly. And what a good expression to use For Heaven's sake!

How many of you know of people seeking marriage, turned away from the Church – rejected - because one person wasn't Catholic, or wouldn't sign a document stating they'd raise their children within the Catholic Faith, nor raise them as Roman Catholics? Jesus would never have tolerated these draconian decisions, and all MAN made, never authorised by Jesus himself.

What about those seeking a Blessing for themselves. Having remained in a sound relationship for many years? Who feel more comfortable with themselves than just the relationship, and IN LOVE with each other. Those rejected by Churches who preach love, but don't recognise it when it stands before them, or stares them in the eye?

Being rejected for Ordination, or even admission to a Religious Training Establishment or seminary, because of being married?

Rejected for speaking the truth? For having an open and unbiased mind? How many of you have been cast out for following this advice from St. Augustine, one of the twelve Doctors of the Church, and patron saint of brewers, printers, theologians, the alleviation of sore eyes, and a number of cities and dioceses.

It was St Augustine who himself turned his life around, little wonder the following words are attributable to him, "When your conscience and the Church conflict, follow your conscience."

When rejected from joining Catholic spouses, partners or family members at the Altar Rail, because you're not a Roman Catholic, nor a member of the Orthodox church and aren't good enough to share in what the Church teaches us is the most important gift we can receive – the Body and Blood of Christ?

Have I missed out anyone? Is there a single person today who hasn't struggled with one or more of these issues? Who hasn't

been condemned by other Christians – rejected – because you didn't fit neatly into someone else's mould?

Well, have I got good news for you!

“Jesus said, ‘The stone that the builders rejected has become the cornerstone.’” (Matthew 21:42)

And you – and you, and you, and you – can be the cornerstone of THIS church.....Our loving caring and empathic ‘ People’s Church.’ You will be most welcomed at The Oratory of St Luke the Physician Church of which I am the Parish Priest and now elevated to Bishop.

All of you who have been rejected by other churches, and everyone else too, will be the welcomed and the cornerstone here.

Now, I’m thinking about another “stone” story. You won’t find this one in the Bible. But it’s a story I’d like to tell you today. You may have heard it or one similar!

A homeless and hungry man knocked on the door of a house one day. The door was answered by a woman and her partner... people of great love and Christian compassion. They asked how they could help this dishevelled man.

“Oh, it is I who have come to help you,” said the man. “But I need some help to be able to teach this lesson. Do you know how to

make soup from a stone?”

Now, the couple were really intrigued. “No,” they said. “Is that really possible?” “Oh, yes,” said the man. “In fact, I have a perfect stone right here in my hand,” and he opened it to show a small, smooth round rock in his palm. “But I need a pot of boiling water, and have no means to make fire.”

With a touch of hesitation, but filled with curiosity, the couple invited the man into their kitchen. Soon, a large pot of water was boiling on the stove. “Now,” said the man. “Let me drop in the stone, and soon we’ll have soup.”

All three watched the stone rattle and bounce in the bottom of the stockpot, counselled in patience by the mysterious stranger.

The silence was soon broken. “Do you happen to have an onion you could spare?” asked the homeless man. “I find a little onion makes the stone soup taste even better.”

The couple selected a nice big onion from a basket in the kitchen, and soon it was sliced and dropped into the boiling water. “How about a bit of salt and pepper?” asked the man. And a bit later, “You know, some people like carrots in their stone soup.” All were happily added, as eventually were a number of other ingredients – celery, noodles, tomatoes, some peppers, and various other delicious additions.

Before you know it, Stone Soup was served! All agreed it was quite tasty, and the couple thanked the man for teaching them this marvellous lesson, before sending him on his way with the leftovers.

Here (motioning around the room) we have a small and simple space.

Here (turning to the altar) we have our “stone.” Our Altar Stone.

Here (gesturing toward the people) we have some rocks. You are our rocks. Now, compared to some of the large churches and cathedrals in town, we don’t have much, do we?

But with this “stone” we can make wonderful soup – we can make a strong, and vibrant, and healthy, and spiritually nourishing faith community! Because each of you has gifts you can add to the soup. I’m not talking about carrots or onions or celery, of course.

I’m talking about the gift of song. Or the gift to play songs on our organ or CD player. Or artistic talent. Organisational skills. Fundraising ability. Strong heads, and hearts, and hands. Knowledge of accounting or the law. Business acumen. Teaching skills.

A love of ritual and ceremony, and a desire to participate in it as an altar server, or member within Holy Minor Orders.

Leadership skills. Experience serving on non-profit boards, or lacking that experience, the desire to learn! Or simply the ability to stop by the supermarket to pick up some biscuits, milk and fruit juice on your way to our Holy Eucharist or Mass. Everyone can contribute something to our feast.

That's what it's going to take to make our soup. That's what it will take to turn these stones – these rocks - into a united faith community where everyone is welcome, where everyone is included and loved – not for who they can or might be someday, but for who they ARE today. Just as they are.

Christ again, from 1 Peter 2:5 - "...like living stones, let yourselves be built into a spiritual house, to be a son holy priesthood, to offer spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ."

We are the stones the builders have rejected. So we are the corner stones. We are also the stones that make nourishing soup. Like Peter, we are the rocks. Upon these rocks will we found our Church. Upon these rocks present here today we have found a new UNITED FAITH community – that of the Oratory of St Luke the Physician. Together WE ARE THE CHURCH.

+ David Bennett OSJ.

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John 20 v 11 – 18

We have all been through the sadness and joy of Easter, but have we ever thought fully of how the women in Jesus' life reacted at this time, women weren't considered as being truthful when they reported back to the disciples that Jesus wasn't in the tomb, so let us look at one woman in particular.

Let us look at Mary Magdala who she was and where she came from. According to my "Who's who in the Bible" Mary came from Magdala a town located on the Sea of Galilee, she was a friend of Joanna the wife of Herod Antipas, She had been healed of evil spirits and was the one of the women who had been healed of evil spirits and diseases" (Luke 20 verse 2)

As Jesus went through every city and village preaching and bringing the glad tidings of the Kingdom of God. (Luke 8 verse 1 – 3). and adds that the twelve were with him and certain women. Luke specifies Mary Magdalene, as well as Joanna and Susana and many others who looked after Jesus and his disciples out of their own means.

To think of women as disciples in training for leadership violated Jewish custom but Jesus broke the mold in His relationship with women. Women most certainly were among the disciples.

Jesus' twelve disciples had left their occupations to join Christ in His ministry and Luke tells us that it was primarily women who

provided funds to buy food and other necessities. Early Jewish literature makes it clear that well-to-do women were frequent contributors to well-known rabbis and their students.

Church tradition long identified Mary as the “woman of the city” (Luke 7 verse 37) a sinner who came to Jesus while he was dining at the home of the Pharisee and anointed his feet with her tears and wiped them with her hair. However, since Luke does not give the name of this woman in that story and introduces Mary Magdalene almost immediately afterwards, it is unlikely he considered them to be the same.

A more plausible conclusion is that Mary was a woman of high standing and not the prostitute she was said to have been. Mary had been healed from seven demons, demons in Jesus' day meant such illnesses as Epilepsy, fits, mental disorders of every kind, which does not bring her into the category of a prostitute.

No one loved Jesus so much as Mary Magdalene. He had done something for her that no one else could do and she would not forget. Tradition has always had it that Mary was a scarlet woman, whom Jesus reclaimed and forgave and purified. Mary had sinned but she also loved and love was the only thing she brought to Jesus.

Apparently in Palestine it was the custom to visit the tomb of a loved one for three days. It was believed that for three days the spirit of the dead person hovered round the tomb, then it departed.

Jesus' friends couldn't come to the tomb on the Sabbath because this would have been breaking the law , the Sabbath is, of course, our Saturday , so it was Sunday morning that Mary came to the tomb.

She was very early, it was the grey dark before dawn, but Mary could no longer stay away.

Can you imagine how she felt, when she arrived and found to stone from the entrance of the tomb rolled away and the tomb empty. She had followed Jesus faithfully right to the end and not run away like the disciples had, she was at the crucifixion with Mary his Mother and the other women, now she was hear at the tomb. The first to come, and he wasn't there. Her first thoughts were that the Jews had moved him, not satisfied with the crucifying him they were inflicting further indignations on him, and there were people who robbed tombs. She must have been devastated, and she rushed back to find Peter and John.

Someone has called this story the greatest recognition scene of all literature. To Mary belongs the glory of being the first person to see the risen Christ. She had come back to the tomb after taking her message to Peter and John, and then must have been left behind in their race to the tomb so by the time she she got there they had gone. So she stood their weeping. There is no need to seek for elaborate reasons why Mary couldn't see Jesus .

The simple fact was that she was weeping and could not see him through her tears.

We wouldn't have seen him if we had been crying like she was, her whole conversation with the one she thought was the gardener shows love. "If you are the man who has removed him. Tell me where you have laid him and I will take him away. How she would have managed it, we can only wonder she hadn't thought of that problem. Her one desire was to weep her love over Jesus' dead body. As soon as she had answered the person whom she took to be the gardener, she must have turned again to the tomb and so turned her back on Jesus. Then he called her "MARY" and her single answer 'Master' ('Rabboni' in Aramaic)

Mary was the first one to give witness to the resurrection, for she "went and told the disciples that she had seen the Lord and that he had spoken these things to her. (John 20 v 18)

That the disciples didn't believe Mary was due to the fact that she was a women, but then doubting Thomas didn't believe what the disciples told him. I suppose it was only natural, they had seen Jesus crucified and buried, it was impossible.

The reaction of others to Mary's news doesn't change the fact that she was chosen to be among the first to hear God;s good news and the very first to see and speak to the risen Lord. Mary was not a loner. With this one exception she is always seen in company with others.

So we see in the passage from John two very simple and powerful reasons why Mary did not recognise Jesus.

1. She could not recognise him because she was in tears. They blinded her eyes so that she could not see. When we lose and dear one there is always sorrow in our hearts and tears or unshed in our eyes. But one thing we must always remember - at such a time, our sorrow is in essence selfish. It is our loneliness, our loss, our desolation that we are thinking. We cannot be weeping for the one who has gone to be the guest of God, it is for ourselves we weep. That is natural and inevitable. At the same time we must never allow our tears blind us to the glory of heaven. Tears there must be but through the tears we should glimpse the glory
2. She could not recognise Jesus because she insisted on facing in the wrong direction. She could not take her eyes off the tomb so had her back to him. Again it is often so with us. At such a time, our eyes are upon the cold earth of the grave, but we must wrench our eyes away from that. That is not where our loved ones are their worn out bodies may be there, but the real person is in the heavenly places in the fellowship of Jesus face to face, and in the glory of God.

How Mary's faith is forever stamped on the pages of sacred history. Many overlook Mary and stress the roles of Peter and John, but she was a most faithful and honoured disciple of Jesus.

Today it is all too easy for us to be saved by Jesus and then go our own way. We're faithful when we need his help, but then our prayers lose their intensity. Mary never seemed to lose her intensity. Mary loved her Lord. May we all be like Mary in this.

It is fascinating that Jesus chose Mary to be the first to see Him after the resurrection and the first to share the good news. It's curious that if Mary Magdalene were with us today many church pulpits would be closed to her. But it is wonderful that our pulpits are ever open to women who share in the love of Jesus, but whether or not we are in a position to share a pulpit we can all share Christ with our neighbours and friends.

Unice Brearley, OSJ



St Leonard's Chapel,
Hazlewood Castle, Yorkshire,
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OSJ Services 2017



Services take place on the FIRST and THIRD Sundays of each month at 6.00 p.m.

Services, unless otherwise stated, take the form of a short and very gentle communion service, lasting between 20 and 30 minutes.

All are very welcome and all may receive.

1st January, 2017

5th February, 2017

5th March, 2017

2nd April, 2017

7th May, 2017

4th June, 2017

2nd July, 2017

6th August, 2017

3rd September, 2017

1st October, 2017

5th November, 2017

3rd December, 2017

15th January, 2017

19th February, 2017

19th March, 2017

16th April, 2017

21st May, 2017

18th June, 2017

16th July, 2017

20th August, 2017

17th September, 2017

15th October, 2017

19th November, 2017

17th December, 2017


We use a non-alcoholic wine so children may take part too.

There is no requirement to be baptised or confirmed.

Additional Services:

Remembrance Sunday: 12th November 10.35 a.m.

Midnight Mass: 24th December 11.20 p.m.

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|  | <h1 style="text-align: center;">The Order of St James Newsletter</h1> <p style="text-align: center;">June 2017</p> |  |
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Luke 7 verses 36 to chapter 8 v 3

In the previous 5 verses of this chapter Jesus accuses the Pharisees of being two faced. John the Baptist came neither eating bread or drinking wine but the Pharisees accused him of being a mad eccentric and that he had a demon. The Son of Man came living life to the full eating and drinking and they accused him of gluttony and a wine drinker. A friend of the tax collectors and sinners so WHY in these verses does Simon the Pharisee ask Jesus to a meal.

Let me set the scene, Simon would be a wealthy man so his house would be built round a court yard which would have beautiful gardens and a fountain, this in the form of a hollow square. In warm weather meals would be served in the courtyard. In the middle east the guests did not sit, but reclined at table. They lay on low couches, resting on the left elbow leaving the right arm free, seems a terribly uncomfortable way of eating to me, they have their feet stretched out behind them, and during the meal sandals were taken off. This explains why the woman was standing besides Jesus' feet.

It was the custom that when a Rabbi was invited outsiders were allowed to wander in and out of the courtyard at will, listening to what the Rabbi had to say, and I suppose we would say just being nosy. This situation was why the woman in question was present, as at any other time, being a prostitute she would have been banned from the courtyard.

Certainly one question jumps out of this reading WHY DID Simon invite

Jesus, was he a secret admirer of Jesus and wanted to find out more about him?

This wouldn't seem the reason as he hadn't even offered Jesus his guest the normal hospitality of such an occasion, this being the host would place his hand on the guest's shoulder and give him the kiss of peace, also cool water should have been poured over the dusty feet of Jesus to cleanse and comfort him , and either a pinch of sweet smelling incense was burned or a drop of attar of roses was placed on the guests head. These things were the common courtesy and tradition of the Jewish faith.

The possibility of him being an admirer is dismissed with his lack of normal courtesy.

Had Simon invited Jesus with the deliberate intention of trying to trap him into saying something that he could then make a charge against him, but this seems unlikely as he called Jesus Rabbi. On the other hand he could just have been a collector of celebrities , a person who must put himself in a position so that he could boast that he had dined with this startling young Galilean That would explain the strange combination of a certain respect but with the omission of the normal courtesies. Simon was a man who tried to patronize Jesus.

We have all come across this type of person, people who can be very patronising and actually very unfriendly.

On the other hand the woman in question was a bad woman, a prostitute, who would never have otherwise been allowed into the courtyard. She had heard Jesus speak from the edge of the crowd and realised that he could help her and get her back onto the road of normality. As with all Jewish women she wore a little phial of concentrated perfume round her neck, these were called alabasters, and they were very costly. She wanted to pour this over his feet, she was so filled with the desire for his help that when she did this tears streamed down her cheeks and fell upon his feet.

It was extreme immodesty for a Jewish woman to appear in public with

her hair unbound, The fact that this woman loosed her long hair in public just showed how she had forgotten everyone except Jesus.

This story though demonstrates a contrast between two different attitudes of mind and heart.

Simon was a very self sufficient person, someone who knew it all, and didn't think he needed Jesus or even wanted to accept Jesus' teaching.

How near to this category do we come?

In contrast the woman who poured costly perfume onto Jesus' feet and washed them with her tears and dried them with her hair, shows she was in desperate need of Jesus' forgiveness, her love had shown dramatically in her actions. The perfume had been all that she had had to offer but she had given it willingly and lovingly. Do we come to Jesus with this amount of love in our hearts and gratitude knowing he alone is always with us, whether we acknowledge him or not.

We have come across other people in the Gospels who have come to Jesus in unusual circumstances because of their desire to be forgiven and with his tremendous love they have been forgiven.

We have Matthew the Tax collector who left everything to follow Jesus.

Then there is Zacchaeus, who being very small, climbed a tree so that he could see Jesus. These people and many more were very conscious of this burning need for the overwhelming love of Jesus

As we can see Simon is appalled. The woman's behaviour flouts all convention. He could not cope with a notorious sinner, a woman at that, carrying on in such a scandalous manner. Simon himself is not entirely innocent when it comes to convention. He had failed to extend to Jesus the regular features of good hospitality. V 44 – 46 – the pot calling the kettle black.

How do we cope with unconventional behaviour in church?

Do we require people to abide by the rules, or do we give space for freedom and flexibility?

If we see people turning up in inappropriate clothes, expressing themselves emotionally in worship do we wish they would control themselves?

In other words are we a bit like Simon?

Jesus wasn't just the friend of sinners. In Hans Kings expression he was the friend of women, too. Women counted for little in the ancient world. They were expected to avoid the company of men in public. They could not go beyond the 'court of women' in the Temple, Jewish historian Josephus regarded them as in every respect inferior to men.

This happens in various places even today, The clash between men and women at the whaling wall in Jerusalem, when the women were demonstrating that they should be allowed to pray there not just the men. And in Egypt where women were demonstrating for better rights. We find even in England prejudices against women still exist. It takes a long time for things to change.

But Jesus defied such prejudices. Women are mentioned among his followers, and wasn't it Mary Magdalene to whom he made himself known after his resurrection, when he told her to go and tell his disciples. Who, naturally at that time, her being a women, they didn't believe her.

The Church through its 2000 years of history has largely failed to live up to Jesus' example. Where is our church now in standing up to prejudice and affirming the worth of the losers in the world?

Jesus also refuses to go along with stereotyping people. He doesn't deny that the woman was a sinner, but declares that her faith has saved her and that she is forgiven. Simon could not get beyond his stereotype of the woman as a sinner.

Sometimes stereotyping can be humorous. Motorbike and Formula 1

racing commentator Murray Walker remarked on an incident when he was on motorbike duty. Murray was in the pit lane at Donington Park and when a stroppy chap approached him and demanded. "What are you doing here" You're a car man!"

Sometimes it's more serious William Dalrymple tells of a notorious brigand in the seventh century Egypt who converted and requested admission to a monastery. At first he was turned away because of his past and supposed inability to cope with monastic life. He was only admitted when vengeance-seekers outside threatened his life. Thereafter he became a model monk.

Stereotyping becomes damaging when for example a child starts a new school proceeded by a reputation as lazy or troublesome, has a different accent or different religion.. What releases a person from being imprisoned in past reputation? Does our Church perpetuate or challenge stereotypes.

Jesus forgiveness releases us from guilt and shame in Luke's beautiful story it is not that the woman's show of love has won forgiveness for her, it is the other way round. As in the parable about the creditor and two debtors, it is forgiveness that releases the woman's love, joy and gratitude.

Simon's difficulty in loving suggests that he hasn't received forgiveness, hasn't even felt the need of forgiveness. Forgiving little, loving little, may be the story of his life. But it is never too late to turn to Christ acknowledge our sin, and receive that glorious declaration "Your sins are forgiven" and go on our way rejoicing and in peace. Is this the moment to make that acknowledgement and receive that forgiveness?

The one thing that does shut us off from God is self sufficiency. And the strange thing is that the better we are the more keenly we feel our sin. Paul could speak of sinners "Of whom I am the foremost (1 Timothy 1 v 15) Francis of Assisi could say. "There is nowhere a more wretched and more miserable a sinner than I " It is true to say that the greatest of sins is to be conscious of no sin, but a sense of need will open the door to the forgiveness of God because God is love and love's greatest glory is

to be needed.

How do we see Jesus . Simon thought Jesus might be a prophet but by the end of this incident he has changed his mind. How do we see Jesus? Bringer of forgiveness, through his death and resurrection? Appearances can deceive.

Let us be honest about the Pharisee, who may be lurking in us. Let us be compassionate in our view of the people we meet. And let us be clear about our need for Jesus as Lord, If we haven't already done so let us get rid of our prejudices and come to him with open hearts and minds and accept his love and forgiveness.

Unice Brearley, OSJ.

THE WATCHMAKER, CHILDREN, AND IS THERE A GOD?

I genuinely do BELIEVE there is a God, though I confess having never seen him. "No man has seen God at any time."

God says, "No man shall see me and live."

'There is a God. He that cometh to God must believe he is'.

But we all believe in things we have never seen. We have never seen the wind, yet we know it blows because we see trees and branches swaying and moving, we also feel the wind on our faces and sometimes we struggle because of its mighty strength to stay upright when we are walking.

Like the wind, God may exist, though not seen by us. We also believe that many men are now alive, whom we have never seen

nor met, but whose works we have seen, or whose fame we have heard of.

Therefore, is it not as foolish as it is wicked to doubt whether there be a God, simply because we never saw him.

But I will share with you why I believe there is a God. Many years ago a man went into a shop with four little children, it was into a watchmakers shop, there a man brought out a little box, and put a key into a small hole in the side of it, and wound it up. He then set down the box, and touched a spring, and the top flew open, and a little bird, not as large as a hummingbird, hopped out, and flapped its wings, and sang, or seemed to sing, a pretty tune.

When it had sung its tune, it hopped down into the box and could not be seen anymore. It was made of brass and silver and gold. It was very small and very beautiful.

The little boys and girls that were with the man were much pleased. One boy said, "How pretty it is." The other said, "How it sings." And the young lady said, "I wish I had it. I would give a pound for it."

She was told the price of it was six hundred pounds. The young lady asked, "Who made it?" The elderly gentleman, a very clever and master watchmaker, told her it was made by a man in Geneva, in Switzerland.

Have you guessed what type of clock this may be?

All left the store in good spirits and went out to a bird sanctuary. Here were many living birds. Some were black, some were blue, some were red, some were yellow, some were green, and many were speckled. One had a white body, and red head, and black wings.

One was black all over except the wings, which were of the colour of gold. Every one of them could hop from branch to branch, and from tree to tree. They could build nests, and find food for themselves and for their young ones. They could all make some noise. The notes of most of them were very sweet. One of them could out sing all the rest. He had the loudest noise. He had the notes of the quail, the jay, the blue-bird, the robin, the magpie, and a dozen others. He is called the mocking-bird.

The sun shone clearly, and a little rain the night before had made the air cool and pleasant. So all walked through the sanctuary, and found some pretty flowers. They then came to a cool spring, and took a drink of water. Near the spring was a large rock, and on it they all sat down to rest. "Now, is not this fine?" said One of the group. "Yes, yes, yes, yes," was heard from all. Just then two or three birds near us sang sweetly, as if to please us. The man thought it was a good time to talk. So he said, "If a man in Geneva made the bird in the box, how come all the living birds are here? Did they make themselves?" One of the boys replied, "How could

they make themselves?

I saw in my book the other day, that 'nothing can make nothing.'"

"Well," said the wise old man, "did the man in Geneva make them?"

The young lady answered, "No! he never saw them. He could not make such birds as these. The bird in the box is the best he could make, and it cannot lay eggs, and hatch young ones, and fly about, and build nests, and eat cherries."

The man said, "Did they just grow without anyone making them?"

The younger boy replied, "How could they?"

Then the young lady said, "I can tell you how they came here. God made them. No man could make them. None could make them but God himself. I know there is a God, because there are so many pretty birds."

The man added, "You are all right, my children. There is a God. If these little birds were put under the water, they would all die, yet there are thousands of living things in the water, that would die if they were brought out of it. God has fitted the birds to the air, and the fishes to the sea. He has made everything good, and we ought to believe that he is. His works are all around us. They are many, and great, and wise.

Let us never doubt that there is a God.” Lessons for us If there is a God, we ought to believe in him, and think of him. We ought to love him, and obey him, and not sin against him.

We ought also to trust in him. Little birds do his will, and praise him in their way. We ought to praise him in our pretty hymns, and in our hearts.

And we ought to pray to him, as he has taught us: “Our Father which art in heaven, Hallowed be thy name. Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done in 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, and the power, and the glory, for ever and ever.” AMEN .

+David Bennett. OSJ.

A SHORT BIBLE STUDY: Revelation 3:14-22

The below study you will note has everyday words used such as hot, cold, lukewarm, all can be associated to fluid, liquid and blood. The same equally applies to food we eat.

Once again it reminds me of the connection of the Holy Eucharist, Mass, and Communion, where we have the Host as food to sustain us and the wine (blood) to refresh us. If we wish to really push the boat out we could also observe three words

hot, cold and lukewarm, in that respect there are three titles which are used to describe The Father, The Son and The Holy Spirit. THE TRINITY.

So if this study was for example food or drink how would we approach it, and describe it. I wish that this short study will look at Revelation 3:14-22 in a fresh approach, and not be dreary!

So let us proceed:-

We Would Open It:

What food or drinks do you like served lukewarm?

Pause upon this question for a moment? Then reflect upon it in relation to your faith and of Jesus Christ and the Holy Spirit?

We Would Dig Into It:

1. *Read Revelation 3:14* and answer the following questions:

- a) What three titles does Jesus use for Himself?
- b) Which of these three titles stands out the most to you and why?

2. *Read Revelation 3:15-17* and answer the following questions:

- a) What does "hot and cold" refer to in this text?
- b) Why is Jesus so upset about the Laodicean's lukewarm attitude? What effect could

it have?

c) How were the Laodiceans deceived? Who caused the deception?

3. Read *Revelation 3:18-22* and answer the following questions:

a) What exactly are the riches that Jesus is offering to the church?

b) When Jesus disciplines us, what does it teach us about how He feels toward us?

c) Why would Jesus offer the Laodiceans the opportunity to turn back to Him after all they had done?

d) How can a person be "victorious" in God's eyes? Is it something we do, something we believe, or both? Or, ask yourself how would I interpret someone in my eyes as "victorious?"

We Would Certainly Reflect on it:

1. If Jesus addressed our church like He did the Laodicean church, how would you react?

2. Would you describe your relationship with Christ as "hot," "cold," or "lukewarm"? Why?

3. If you could give advice to a person who is "lukewarm" what would it be?

4. In what areas of your life have riches kept you from experiencing the fullness of a relationship with Christ?

5. How does it make you feel to know that Jesus knows “all the things you do” (v. 15)?

6. How can we pray for you today?

What Would We Pray About: ?

Think about what you wish to pray for, write down your thoughts in a little book that you could keep with you.

Enter your prayers, your thoughts and the names of all others you may feel may benefit from knowing that you care and pray for them.

With all daily blessings to you, your family, all friends, and work colleagues. May you protect and offer love and compassion to all those whom you care for.

+ David Bennett, OSJ

News from the OSJ Philippines Province

OSJ Philippines has been in hiatus for the past two years as we settle things for the future of ministry in the Philippines. After a length of stay here in UK, we have now booked a trip for later in 2017 after Gladdys’ visa is renewed. In the meantime, however, we have remained active. Gladdys has helped plan and organise two re-unions; the first for her former high school and the second one, scheduled to take place on the last Saturday in April, for the alumni of Pangasinan State University. While we were both present for the high school reunion, which included a concluding Eucharist, Gladdys has been busy via video link and social media helping pull together this week's university re-union.

At this stage, our desire is that we become simply a faithful "presence of Jesus" in the Philippines and also in the UK, doing whatever our hands find to do with all our heart and soul. Our heart is to encourage and serve people; to draw people to Jesus; to love and care for the poor; and to enjoy meaningful prayer times with extended family and friends - those who actually form the basis of OSJ Philippines. We do have blue-prints for the building of a chapel in a rural area; and we have also a scale model building that is currently in England, if anyone should like to see it.

This may come as a surprise, but we are not currently soliciting for building funds. That is because I am feeling more and more that any such chapel should be a simple affair that will probably be annexed to a private home, and we feel it will have more value if locally funded and maintained as much as possible.

We know and are confident that our Lord will provide whatever is needed for His work in His time. It is important that any place of dedicated worship have proper ongoing supervision, so in a way, we are simply returning to a figure of worship that was common in the early church for more than 200 years, where the Eucharist was often celebrated in a specially prepared or converted private dwelling, and was self-supporting, although in full fellowship with the other local Churches.

We are very grateful for the ongoing prayers and fellowship of the OSJ and friends, especially the background prayers and support of our Bishop Ian and Bishop David in Wales, and look forward to gathering together with other members here in the UK before we embark on our next trip to the Philippines. We trust that we will be fruitful in our lives, being aware that "ministry" means "service" and very content for most of that to be "hidden" from the public eye.

Rev John Ruffle, National Director Philippines, OSJ

OSJ Pakistan: current developments.

Rev Dr Samson Astle has confirmed that work on the church centre under development in Pakistan is nearing completion and the roof is now being completed. There is still a lot to do but the major building work is nearly completed.

He has asked all members to continue to pray for OSJ Pakistan and the work it is committed to. He has also asked us to pray that sponsors might come forward to help in completing this particular project.

OSJ UK: current developments.

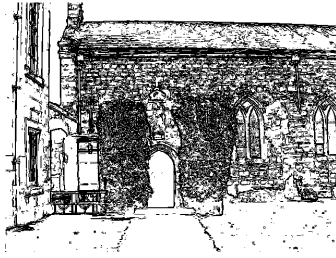
Many of you will know of Unice because she is a regular contributor to the OSJ newsletter. She has been in hospital after falling and is recovering. Please pray for her.

OSJ Wales: current developments.

+David has now returned from his visit to New Zealand.

OSJ Kenya: current developments.

Pastor Patrick has made available to me a breakdown of the current spending and financial needs of the Kitale orphanage. Please ask if you wish to receive a copy by e-mail. If you wish to support him, whether in prayer or financially, then please do contact him by e-mail.



St Leonard's Chapel,
Hazlewood Castle, Yorkshire,
LS24 9NJ

OSJ Services 2017



Services take place on the FIRST and THIRD Sundays of each month at 6.00 p.m.

Services, unless otherwise stated, take the form of a short and very gentle communion service, lasting between 20 and 30 minutes.

All are very welcome and all may receive.

1st January, 2017

5th February, 2017

5th March, 2017

2nd April, 2017

7th May, 2017

4th June, 2017

2nd July, 2017

6th August, 2017

3rd September, 2017

1st October, 2017

5th November, 2017

3rd December, 2017

15th January, 2017

19th February, 2017

19th March, 2017

16th April, 2017

21st May, 2017

18th June, 2017

16th July, 2017

20th August, 2017

17th September, 2017

15th October, 2017

19th November, 2017

17th December, 2017

We use a non-alcoholic wine so children may take part too.

There is no requirement to be baptised or confirmed.

Additional Services:

Remembrance Sunday: 12th November 10.35 a.m.

Midnight Mass: 24th December 11.20 p.m.

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|  | <p style="text-align: center;">The Order of St James Newsletter</p> <p style="text-align: center;">June 2017</p> |  |
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Matthew 14 v 113 - 21

In our reading this morning we find Jesus had just heard of the death of his cousin John the Baptist, and must have felt for him, also his disciples had just returned from their travels, and they were all gathered I've no doubt he would want to get away from the crowds for a while, so he went with his disciples to Bethsaida but the crowds were having non of this and., they followed him, but despite his grief for John welcomed them.

This is the only miracle of Jesus which you can find in all four Gospels. Matthew, Mark, Luke and John.

The twelve have just come back from their tour, and this was a time when Jesus really needed to be alone with them to hear all their news about their travels

Most people would have resented the invasion of their hard-won privacy. How would we feel if we had sought out some lonely place to be

with our best friends and suddenly a clamour of people turned up with their insistent demands. Sometimes we are too busy to be disturbed, but to Jesus human need took first place.

Would we have followed the crowd, When we see a queue, do we join it? We certainly would have done during the war, expecting something good to turn up, but in this case who did the crowd think they were following? As I have said before the reason Jesus went to this deserted place was to take in the news of John's death and to hear the news from his disciples. But the crowd were unlikely to be offering comfort for his loss, all they thought about was seeking healing for themselves, which he gave.

There are many ways of looking at this event, here are two of them.

The evening came, home was far away, and the people were tired and hungry. Jesus astonishingly ordered his disciples to give them a meal. There are two ways in which we can quite honestly look at this miracle. First we can see in it simply a miracle in which Jesus created food for this vast multitude. Second some people think that this is what happened. The people were hungry and they were utterly selfish. They all had something with them, but they would not even produce it for themselves in case they had to share it with others. The Twelve laid before the multitude their little store and thereupon others were moved to produce theirs, and in the end there was more than enough for

everyone. So it may be regarded as a miracle which turned selfish suspicious fold into generous people, a miracle of Christ's changing determined self-interest into a willingness to share.

Before Jesus distributed the food he blessed it, he said grace. There was a Jewish saying that “he who enjoys anything without thanksgiving is as though he robbed God” The blessing said in every home in Palestine before every meal ran “Blessed art thou Yahweh our God, King of the world who caused bread to come from the earth” Jesus would not eat without giving thanks to the giver of all good gifts. This is a story which tells us many things.

At the end they took up twelve basketfuls of fragments. Are any of you like me, I had always wondered where these baskets came from, but apparently no orthodox Jew travelled without his basket. The Romans made a joke of the Jew and his basket. There were two reasons for the basket which was a wickerwork affair shaped like a narrow-necked pitcher, broadening out as it went down. First, the orthodox Jew carried his own food supplies in his basket, so that he would be certain of eating food that was ceremonially clean and pure. Second many a Jew was an accomplished beggar, and into his basket went the proceeds of his begging. The reason that there were twelve baskets is simply that there were twelve disciples. It was into their own baskets that they frugally gathered up the fragments so that nothing would be lost.

The second version of the story, gives us a wonderful insight into the attitude of Jesus and the attitude of the disciples.

It shows us two reactions to human need. When the disciples saw how late it was, and how tired and hungry the crowd were, they said, "Send them away so that they can find themselves something to eat." In effect they said "Get rid of them and let someone else look after them. -

Would this have been our reaction in the circumstances, Is it our reaction when this type of situation is put before us? But Jesus said "You give them something to eat." In effect Jesus said "These people are tired and hungry. We must do something about it." And there are always the people who when they see someone in trouble say 'Let others worry'. And there are those who say 'I must worry about my brother's or my sister's need' - which category do we come under.

It also shows two reactions to need. When the disciples were asked to give the people something to eat they insisted that 200 denari, (or 200 pence) was not enough to buy bread for them. This was more than six months wages at that time. Jesus said "What have you got" They had five loaves , small barley loaves. They had two fishes which would be the size of sardines.

This did not seem much But Jesus took it and worked wonders with it. In the hands of Jesus little is always much. We may think we have little of talent or substance to give to Jesus. That is no reason for hopeless

pessimism such as the disciples had. The one fatal thing to say is “For all I could do, it is not worth my while trying to do anything. A very big mistake for if we put ourselves into the hand of Jesus Christ, there is no telling what he can do with us and through us.

We all have talents of some sort, some we are aware of but others if we put our trust in Jesus and give him our lives and work for him marvellous things will happen and our world will be transformed.

. It would be most interesting to work out how much time Jesus spent not talking, but easing human pain and satisfying hunger. He still needs the service of human hands. The mother who have spent a lifetime cooking meals for a hungry family; the nurse, the doctor, the friend, relation or parent who has sacrificed life and time to ease another's pain; m social reformers, who have turned themselves out to seek better conditions for men and women – they have all preached far more effective sermons than the eloquent orator.

Jesus' help was generous. There was enough and more than enough. In love there is no nice calculation of the less and more. God is like that. When we sow a packet of seeds we usually have to thin the plants out and throw away far more than we can keep. God has created a world where there is more than enough for all if we will share it.

As always there is permanent truth in an action in time. In Jesus all our needs are supplied. There is a hunger of the soul there is in each of us, sometimes at least, a longing to find something in which we may invest our lives. Our hearts are restless until they rest in him. "My God will fully satisfy every need of yours" Said Paul (Philippians 4 v 19) even in the desert places of this life. When we look around society today, there is a hunger of the soul, but people don't seem to be looking in the right place for it. What are we doing to help our neighbours to find Jesus and help bring them to hear His word and see his works.

The situation on this little hillside in Bethsaida went from an awkward problem for the disciples, surrounded as they were by a huge number of hungry people, to a party with plenty to spare.

When we give away generously we do not end up with nothing, we have more, because we cannot out-give God.

Whether the food did multiply in the basket or people gave what they had, either way it was a miracle and it resulted from Jesus' influence. It may be that the mechanics of how food was shared is less significant than the meaning of the event, Jesus is the bread of life who provides enough and more than enough.

The people had followed Jesus and he gave them food, which was in many ways an ordinary Jewish meal, with a blessing, followed by sharing

eating in family groups. But without Jesus they would have been hungry. To-day we are less likely to be ill-prepared - and in such a situation there would be a fast-food van not far away. So we are less dependent on Jesus to supply practical needs.

Apparently (we may be) too self-sufficient to need God. We ought to ask ourselves about the dangers associated with this.

The people seeing the food provided would have recognised a parallel with Moses and the Israelites in the desert when God provided manna. For Christians to-day the link is to Holy Communion, in both cases there is a relationship between obedient followers and God's loving care

Connecting the miracle of Jesus in Matthew to the reading in Isaiah God calls his people. The invitation is open but it comes with a challenge, which comes to all of us today, God gives generously and he gives good gifts, but his grace needs a response. God gives in abundance, as is shown in the feeding of the 5000, but there is also responsibility and accountability. God loves his people and lifts them up, they reflect God's glory. They have what they need but to what end? What does accepting God mean to us here and now?

Unice Brearley, OSJ

Repatriation

Because of my interest in the work of military chaplains, I have amassed a number of chaplain's field communion kits and other items dating back from the turn of the 19th Century to the present time. Where I have been able, I have also attempted to get the names and stories associated with those kits that can be identified. What stories they tell too.

I obtained one kit a few years ago and the case was stamped with a name and a date. It was exceptionally complete for something over 100 years old, almost in pristine condition, and exceptionally rare. I did my research and found it belonged to an Australian chaplain who served in Gallipoli and in France during the First World War.

The following is extracted from the Australian Dictionary of Biography and compiled by David Dexter

Frederick William Wray (1864-1943), Anglican clergyman and military chaplain, was born on 29 September 1864 at Taradale, Victoria, sixth son of English-born Robert Mackie Wray, clerk, and his Irish wife Anne Rebecca, née Bury. Educated near Castlemaine, at 14 Fred joined the Victorian Volunteer Force and later the militia, serving a total of seven years. He was an undergraduate at Trinity College, University of Melbourne, in 1889-90 and decided to study for the Anglican ministry. Made deacon in 1894 and ordained priest on 22 December 1895 by Bishop F. F. Goe, Wray was minister at Dookie (1894-96) and Euroa

(1896-1900). On 4 June 1897 he was appointed chaplain in the Victorian Military Forces.

An accomplished rower, marksman and Australian Rules footballer, the 'sporting parson'—nearly six feet (183 cm) tall, weighing 15 stone (95 kg) and 'a splendid type of a muscular Christian'—sailed as chaplain with Victoria's 2nd (Mounted Rifles) Contingent and arrived in South Africa on 5 February 1900.

The contingent saw action in the Cape Colony, Orange River Colony and the Transvaal, then returned to Melbourne in December. Two bouts of enteric fever delayed Wray's repatriation until mid-1901. On 3 April 1902 he married Henrietta Olive Elizabeth Catford at Christ Church, Hawthorn. He resumed parish work, first at Yarrawonga (1902-13) and then at Rushworth, retaining his military appointment and gaining promotion to chaplain 2nd class in 1912.

On 1 December 1914 he joined the Australian Imperial Force and sailed for Egypt three weeks later. Allotted to the 4th Brigade, with particular responsibility for the 13th Battalion, he 'slipped ashore' at Gallipoli early on 26 April 1915 despite orders forbidding non-combatants from so doing. He became a familiar figure at the front line and earned the soldiers' gratitude. A fellow chaplain described him 'moving about in full view of the enemy' with 'a notebook and pencil in his hand ... busy with the work of keeping a check on the names of the dead and a list of their personal effects'. On 3 May, after the 4th Brigade had suffered heavy losses, Wray described his duties: 'During the day I did field dressing, stretcher bearing, grave digging and filling and putting the bodies in'.

Suffering from enteritis in August, he was successively taken to Malta, England and finally to Rushworth. For his service at Gallipoli he was mentioned in dispatches and appointed C.M.G.

Rejoining the 4th Brigade in Egypt in March 1916, Wray accompanied the 13th Battalion on operations in the desert and was again mentioned in dispatches. In June the brigade transferred to the Western Front, taking part in the battles of Pozières and Mouquet Farm in August. As at Gallipoli, Wray moved among the troops, giving spiritual and practical support; once more his work included assistance at dressing stations, burying the dead, sorting effects such as identity discs and pay books, and writing to the bereaved.

On 14 October he wrote a letter critical of his Church for not providing as chaplains 'those specially fitted for work among men'. Posted in December as staff chaplain to Administrative Headquarters, A.I.F., London, he became senior chaplain early in 1917. Until his overseas service ended in August 1919, he administered chaplaincy affairs from London, making periodic visits to France. He was appointed C.B.E. in June.

Returning to civilian life, in 1920 Wray was appointed canon of Holy Trinity Cathedral, Wangaratta, and in 1928 rector of that parish. Erect and square-shouldered, he kept his soldierly bearing and traversed the Wangaratta area on foot or on a bicycle, never having learned to drive a motor car. He retained his interest in sport, and was active in the affairs of returned servicemen and in Freemasonry. Wray retired in 1935.

Predeceased by his wife, he died on 18 November 1943 at his home in Sandringham, Melbourne, and was buried in the new Cheltenham cemetery. Two sons and three daughters survived him.

I posted the information I had found on the Internet along with images of the field communion kit he was issued with during 1916. Then I had an unexpected response from Australia.

To shorten the story and after a good deal of communication, the field communion kit is being returned to Rev Wray's family who have arranged to donate it to the new Shrine of Sacrifice exhibition in Melbourne where it will be on long term display. The Shrine has over one million visitors a year so it is both a generous and gracious gesture showing great wisdom.

For me personally, it is a good outcome. I have a large collection of chaplain related items that could potentially end up in a skip in a house clearance. The significance of some items I have in my stewardship is beyond price but to a casual or unlearned observer appears of little value. At least this particular item will be seen and hopefully appreciated by the many thousands of visitors to the Shrine, and far better than being stuck in a cupboard or loft somewhere and then being 'lost'.

I do have one very special item which I do want to share with you, perhaps even more special and significant than Rev Wray's field communion kit.

It is a cassock alb and it has a hole in it caused by a mortar.

It came from an army chaplain who served in Afghanistan, and I recently and very sadly learned that he had taken his own life. Often putting himself in the greatest and gravest of dangers, he gave tremendous support to others, and at a time he most needed support himself, he was let down, abandoned and betrayed by the church he faithfully served.

Sacrifice is sometimes hard to recognise, to quantify, to understand. Sacrifice is born of hardnosed and stubborn love that refuses to give into evil and shuns the overly sentimental version of over excited hormones that is often portrayed by the media driven society we live in.

There is no doubt about it - we live in a consumer society – everything appears to have a price and can be thrown away and replaced when it breaks down, our washing machines, our phones, our marriages. We are gradually being brainwashed into thinking that it applies in all areas of our lives. Even in church.

‘Don’t bother trying to fix things, just get new.’

However, some things don’t have a price – instead they have a cost, and that is quite different.

Like Chaplain Wray’s field communion kit and the more recent cassock alb, it is what they represent that makes them priceless.

The actual value of the physical things themselves is minimal. What they represent or signify are the things that will last eternally, and these things cannot be 'bought'.

Sacrifice has a lot to do with this.

The life of the Christian (even in simply trying to love God and love your neighbour in the best possible way you can with every fibre of your being) always involves some measure of sacrifice, and the more you love, the greater the sacrifice. The more we love too, the more we are wounded and the more scars we will bear, even as Christ himself was scarred. That is not the price we pay but the cost we bear, and not out of duty but love. Duty is no substitute for genuine love.

What the world did to Christ, it will do also to us simply because we carry His light in a world that would rather live in darkness. Rising above the darkness to give light we carry for Christ to others is our calling.

There will always be a cost to each one of us and we will bear the scars. I was once told that a Christian without scars caused by a genuine love is either a new Christian or is a lazy one. I have come to learn the wisdom of this. Scars heal but they never go away, just like scars in Jesus' hands and feet and side, on his back and on his head. They are always present. This may be why some (but not all) Christians bear the marks of the stigmata.

So where is this leading?

Quite simply that we as Christians become 'Shrines of Sacrifice' because of our faith, even if this manifests itself in many forms and in many different guises. It is not something that we should be concerned about or seek. It just happens.

If we do seek it or try to create it, it is false, unworthy and ingenuine.

Let life test your faith and do not be afraid.

God is faithful and will not let you down so do what you believe is right and good because you love. There is a huge difference between doing things because you want to and because you have to.

Putting it bluntly, love builds faith, duty kills it.

Don't make compromises and walk with God honestly – don't pretend that your heart's desire is His will but let His will become your heart's desire.

Let love be your own personal 'shrine of sacrifice'.

+Ian, OSJ

Comment: Grenfell Towers, London.

We were all disturbed and horrified by the fire and loss of life at Grenfell Towers in London. Messages of support for survivors were received from many parts of the world and also from many of our members.

However, I personally was disturbed at the number of unconnected communities and groups who did use the fire as a means of obtaining sound bites and presence on the media for their own particular and often political ends. This I condemn. It was mercenary behaviour, as was the attempt by one alleged 'resident' to obtain accommodation, funding and goods, after claiming he had lost all his family in the fire. He is charged and will return back to court in late July for sentencing.

I also condemn the 'fake news' items that made their way into the media, created by those who should know better and have their own agendas, in particular the story of the baby who survived 12 days after the fire, was unnecessary and was a down right lie, however well intended (hope in the face of adversity) it may have been.

A story about a miracle baby being rescued from the 16th floor of Grenfell Tower has angered social media users who shared it before finding out it was fake.

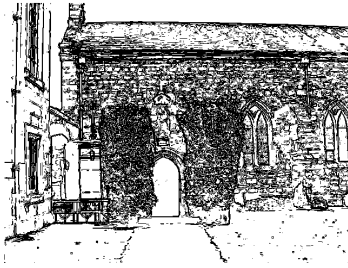
Using a BBC "breaking news" image, a link to the story then sent people to a website bearing a "Metro" logo. Neither organisation had anything to do with the story.

The author claimed that both London's Metropolitan Police and Mayor Sadiq Khan had confirmed the baby's survival.

A quick glance through Twitter confirmed neither the police nor Mr Khan tweeted about a baby being found alive 12 days after the devastating fire.

Fake 'good news' is no substitute for the real thing, no matter how much we may wish it. Lies are no substitute for the truth. It is the truth we need, even if it is not what we want to hear.

+Ian, OSJ



St Leonard's Chapel,
Hazlewood Castle, Yorkshire,
LS24 9NJ

OSJ Services 2017



Services take place on the FIRST and THIRD Sundays of each month at 6.00 p.m.
Services, unless otherwise stated, take the form of a short and very gentle
communion service, lasting between 20 and 30 minutes.
All are very welcome and all may receive.

1st January, 2017

5th February, 2017

5th March, 2017

2nd April, 2017

7th May, 2017

4th June, 2017

2nd July, 2017

6th August, 2017

3rd September, 2017

1st October, 2017

5th November ,2017

3rd December, 2017

15th January, 2017

19th February, 2017

19th March, 2017

16th April, 2017

21st May, 2017

18th June, 2017

16th July, 2017

20th August, 2017

17th September, 2017

15th October, 2017

19th November, 2017

17th December, 2017

We use a non-alcoholic wine so children may take part too.
There is no requirement to be baptised or confirmed.

Additional Services:

Remembrance Sunday: 12th November 10.35 a.m.

Midnight Mass: 24th December 11.20 p.m.

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|  | <h1>The Order of St James Newsletter</h1> <p>August 2017</p> |  |
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The Bridegroom.

I have found myself becoming increasingly interested the roles of the bride and of the groom in the wedding service. It seems we as a society have far strayed from what was understood in New Testament times – now the groom is often nothing more than ‘a guest’ at his own wedding, the bride having taken upon herself the organization of her perfect day. All that is required is that he turns up smart and on time, sober and have a speech prepared.

I may be old fashioned but this kind of attitude, even if it is generally accepted as the current social norm, is hardly reflective of a sound foundation for a marriage or an appropriate expression of real love.

Most people can organize a reasonably successful wedding, but being married, staying married and making it a real success, takes intelligence, though, care, consideration and a lot of love and patience by both parties.

So here are a few thoughts built upon a small number of New Testament references made regarding ‘the bridegroom’. They are in theme order rather than according to their placing in Holy Scripture.

Matthew 25:1-13

"At that time the kingdom of heaven will be like ten virgins who took their lamps and went out to meet the bridegroom.² Five of them were foolish and five were wise.³ The foolish ones took their lamps but did not take any oil with them.⁴ The wise ones, however, took oil in jars along with their lamps.⁵ The bridegroom was a long time in coming, and they all became drowsy and fell asleep.

⁶ "At midnight the cry rang out: 'Here's the bridegroom! Come out to meet him!'

⁷ "Then all the virgins woke up and trimmed their lamps.⁸ The foolish ones said to the wise, 'Give us some of your oil; our lamps are going out.'

⁹ "'No,' they replied, 'there may not be enough for both us and you. Instead, go to those who sell oil and buy some for yourselves.'

¹⁰ "But while they were on their way to buy the oil, the bridegroom arrived. The virgins who were ready went in with him to the wedding banquet. And the door was shut.

¹¹ "Later the others also came. 'Lord, Lord,' they said, 'open the door for us!'

¹² "But he replied, 'Truly I tell you, I don't know you.'

¹³ "Therefore keep watch, because you do not know the day or the hour.

This is about knowing your place, knowing your responsibilities and acting upon them within the authority given into your stewardship.

Importantly, it's about 24/7 commitment. It is also about not expecting anyone to bail you out if you get things wrong or fail in your duties. The buck stops with you and no one else and you have to live with the consequences. The only person to blame if things go wrong is yourself.

Matthew 9:15

*Jesus answered, "How can the guests of the **bridegroom** mourn while he is with them? The time will come when the **bridegroom** will be taken from them; then they will fast.*

&

Mark 2:19

*Jesus answered, "How can the guests of the **bridegroom** fast while he is with them? They cannot, so long as they have him with them.*

&

Mark 2:20

*But the time will come when the **bridegroom** will be taken from them, and on that day they will fast.*

I remember doing a wedding rehearsal one Friday with the bride and groom and their four children in preparation for the wedding blessing on the Saturday. It was a good service. The groom was killed on the Monday, riding the new motorbike his bride had bought him as a wedding present. I helped conduct the funeral the following Friday.

It was a bad, sad and unhappy business, a pure accident but with devastating consequences.

None of us know what time we have, or what time those we dearly love have. It is important to celebrate and appreciate what we have because it soon may be gone.

The same is true at a faith level too.

Whilst the love of God is infinite, acceptance by God is not something that is permanently on offer. It is time limited. At some point we will be asked to make a commitment that has eternal consequences, and we must decide our future before the choice is made for us by default.

A simple analogy is doing the bank holiday shopping before the shop shuts. Once closing time comes, the shop doors are locked and no amount of crying or pleading will open those doors. You can have all the best intentions in the world and be the kindest and most loving person in the world, but you have to get there before shop shuts. There are no second chances.

I believe when Jesus said the words, *'but the time will come when the bridegroom will be taken from them,'* he was well aware his time was limited, not only in terms of the time he himself had left on earth for ministry, but also more subtly, the time he was available to others.

Perhaps he could have said, 'Celebrate whilst you have me for soon I shall be taken from you...' and then maybe those around him would

have listened and understood far more willingly, but Jesus chose to be a little more discrete and let his disciples enjoy the moment.

Luke 5:34

*Jesus answered, "Can you make the friends of the **bridegroom** fast while he is with them?"*

He certainly hinted but it seems the disciples and hearers of his words were slow to grasp the reality of the situation.

Luke 5:35

*But the time will come when the **bridegroom** will be taken from them; in those days they will fast."*

My favourite text is always going to be the 'wedding at Cana'. It is like an onion, that when you have peeled one layer back, there is yet another, all the time taking you closer to the sweet centre. This miracle works at so many different levels. However, I want to focus on just one part, that of the bridegroom's role. Jesus' role becomes prophetically interchanged with that of the actual bridegroom in the words 'You have saved the best till now,' because we know who was responsible for changing the water into wine.

John 2:9-

... and the master of the banquet tasted the water that had been turned into wine.

*He did not realize where it had come from, though the servants who had drawn the water knew. Then he called the **bridegroom** aside and said “Everyone brings out the choice wine first and then the cheaper wine after the guests have had too much to drink; but you have saved the best till now.”*

The implication might be that as Jesus consummates his marriage to his bride, the community of believers, through his death, the best has been saved until that moment and resulted in the events of Pentecost. At the very least it certainly suggests where Jesus is concerned, only the very best will do for those who love him.

John 3:22-30

²² *After this, Jesus and his disciples went out into the Judean countryside, where he spent some time with them, and baptized.* ²³ *Now John also was baptizing at Aenon near Salim, because there was plenty of water, and people were coming and being baptized.* ²⁴ *(This was before John was put in prison.)*

²⁵ *An argument developed between some of John’s disciples and a certain Jew over the matter of ceremonial washing.*

(Could this really be scriptural evidence for the earliest beginnings of groups like ‘Churches Together’, the self-elected and self-imposed arbiters of the mind of God and orthodoxy?)

²⁶ *They came to John and said to him, “Rabbi, that man who was with you on the other side of the Jordan—the one you testified about—look, he is baptizing, and everyone is going to him.”*

²⁷ *To this John replied, “A person can receive only what is given them from heaven. ²⁸ You yourselves can testify that I said, ‘I am not the Messiah but am sent ahead of him.’ ²⁹ The bride belongs to the bridegroom. The friend who attends the bridegroom waits and listens for him, and is full of joy when he hears the bridegroom’s voice. That joy is mine, and it is now complete. ³⁰ He must become greater; I must become less.”*

John would probably be regarded as the spiritual equivalent of the ‘best man’ at this very particular wedding I think. He has acted under authority and fulfilled his role and now the moment has come for him to step back into the shadows and let the groom take charge. The line ‘*He must become greater; I must become less,*’ is one we must all face up to and reconcile ourselves with. It is simply about learning to submit our will to that of God’s. We are certainly not Jesus’s equal in our relationship with Him, even if he calls us ‘brother’ or ‘sister’.

Thinking about a wedding these days, it seems that they have become symbols of chaos. The bride runs the show, the groom does as he is told, and the best man undermines the groom in his speech more often than not. The church and priest/minister/pastor are often just fashion accessories and the success of a wedding is often judged on the amount of money spent on it and/or how quickly the guests got drunk. These things are not promising indicators of a good basis for marriage.

I am not totally despairing about this situation as I do see in some brides and grooms something that is 'of God', even if they have no connection with any church or Christian community. There is still a light that burns in the darkness and it gives me hope for new couples facing everything the world wants them to submit to.

Brides and grooms have a lot to learn, but so do we as priests in not letting them fall foul of the world's low expectations and showing them a better way. We must show them that we *"have saved the best till now."*

+Ian, OSJ

-oOo-

Articles from Rt Rev David Bennett, +Wales, OSJ.

FEELINGS HIDE WORDS

People whom I meet daily in my pastoral role when out and about in the streets and when visiting many within their homes, display that hurt and pain both in their eyes and how they conduct their conversation(s). They share with me it is because of what someone has said to them, but not meant from the heart. Or, try in vain attempting to use words with no meaning just to have a chat. I find sometimes that our presence and silence of just listening and acknowledging them works dare I say it "miracles!"

People often hide their feelings behind a wall of words. They use a kind of double talk in which words and feelings do not agree. It saddens me that many people are afraid that honesty in speech will cost them friendships, love, or respect.

So they either keep their lips securely closed in silence or say something other than what they mean. True friendships built on love and trust, are when friends and close colleagues can accept such honest statements that we make and from our hearts.

We must accept too, that other factors which may impede straight talk are shyness, lack of confidence, fear of displaying ignorance, trying to avoid criticism, and not wanting to hurt someone's feelings.

I am sure we all at some time have encountered these feelings. I will be the first to put my hands up and admit to such agonising feelings and thoughts in the past throughout my own life. One thing I have learned is to "be oneself" and others will know immediately we are genuine.

Believers in Christ are not exempt from this problem. Trying to be both loving and truthful can be difficult, but the Bible tells us how to deal with this dilemma. The book of James teaches us that we need the wisdom that comes from God above.

The Lord will enable us by His Holy Spirit to speak effectively and honestly.

His wisdom is "first pure, then peaceable, gentle, willing to yield, full of mercy and good fruits, without partiality and without hypocrisy" (James 3:17) Let's govern our speech with these qualities from God's Word. Then we will not have to hide behind a wall of words.

Wisdom is knowing when to speak your mind and when to mind your speech.

PROVERBS 16:23

The heart of the wise teaches his mouth, and adds learning to his lips.

-oOo-

HONESTY IS BEST POLICY

A false balance is abomination to the Lord. Proverbs 11.1. Honesty as I use it within relates to honour in all matters that concern money. It is also used in a wider sense, using it here simply with regard to money it simplifies matters.

One of the commonest forms of dishonesty relates to debt, or money which people probably intend to repay, but often make up their minds not to repay if they can possibly avoid doing so.

In fairness, all debt is not necessarily morally wrong. Sometimes it is perfectly right and just to incur debt, when there is every prospect the debt can be repaid, and the debt incurred will bring a legitimate return. We must however, be very careful how and for what purpose the debt is incurred.

It is too easy to be dishonest incurring debt. A debt which we know we have no prospect of repaying is just as dishonest as actually to steal the money.

We must always remember that money is lent to us, or credit given to us, on the distinct understanding that WE are both able and willing to repay.

The ability to repay is not always in our own power, but the willingness ALWAYS IS.

There are certain flagrant acts of dishonesty being in debt, often committed by persons who call themselves Christians, who sometimes fancy them-selves to be good churchmen.

If, while in debt, we spend money on things that are not really necessary, expensive clothes, an executive car, exotic holidays., then we are obviously being dishonest with the intent NOT to repay.

We are spending what really does NOT belong to us at all, but to our creditors. It would be equally dishonest to put that money into a savings bank, or invest it, while in debt; simply because that money we call ours is money belonging to others.

We may spend it on ourselves for what is absolutely needful for our life and daily needs, but that money still does not belong to us, we have no right, while in debt, to spend it as we like.

A second cause of dishonesty is betting and gambling in every shape and form. When you analyse gambling, to its simple elements, it mainly resolves itself into DEBT.

The whole idea of getting something for nothing is demoralising in a world where God meant us to work for our living. There is a meanness about any form of gambling. It does not make things any better saying your neighbour is trying to get your money without giving YOU any adequate return. Two wrongs do not make one right.

Nor is it an excuse to say that you will NOT miss what you lose, or that the transaction is so small as to be negligible. The principle is all the same, whether the amount be small or great, it must never be forgotten gambling is the most seductive of all vices.

It is very easy to say: "I will never become a gambler," but is that not what the victim of every sin says. At first we only play with the least harmful forms of it, but gradually it gets an even greater power, a strangle hold over us.

He was no Christian Saint, but it was Napoleon who said: "Little sins are like cobwebs, but they grow into cables," People often think: "I can use this money and then replace it before it is needed for its original purpose." When the moment comes for repayment, it is not convenient, and we drift further into regular dishonesty and debt.

In recent times, dishonest businesses paying below the minimum wage for work done, then taking too large a share of the profits - the doctrine that money was the first and most important thing, and that political economy was independent of the welfare of the souls or bodies of men, has done infinite harm.

If it be dishonest to give too low a wage for honest work, it is just as dishonest not to give honest work for a fair and honest wage.

If an employer can cheat an employee, so can an employee cheat an employer, one crime is as bad as the other.

So that it becomes most difficult to discriminate between them. It is a carelessness with regard to money. Many people will not take the trouble to keep accounts, give receipts, pay money at the right time, or to examine their position from time to time.

Without a conscious intention to cheat or defraud, many get into such a condition of confusion that neither they themselves, nor anyone else, know how they really stand. This is really brought on by a fear, since it prevents everyone from obtaining their due and causes endless trouble and annoyance to others. Yet how very common it is even among good people!

The truth of the whole matter is that we cannot afford to leave Christ out of our money matters, and act as if He had nothing to do with them. Honesty after all, means just acting with regard to money as Christ would have us act.

We know that our Lord was very much afraid of money for His followers, very much afraid, that is, of its influence on their life and character, and it will be well, therefore, for us to be very careful with regard to it and its effect upon us. Remember the Lord overturning the tables in the Temple?

We cannot be Christians and yet use money irrespective of the principles of justice, consideration for others, and faithfulness to our word and promise. We cannot as Christians use it as though it belonged to us simply as our own possession, while we believe that it is a trust from God to be used in His service and for the helping of our fellow men.

Dishonesty cuts very deeply into the religious life.

Whether it spring from mere carelessness or from deliberate self-preference, it will not work with true religion of any kind, and still less with Christianity. In its less extreme forms it often escapes human justice, but it unfits a man altogether for the Christian life. This fact is very quickly realised by the outsider who, however, unscrupulous himself, recognises the incompatibility of dishonesty with the Spirit of Christ. "A false balance is abomination unto the Lord," and a name of justifiable scandal in those who call themselves by the name of Christian.

-oOo-

"OUT THERE IT'S A JUNGLE!"

You're in that jungle when you're out of ideas and energy, out of time and money, out of solutions and hope. Its a jungle filled with aching hearts, broken promises, frightened minds, complaints at home and demands at work. Speaking of this jungle, Max Lucado writes eloquently: "Our predators are creditors, and the brush that surrounds us is the rush that exhausts us,"

Are you there? If so, you need two things:

1. ***The right person.*** Not just any person, and not someone equally confused. No, you need somebody who knows the way out; somebody to say to you, “Don’t give up, there’s a better place than this and I’ll lead you there.
2. ***The right direction.*** All you have is a person, all you’ve got is company. You need someone who can heal your emotional wounds, release you from your fear and give you hope. And that’s what your shepherd does. Your loneliness leaves because you have His constant companionship. Your despair diminishes because you have clearer understanding. Your confusion lifts because you have new direction. And please note: the jungle is still a jungle, it hasn’t changed - but you have!

“But I don’t feel like I’m out of hope,” you say: Just add the word - **YET!** You may be no more than one turn from a Cemetery, a hospital bed or an empty house. Although you don’t need it now, you will later, and you’ll need to know who to turn to - your Shepherd.

He’s the only **One** who can restore your peace of mind. So get to know Him better. And be Jesus to someone who needs Him today.

PSALM 23:1/3.

"The Lord is my Shepherd.....He restoreth my soul."

-oOo-

A few thoughts from a 90 year old man.

- 1. Life isn't fair, but it's still good.*
- 2. When in doubt, just take the next small step.*
- 3. Life is too short not to enjoy it.*
- 4. Your job won't take care of you when you are sick. Your friends and family will.*
- 5. Don't buy stuff you don't need.*
- 6. You don't have to win every argument. Stay true to yourself.*
- 7. Cry with someone. It's more healing than crying alone.*
- 8. It's OK to get angry with God. He can take it.*
- 9. Save for things that matter.*
- 10. When it comes to chocolate, resistance is futile.*
- 11. Make peace with your past so it won't screw up the present.*
- 12. It's OK to let your children see you cry.*
- 13. Don't compare your life to others. You have no idea what their journey is all about.*
- 14. If a relationship has to be a secret, you shouldn't be in it.*
- 15. Everything can change in the blink of an eye... But don't worry; God never blinks.*
- 16. Take a deep breath. It calms the mind.*

17. *Get rid of anything that isn't useful. Clutter weighs you down in many ways.*
18. *Whatever doesn't kill you really does make you stronger.*
19. *It's never too late to be happy. But it's all up to you and no one else.*
20. *When it comes to going after what you love in life, don't take no for an answer.*
21. *Burn the candles, use the nice sheets, wear the fancy lingerie. Don't save it for a special occasion. Today is special.*
22. *Overprepare, then go with the flow.*
23. *Be eccentric now. Don't wait for old age to wear purple.*
24. *The most important sex organ is the brain.*
25. *No one is in charge of your happiness but you.*
26. *Frame every so-called disaster with these words, 'In five years, will this matter?'*
27. *Always choose Life.*
28. *Forgive but don't forget.*
29. *What other people think of you is none of your business.*
30. *Time heals almost everything. Give Time time.*
31. *However good or bad a situation is, it will change.*
32. *Don't take yourself so seriously. No one else does.*
33. *Believe in miracles.*
34. *God loves you because of who God is, not because of anything you did or didn't do.*
35. *Don't audit life. Show up and make the most of it now.*
36. *Growing old beats the alternative — dying young.*
37. *Your children get only one childhood.*

38. *All that truly matters in the end is that you loved and were loved.*
39. *Get outside every day. Miracles are waiting everywhere.*
40. *If we all threw our problems in a pile and saw everyone else's, we'd grab ours back.*
41. *Envy is a waste of time. Accept what you already have, not what you think you need.*
42. *The best is yet to come...*
43. *No matter how you feel, get up, dress up and show up.*
44. *Give Way, even Stop.*
45. *Life isn't tied with a bow, but it's still a gift.*

-oOo-

'His rules', 'her rules'.

What follows is taken from the internet and may seem at first glance a bit of fun. There is plenty of this kind of material out there. If you are married or in a long term relationship, then you may find much that you will relate to. However, all is not as it seems. You may not realise but some of this stuff is very divisive and deliberately so.

Marriage is representative of God's relationship with mankind (this is inclusive), and if you want to undermine this relationship the simplest way is to damage our understanding of marriage. A simple guide to whether something is 'of God' is, does it unite, or does it divide. Make of this what you will but it is simply not as innocent as it seems.

Men's Rules for Women

Women, learn to work the toilet seat. You're a big girl. If it's up, put it down. We need it up, you need it down. You don't hear us complaining about you leaving it down.

Sometimes we are not thinking about you. Live with it.

Don't cut your hair. Ever. Long hair is always more attractive than short hair. One of the big reasons guys fear getting married is that married women always cut their hair, and by then you're stuck with her.

Ask for what you want. Subtle hints do not work! Strong hints do not work! Obvious hints do not work! Just say it!

We don't remember dates. . . .End of !

Most guys own three pairs of shoes - tops. What makes you think we'd be any good at choosing which pair, out of thirty, would look good with your dress?

Yes and No are perfectly acceptable answers to almost every question.

Come to us with a problem only if you want help solving it. That's what we do. Sympathy is what your girlfriends are for.

A headache that lasts for 17 months is a problem. See a doctor.

If you think you're fat, you probably are. Don't ask us. We've been tricked before!!

If something we said can be interpreted two ways, and one of the ways makes you sad or angry, we meant the other one.

Women's Rules for Men

Call when you say you are going to call.

Never lie, about anything.

Showing emotion is good, it does not make you weak, it makes you human.

Girls talk on "Girls Night Out" so don't be surprised if you get in trouble when we get back.

The correct answer to "Do I look fat?" is never "Yes."

The correct answer to "Is she prettier than me?" is never "Yes."

Ordering for her is good, telling her what she wants to order is bad, but you can give suggestions.

Being attentive is good, stalking is bad.

Using words like "Darling," and "Sweetheart" is good. Using words like "Nag," "Big butt," or worse are definitely bad for your general health and wellbeing.

Talking is good. Shouting is bad. Slapping is a felony.

A grunt is seldom an acceptable answer to any question. Also, yes or no is not always an acceptable answer either.

None of your ex-girlfriends have ever been as smart, pretty, funny, or good as your present girlfriend.

Her cooking is always excellent, even if you don't like what she made.

The previous rule does not mean that you don't have to cook, cook for her whenever possible, and let her help if she wants.

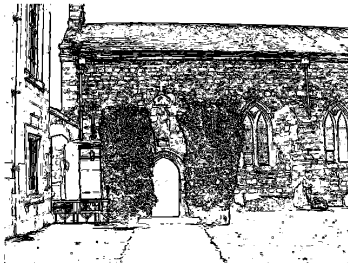
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| <p>You can either ask us to do something or tell us how you want it done. Not both. If you already know best how to do it, just do it yourself.</p> <p>Whenever possible, please say whatever you have to say during commercials.</p> <p>Christopher Columbus did not need directions, and neither do we.</p> <p>Our relationship will change and is never going to stay like it was in the first two months we were going out. Get over it and stop grumbling to your girlfriends.</p> <p>All men see in only 16 colours, like Windows default settings. Peach, for example, is a fruit, not a colour. We have no idea what mauve, taupe or blush are.</p> <p>If it itches, it will be scratched. We do that.</p> <p>We are not mind readers and we never will be.</p> <p>Our lack of mind-reading ability is not proof of how little we care about you.</p> <p>If we ask what is wrong and you say "nothing", we will act like nothing is wrong. We know you are not telling us the truth and will get round to telling us what it is we don't know we have done wrong.</p> <p>If you ask a question you don't want an answer to, expect an answer you probably don't want to hear.</p> <p>Don't ask us what we're thinking about unless you are prepared to discuss such topics as navel lint, the offside rule, or monster trucks.</p> <p>Foreign films are best left to foreigners. (Unless it's Bruce Lee or some action film where it doesn't really matter what they're saying anyway.)</p> | <p>If she is cooking for you and doesn't want your help, stay out of the kitchen.</p> <p>Personal hygiene - soap is your friend.</p> <p>Wash does not equal shower, after-shave does not equal soap and warm does not equal clean.</p> <p>Foreplay is a must. Remember she is like a diesel truck, you have to warm her up first. Buying her dinner does not equal foreplay.</p> <p>Answering "Who was on the phone?" with "Nobody" is not going to end that conversation</p> <p>Answering "Whose lipstick is that?" with "Nobody" is not going to end that conversation either.</p> <p>You are always wrong.</p> <p>Always say you are sorry even if you are right.</p> <p>"Will you marry me?" is good, "Will you shack up with me?" is bad.</p> <p>Don't assume that every bad mood is caused by PMS.</p> <p>Silence could mean anything she feels like at a particular moment in time, and it could change without notice.</p> <p>Never let her walk away alone, ever. That means always go after her.</p> <p>Chivalry and feminism are NOT mutually exclusive.</p> <p>Pick her up at the airport. Don't grumble about it, just do it and have flowers.</p> <p>If you want to break up with her, break up with her. Don't behave like a complete jerk until she does it for you.</p> <p>Don't tell her you love her if you don't.</p> |
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| <p>Boy's toys and sport are as exciting for us as handbags and shoes are for you.</p> <p>Men need men's company in the same way that you girls like to spend time together. We don't love you any the less.</p> <p>Disagreeing with you does not mean I don't love you.</p> <p>Some things are just not worth fighting over.</p> <p>If you want a door mat, just buy one. Don't expect me to take on that role too.</p> <p>Life is what you make it or let it become. You have choices. It is not someone else's fault if you screwed up.</p> <p>There is a difference between listening and hearing, need and want, freedom and responsibility, being loved and living with psychopathic dictatorship. So many choices.</p> | <p>If you do love her, tell her as often as possible.</p> <p>Remember Valentine's Day, Birthdays and any cheesy "Anniversary" she so names.</p> <p>Don't try to change the way she dresses, but if <u>she</u> suggests something to <u>you</u>, try it.</p> <p>Her hair cut is never bad, even if it is short.</p> <p>Don't let her friends pick on her or say anything bad about her.</p> <p>The 'rules' are never fair. Accept them without questions, and expect them to change at a moment's notice.</p> <p>Telling her "I told you so" or "You were wrong" will not be forgotten.</p> <p>You trying to have the last word in one argument will just become the beginning of a new one.</p> |
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A few questions to ask yourself:

1. Which of these 'rules' are actually unreasonable or unfair?
2. Which are 'unscriptural'?
3. Which are reasonable and would work in both columns?
4. Which are based on purely stereotypical expectations?
5. How may these 'rules' have come about?
6. Do men and women have genuinely different relationship needs?
7. What rules made us laugh and why?
8. Are relationship 'rules' actually divisive?
9. What does God say about relationship rules?

+Ian, OSJ



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Gospel Reading. John 4 v 5 – 42

Unice Brearley, OSJ

This New Testament lesson opens with a well. In fact Jacobs well in Samaria. Jesus and his disciples were travelling from Judea to Galilee, by the shortest route, still a 30 mile walk. They were tired and hungry, Jesus decided to stay and rest at the well while his disciples went into the town to buy food.

It was very hot. Jesus was surprised to see a Samaritan woman approaching the well to fetch water. A job usually done in the cool of the day. Now the woman was a Samaritan, Jesus was a Jew, The Jews had quarrelled with the Samaritans 400 years previously, and the quarrel was still bitter. And no respectable Jew would speak to a Samaritan particularly a woman.

This didn't worry Jesus he was noted for doing the unusual, breaking down barriers. To the woman's surprise he asked her for a drink of water.

I think this would cause the woman to gasp, A Jew speaking to a Samaritan, especially a woman.

The rift between the Jews and the Samaritans was caused by Jews who had been taken into captivity after wars eventually marrying into the tribes that had captured them thus causing this problem. I understand even today in a strict Jewish family if a son or daughter marries outside the faith, the family holds a funeral service.

Another problem for the Jew was that they were forbidden to speak to a woman in public, even his wife or daughter.

Apparently there were Pharisees who were called "The bruised and bleeding" because they would shut their eyes when they saw a woman so walking into walls and buildings.

This particular Samaritan woman was also a woman of notorious character. No decent man, let alone a Rabbi would have been seen in her company, or even exchanged a word with her. Yet Jesus spoke to her.

One theory I have read about this woman, written by a Jewish historian, Josephus, is that the Samaritan people were made up of 5 different nations with 5 different Gods and this woman's 5 husbands represented this.

The man she now lived with represented the Worship of the Lord, a worship the Jews emphasised should take place in Jerusalem, whereas the Samaritan who worshipped God worshipped on the mountain.

Didn't Jesus say "that the time was coming when the Father would be worshipped neither on the mountain nor in Jerusalem but in spirit and in truth".

Another theory is that this woman is an outcast because of her five husbands. The Rabbis disapproved of more than three marriages, never mind the fact that she wasn't married to the current man of her life. No woman in the village would speak to her or associate with her. Rather than be ignored she would go to the well in the heat of the day to collect her water.

Jesus could quite easily have ignored her, her racial background, her lifestyle, Jesus doesn't treat people like that he allows her to tell her story, asks something from her, acknowledges she could do something for him.

The surprised woman tells him that the well is deep, "you have no bucket" she said. When people were on a journey they usually carried with them a bucket made from the skin of some animal.

With the type of wells in that country you needed a bucket. Jesus' disciples probably had one but had taken it with them when they had gone to buy food.

The woman was astonished when Jesus offered her the "Living Water" saying that anyone who drinks from this well will go thirsty again, but those who drink of the water that I will give them will never thirst again.

The woman probably thought Jesus a little mad, "Living Water" what next so as if humouring him she said "Give me this water so that I will never thirst again and will not have to walk to the well day after day". She was jesting with a kind of humouring contempt about spiritual things.

The time for jesting was over. Jesus tells her to go and fetch her husband and come back with him. The woman was shocked that he knew about her, and she suddenly caught sight of herself as other people saw her. She was suddenly compelled to face herself and the looseness and immorality and inadequacy of her life.

How would we react if we came face to face with Jesus?

Is there a pattern in our lives that we need to look at - Jobs that don't seem to live up to their promise, friends who seem to let us

down, creative opportunities we allow to slip away.

Just what is the heart of the matter for us?

There are two revelations of Christianity, the revelation of God and what he can do for us, and the revelation of ourselves. We never really see ourselves until we see ourselves in the presence of Christ, and this comes as a shock when we realise how we have sinned and let God down. We sudden realise that the life we are living will not do. We must change and we must be awake to our need of God.

Can we follow the example of Jesus?

Who is the Samaritan in our lives, the person we would cast out, the one we would prefer to ignore?

Do we acknowledge people as people with gifts, skills, something to offer as well as needs = or as someone to be done to?

Imagine a family living in a tiny corrugate-iron shack in a township outside Capetown – part of a group who were outcasts until the end of apartheid. They have a dry toilet. In winter the rain comes in.

Changing things is a slow process.

See a group from Belfast, of all ages, privileged and able to fund-raise. They go to Capetown, not “to do to” but “to do for” under the banner of Habitat for Humanity. They work alongside the family to build, block by block, a new house. A family provides a warm welcome, cooks meals every day and keeps an eye out for their white workers.

The team is assured that the greatest value about their visit is BEING SEEN. White people taking direction from black builders in a totally black area - a thing that would never have happened in South Africa when apartheid was in place.

Others in the township are amazed just as the disciples would be on their return to Jacobs well with food.

Jesus offers us the “Living water”

Do we recognise this and are we prepared to accept it?

Jesus moved and still moves beyond barriers and invites us to do the same.

Are there people in our ~Church or in our town who are being ignored or worse?

Is there an international issue we should do something about?

There are many things that we could and should do. For example the tsunami in South East Asia needed aid for a long time. We can all contribute to disasters in many ways .

Are we prepared to take up the challenge Jesus gave and still gives?

I would just like to finish with a piece from the Christian Conference of Asia, used by our Housegroup in a special service .

Give us O Lord, churches that will be more courageous than cautious

That will not merely “comfort the afflicted” but “afflict the comfortable”

That will not only love the world but also demand justice,

That will not remain silent when people are calling for a voice.

That will not pass by on the other side when wounded humanity is waiting to be healed

That will not only call us to worship but also send us out to witness.

That will follow Christ even when the way points to a Cross.

To this end we offer ourselves in the name of him who loved us and gave himself for us.

-oOo-

If we were to ask ourselves what our first thought on the mention of Psalm 23 would be - what would it be, I wonder?

Sheep? Green fields? water perhaps? - or Funerals? That's what my answer would be.

What would yours be?

David, who wrote the Psalm and later in life a King, grew up and worked hard as a Shepherd - he knew a great deal about sheep. He loved the idea of God as a shepherd. A shepherd's job being to look after His flock, making very sure that they're kept safe, well fed, without fear or stress and always happy.

Sheep in their normal habitat are potentially unprotected and in great danger from hungry predators who would do them harm, because they cannot fight very well, cannot run very fast and are naive enough not to see danger approaching. Sheep then, need a shepherd to care for them properly - to be fed, protected from others who would harm them and keep them together instead of straying.

How "sheepish" then are we?

How badly are we in need of a Shepherd?

Our God is our Shepherd - through Jesus - if we let Him be.

Well, perhaps up to now there's nothing new to us in what we've looked at spoken about, but perhaps that's because we are Christians and have visited this topic before - already loving the Lord and beginning to understand what our Shepherd does for us. But do we fully understand what Psalm 23 is all about?

Do we read it and take it for granted - perhaps as we might say the Lord's Prayer "parrot fashion" and take that for granted.

With everything that is going on around us - and that can be quite frightening - do we read and not understand, listen yet not hear or know but not remember the Word of God?

The Lord is my shepherd then.

We are His sheep, He is our Shepherd. It's important that we understand That is - He helps us to find food, water, work, love, friends and all that we need. He also protects us from evil. He also gently or firmly prods us when we step out of line and deviate from the way of living set down in the Bible as being correct.

If we haven't already we need to understand that it's our spiritual needs that are important rather than our practical needs and our Spiritual wants rather than our practical wants. In Jesus, spiritually we have what we need. Perhaps we find it difficult to understand that if we are spiritually content with our lot, we are far better off than those in our secular culture who are always wanting more and more material things.

That leads us onto:

We shall not want. What does that mean?

We will have everything we need if we allow God to be our Shepherd. We may not have everything the ego wants, but as individuals we will be cared for, loved, and provided for very well, indeed and find utter contentment because of a loving relationship with Jesus and his Father.

This line is one of the most powerful in the prayer. It is a blunt and frank statement and affirmation. "I shall not want" means I will be okay. I will be content with my health, money, friends, family, respect, love and all else. The line sort of wakes us up and says you can have it all, at least what you need (not want), when you agree to let God run your life.

"I shall not want" also expresses or is an affirmation that our lives will not be controlled by 'wanting' all the time.

Always wanting things is a miserable way to live, but a common one. A somewhat similar idea or example is expressed in the Tenth Commandment given to Moses in the Old Testament: "You shall not covet your neighbour's house. You shall not covet your neighbour's wife, or his male or female servant, his ox or donkey, or anything that belongs to your neighbour."

So this is another way of understanding this line of the psalm and not in fact being jealous or envious of others or their possessions.

He maketh me to lie down in green pastures.

Sheep require plenty of green pasture on which to graze or to eat - do not we?. So at one level, this phrase means that God will provide all of our food and other needs if we manage his creation effectively. It endorses the idea that at a deeper level, that God provides nourishment for the body, the mind and the soul that is wholesome, healthful, and appetizing for us. It does not say we must struggle to make ends meet. It says God will lead each one of us to green pastures.

Let's notice that it says he maketh me to lie down. It does not say he suggests that we lie down. At times, we are forced to just rest.

He leadeth me besides the clear waters continues the theme of the previous line in the psalm. The still waters may represent peace, love, harmony and beauty - contentment with what we have.

He restoreth my soul. When we are always going back over old hurts or traumas we can reach a point where on or re-living old traumas one can often feel that the soul has been somehow lost or stolen or destroyed. This line is extremely comforting for those who have this feeling about their lives. Knowing that God forgives, we must forgive ourselves and others, accept our lot and return to joy and health.

He leadeth me in paths of righteousness for his namesake.

When we are healing, from whatever, often we do not know where to turn. This assures one that the Lord will lead us in directions of righteousness, meaning paths that are wholesome and with full integrity. He does this quite often by directing others around us to help.

Though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will hear no evil, for thou art with me.

For many people undergoing the journey of spiritual healing this is the most important line in the psalm, though certainly not the only important one.

It tells us that yes, we may need to walk in difficult territory in our lives. However, we need not fear, for the Lord is with us. When we look back, we indeed often need to move back into issues and health conditions that need correcting, healing and perhaps reframing or take on a different understanding. Anyone who has done it knows this to be the case. We should not be frightened while we do it.

Thy rod and thy staff, they comfort me.

Traditionally, shepherds carried a rod and a staff to guide the sheep and to ward off wolves or other predators that would harm the sheep.

The similarity here is that the Lord also has His rod and his staff. We may get prodded or pushed, at times, *and it is for our own good*. It may be for our protection and to keep us on our path. The rod and the staff in fact are there to comfort us and know that we are cared for and loved.

Thou prepares a table before me in the presence of mine enemies.

This is a very interesting line. It implies that we will encounter “enemies”, or forces that do not want us to continue our healing or learning. It also says that we will be taken care of even in the midst of our opponents. It does not just say we will survive.

It says that a table or a feast will be spread before us, even while we are in the presence of those forces that oppose us. This, surely, is a wonderful thought - sometimes difficult to believe, I think, but it works.

Thou anointeth my head with oil.

This is another surprising line. Anointing the head with oil was a practice in biblical days that was used to honour a person and to dignify a person. It means that not only will you be fed or cared for in the presence of your enemies or opposers, but you will be honoured and dignified or deeply respected, as well. Enemies and even some friends will "take the Mick" out of us for being Christians and dependent on some else that probably does not even exist. Secretly, deep down, I reckon they want some of what we've already got, but are too stiff necked to realise.

My cup runneth over.

This means that we are given even more than we need or can use. The words form a very powerful picture of a cup of "the Elixir of Life" that overflows as there is so much of it. We are truly abundant, very much loved and cared for beyond even our needs or wants.

Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me, all the days of my life.

This can be interpreted many ways. What is meant by goodness and mercy shall follow me? It means that goodness and mercy shall go with us wherever we go, and whatever we do, even if we are in unfamiliar areas or places. It is a statement of future protection.

It also means that if we allow the Lord to be our shepherd, or guide and overseer, we will be treated mercifully or leniently. Our past mistakes will be forgiven, as long as we do not do them again....perhaps.

Looking back has something very profound to do with forgiving the self and letting go of old problems on physical, mental and emotional levels. God's forgiveness is truly merciful and good in this respect, going much more deeply into healing than most of us are aware of.

I shall dwell in the house of the Lord forever.

Here as individuals we confirm where we want to live and have our being or consciousness.

We choose to live in a particular state of consciousness forever – the “House of the Lord” - a spiritual state - keeping our attention focused on the Lord, living by the rules set down by the Lord, submitting our lives to God’s will, staying with it forever. The words “to live” or “to abide”, is to be "one with"..... Jesus is the One.

Perhaps this prayer is more helpful to each of us than for which we give it credit. Let us use it often and learn to appreciate that when we truly embrace the concept of our Lord as our shepherd and guide, we will be protected and helped in ways - that we cannot imagine.

-oOo-

A reflection based on the Oratorio from Handel's 'The Messiah'

I know that my Redeemer liveth,
I know that my Redeemer liveth.

I know
I know my Redeemer
I know that my Redeemer liveth,
and that He shall stand at the latter day upon the earth.
He shall stand at the latter day upon the earth.

I know
I know my Redeemer
I know that my Redeemer liveth,
And though worms destroy this body,
yet in my flesh shall I see God. (Job 19:25–26)
In my flesh shall I see God

I know
I know my Redeemer
I know that my Redeemer liveth,
**And though worms destroy this body,
yet in my flesh shall I see God.**

For now is
For now is Christ.
For now is Christ risen from the dead,
the first-fruits of them that sleep. (I Corinthians 15:20)

**I know
I know my Redeemer
I know that my Redeemer liveth,
For now is Christ risen from the dead,
the first-fruits of them that sleep.**

OSJ (UK) News:

It is with great sadness that I announce the death of one of our members, Jeniffer Riley. Please give thanks for her life and remember those who loved her in your prayers. I know her presence amongst those of us who knew her will be greatly missed.

Jeniffer Riley: 29th July 1949 – 19th August 2017

-oOo-

The Order of St James is able to nominate candidates to be awarded the International Clergy Medal and Rev Gary Mark Wayne Keith has been successfully nominated by the Order to receive this in recognition of his work in the communities he has served so faithfully. It will be received by his wife.

-oOo-

No other news has been received from other provinces of OSJ for this month's newsletter.

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On marriage:

When I see couples for the first time I often ask them what it is they most love about each other and what they want for each other in getting married. It is amazing how many of them have never asked those questions or given any real thought to 'why' they are getting married or even sensibly articulate anything about their relationship.

For most marriage is just something that just happens and is expected. No thinking required.

Little do they realise that being 'in love' is not enough.

Occasionally, you get some couples who have given their relationship and the prospect of marriage some thought.

These are two examples of real responses, names removed:-

(#IM) *Where do I begin? You are my best friend in the entire world. Since the day I first met you, I have fallen in love with you more and more each day. I do not remember a time when I didn't love you and I simply cannot imagine my life without you.*

I never, ever thought I'd be marrying someone as special as you. You are the most beautiful woman I have ever seen and I know that I am the luckiest man in the world. Your beauty caught my eye but it was your personality that captured my heart.

You make me laugh every single day without fail and I smile every morning waking up next to you. You have taught me love, kindness and patience and you have made me a happier, better person.

You are the driving force in our relationship; you breathe optimism and positivity into everything you do, and I have fallen helplessly in love with everything about you.

*I have watched you transform from a giggly, bubbly teenager into a strong, loving, wonderful woman. We have done it all together; school, university, living in **** and now the next chapter in our never-ending story.*

I am so proud to have you by my side and I am even prouder that you will soon be my wife.

I cannot wait to start a family with you and build a life together. I know that you will be an incredible mother and when we have children together, I will be happy beyond words.

You have shaped so much of my life, making me see the world in a completely different way. You have opened my eyes to the possibilities open to us and I am so excited for our adventure together as husband and wife.

You are my best friend, lover, confidant and partner-in-crime. But most importantly, you are the love of my life and you make me happier than I could ever imagine. No matter where we are in the world, I know that I will always have you by my side. You are my greatest strength and my motivation to build an amazing life together.

We have had some challenging times together but we have always come through everything that life has thrown at us. We have come through as a stronger, happier couple and it is your love that keeps me going through the hard times as well as the good.

When I look into your perfect blue eyes, I see my future. I see a life of love, happiness and compassion and I know that I have found my soul mate.

I will never stop loving you; that is my vow.

(HER) You were definitely a slow burner! But the moment I fell for you, I fell hard. We were 15 and 16 but over the next six months our love grew and evolved into something so magical that on the day when I looked into your eyes and you said those three words, 'I love you', I didn't even think about a response. It was the most natural thing in the world to say it back, and everything stood still. I knew from that young age that you were the person I wanted to spend my life with.

A lot of people thought we were crazy when we said 6 months in that we knew we'd get married and spend the rest of our lives together but look at us now. Through our ups and downs of being teenagers to the adults we are today, you

have been everything to me. We have grown stronger and closer together when many would grow apart. We are two opposites that are so different, yet we think the same. We are one whilst still being individuals. There is never a dull moment with you. You make me laugh more than I've ever laughed before, not just cute giggles but loud belly laughs that I simply can't hide. You encourage the silliest most real side of myself to come through because you really are my better half. There is nothing I couldn't tell you because I trust you implicitly.

I can't wait for our future, building our own family together. I think the only thing that could make me love you even more than I already do is seeing you as the amazing father that I know you will be to our future children.

Now don't get me wrong, it's not all perfection...But despite you having a shocking memory and snoring so loudly even the most advanced ear plugs won't block the sound, it doesn't matter (much) because you make me feel loved every single day. I see it in your eyes, I feel it in your touch and I hear it in your words. You're my best friend and my lifelong partner and I promise to give myself fully to you for the rest of our lives and beyond. I love you and I hope you feel my love for an eternity. Forever and Always.

So in practical terms, is there enough real foundation there to build a marriage on?

Put yourself in the place of the priest.

The first question is are they looking for a 'wedding' or a 'marriage'?

Once you have successfully negotiated that, what are the clues or indicators that you are looking for or hoping to see?

Are the couple transitioning from being 'in love' to 'loving'? Are they ready for marriage?

Can the couple discern the difference between 'fact' and 'feeling'?

Can they recognise the difference between purely physical hormonally driven attraction and the something that transcends and fully engages the physical, emotional, spiritual, psychological and intellectual planes of our humanity?

There is not just the content of any statements of love and fidelity the couple make but also working out the intended audience. This may seem a strange thing to say but there are a number of things to consider.

Are the statements intended for the object of their desire and hopes, or are they intended for other listeners, and if so, for what purposes?

Is the speaker really trying to convince themselves or their partner, or even the priest to go ahead with the wedding?

Are these statements nothing more than a huge PR exercise or are they genuine, or even both?

I have learned that for some couples, the truth is a very flexible commodity.

That is where carefully watching body language comes in.

Fortunately, I had no concerns about this particular couple, and this wasn't the only evidence I based my decision to assist them.

So what direction or advice would you offer this couple?

What of God's will for them? What part does that play?

Or in this particular case, is it too late for our involvement, are they already 'married' in reality and all that is required is for us to rubber stamp what is blatantly obvious?

The priest is not just the celebrant - there is a level of responsibility towards the couple that can't be avoided. We ultimately carry some of the corporate and individual responsibility when marriages fail, particularly those we have been personally involved in.

+Ian, OSJ



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Jonah:

Unice Brearley, OSJ

Its not often we look at the Old Testament lessons but the one about Jonah it would seem that it has a great deal to tell us about our attitudes to the work God wishes us to do.

While on holiday in Cyprus a few years ago, we were with a Christian Tour group. Our leader in the second week took the story of Jonah, and broke it down into 5 evening sermons starting with Jonah trying to run away from God. I think we have to just recap on Jonah's adventures to understand this I chapter of the book of Jonah.

We had Jonah's adventures illustrated on a roll of wallpaper, the whole story laid out, I can still see the picture of Jonah, after God had told him to go to Ninevah, illustrated by a little man with a small suitcase haring down the road to catch the ship in the distance, trying to convince himself he could get away from the job God had asked him to do.

How often do we turn in the opposite direction when God asks us to do something we don't want to do or think we are not capable of doing, forgetting God never asks us to do anything that he is not prepared to help us through.

God does have a way of doing His work at times in spite of our disobedience, even Jonah on the ship, in the midst of the storm had the sailors praying to His God, whether they meant it or not remains to be seen.

Jonah has gone through all his traumas at sea repenting of his disobedience and eventually going to Ninevah to preach that they would all be destroyed if they didn't mend their ways and turn to God. What do we find?

He was so effective that even the King dressed in sack cloth and repented as did all his people but was Jonah pleased. No.

Jonah should have been pleased, but no here we find him sat out in the desert sulking and very angry with God. God had decided that because the Ninevans had repented he wasn't going to destroy them, Chapter 3 verse 10 says he had compassion on them. He was slow to anger and had great concern for these people.

Can you imagine how Jonah felt , he had been preaching destructions on the people of Ninevah and here was God forgiving them. Jonah wanted them to be punished he felt God had made a fool of him. He prays to God, a very sad prayer in which he blames God and tries to justify himself, but even that sort of prayer was better than running away again. Jonah had to get his prayers right and rejoice at what had happened and not complain.

How often do we have a tantrum or go off and sulk if things don't go our way, or we know we are in the wrong but we don't want to admit it. Can we take our anger to God Can we be angry with God.

Jonah is really angry with God, from Jonah's limited perspective, he has been discredited and made to look a fool , his image is tarnished. It is God's forgiveness that Jonah find so offensive. He wants the people of Ninevah to be punished, and he wants old fashioned justice 'an eye for an eye' How dare God forgive!

Think how often Jonah's behaviour mirrors that of our own society. We don't like people to be forgiven. Our media or our politicians often demand a justice system that is "tough on crime" but see this only in the length of prison sentence.

Often we are still unforgiving once someone has served their sentence, so much so that rehabilitation into society is made still

harder. For example Jonathan Aitken's story received huge amounts of press coverage not just during his trial and prison sentence but once also on leaving prison. Society doesn't like people to be forgiven and move on.

Jonah certainly had a wrong attitude. He needed to get his priorities right. He was concerned about His Status - He said God had made a fool of him. replacing judgement with mercy to the people of Ninevah.

His Pride was hurt. As a Jew, and a prophet he found it very difficult to accept that God would receive and forgive Gentiles. They were the lowest of the low to the Jews. Do we think this about certain groups of people?

His Sin - His lack of concern for peoples salvation was inexcusable to God. At this point he was sat outside the city = away from where the blessings were. Waiting to see what God would do next, but not anxious to be part of it.

What lessons can we learn from Jonah. It is quite possible for us to be in the midst of God's work being fulfilled and yet miss out on it, through pride, status or sin. Do we think that if the work around us does not fit in to OUR idea of what God should be doing, we don't want to be counted in.

If it's not exactly according to our interpretation of scripture we run away as Jonah did. It is interesting to note what Paul has to say about this in Philippians chapter one verse 18 " It does not matter! I am happy about it- so long as Christ is preached in every way possible. Whether from wrong or right motives. And I will continue to be happy. This certainly wasn't Jonah's attitude.

God provided a plant, which was very good if you needed shade, but when this becomes more important than the people to whom we are trying to bring the Good News, then God provides a worm and the plant is eaten. Jonah was very angry when this happened to him, but God says people are more important than plants.

What is our "plant" today – it may be quite legitimate and important to us, but is it important for the smooth running of our services and the work God is asking us to do. Do we get hung up on changes, instead of discussing and compromising.

Do we need to get our principles right.

Jonah felt uncomfortable without his plant, almost suicidal, God had made a fool of him, and he didn't want to do the job in the first place - Does this apply to our attitude to the work God is asking us to do?

Jonah repented whilst he was in the fishes belly, but how long did it last. As Christians we can also be like Jonah fickle.

God has asked Jonah to convert 120,000 people, and he wanted them punished.

Jonah's behaviour is outrageous but God doesn't argue back, he ignores the tantrum. God uses a very visual; aid quietly and firmly to put things back into perspective and Jonah gently back into place. Jonah has missed the opportunity to proclaim the good news of God's forgiveness to Nineveh and has lost face in the process. It takes the post tantrum visual aid and conversation to restore the relationship. Jonah is only a part of a much bigger picture God is concerned for the whole of creation not just about Jonah's image, or ours.

What visual aids does God use in our society to turn us gently around and bring us back into relationship with each other and with God? Often it is the restoring of relationships that helps us to forgive.

So how does the story of Jonah end? It doesn't True story it may be, but it is also a parable. Without a neat ending. Perhaps God wants us to write our own ending assuming we are Jonah.

We are mirrored so much in his life that this is our story, , how will we react to God's warnings ...

Will we finish the story.

My Yoke is easy:

Unice Brearley, OSJ

A quotation from the bible has been going round in my head this last few days, I have even woke up during the night thinking of it. It has also appeared in the reflections section in a magazine I get. So I thought I would try and put it into words.

Jesus says. Come to me all you who are weary and I will give you rest for my yoke is easy and my burden is light. It sounds easy today but in the time of Jesus the Scribes and Pharisees put burdens on the people – rules and regulations but Jesus said take my yoke upon you and learn from me.

He is talking about holiness not the phoney kind but about being generous and kind and compassionate tender, full of faith and joy a blessing to others.

We may protest that no one can be like that only Jesus but when we

take his yoke upon us he begins to fashion us into his likeness and we learn true holiness. Not the human version of it.

This is very important in the present day when people say “I’ve only one life I’ll do as I want with it. But being a Christian and doing God’s way is our life, changed by God from the inside out , as we have all read at times ‘It is not what goes into a man that makes you unclean but what comes out of it. The heart needs to be right and no amount of ritual can make this happen .

Jesus promises that we will find rest for our souls , but it does not come without commitment and obedience. Taking on a yoke. The yoke is easy, the burden is light and the reward is holiness

-oOo-

Psalm 12 Blenheim Baptist Church¹

Preached 7 September 2017 Rev David Startup, OSJ

How many of us read our Bibles regularly? If we do - and with me the urge comes and goes - how many of us read it from cover to cover regularly - the Old and the New testament?

What do we read more of - the Old or the New?

Do most or some of us read our bible when we are in trouble perhaps - or when we have finished the latest thriller novel and want to fill time before the next one is published? Food for thought.....

I think that most of us read our bibles when we are troubled in some form or another and we look for comfort, reassurance, a guarantee of eternal life or we need to have the question "What would Jesus do?" answered.

We may have just suffered a terrible close bereavement - on the other hand we may just want to be with God and His Word for a while with no particular reason. How many of us have our favourite passages to which we continually return?

Ephesians 6 v 10-19 The Armour of God

Ephesians 3 v 14-21 A Prayer for the Ephesians

1 Cor. 13 v 1-13 **Love is.....**

Thinking about that one - God's Mission for us is to put Love where it is not present?

Love changes everything.....

Out with the Old, in with the new. In the past I've regarded the Psalms as part of the OLD Testament and as such perhaps have not paid the Old Testament as much attention as it deserves? It's much more lively in the New testament because it's all about Jesus - but so is the Old Testament. We should all be encouraged to read it. Jesus is there!

Anyway Psalm 12....

A Psalm of David. The theme - A call for PROTECTION against those who try to manipulate us. That's so interesting - how much time have we got to look at this, this morning?

We look together at Psalm 12 today because the contents of this Psalm describe the state of global mankind today. Everywhere we look as well as the "good" amongst us, and there's a lot, there are also the evil doers - who seem to proliferate as time goes by perhaps because the "good" do do nothing, to stop them.

Deceit is a terrible, life changing and in some cases life threatening disease that can only be healed and eradicated by the constant use of God's penicillin. It has several ingredients and they are all to be found in the Bible - the principle one being LOVE and the first two verses of the Ten Commandments.....

In this Psalm of David he talks to God whilst banging his head against a brick wall, particularly about deceit. Things then were just the same as they are now - only now now there are more people in the world to be deceitful. Why can't everyone be more like Jesus?

As the Life Application Bible says:

Living for God in a deceitful world can be a difficult and lonely battle.

Even the great prophet Elijah felt so lonely amongst it all he wanted to die. But God told him that there were at that time 7000 other faithful servants. Nothing has changed. We can all understand and recognise ourselves in situations to illustrate what David is saying here.

We need to remember, as dire as it seems, that we are never alone in our battle against evil. When we feel that way we must close ranks with other believers in approaching the Lord for strength and support.

Today we are suffering the massive damage and breakdown of mutual love and acceptance for all humankind, caused in the main by ineffective communication mixed with greed, misplaced self esteem and the need to control and be in charge. The biggest spanner in the works of this toolbox of evil being deceit. Nothing changes. David latched on to this all those years ago.

Today we are experiencing evil on a much bigger scale, there are more people about to practice evil. The rewards for the wrongdoer are far greater. The punishment is the same. We are living through the ever increasing consequences evil.

For years now we see terrorism (slowly getting closer to home.) Terrorism is not purely about Muslims and other

religious groups - it's only one way that Evil manifests itself.. Look at the number of natural disasters we are seeing and hearing of on the news. Thank the Lord that we are not in a similar position (yet). Just because we are Christians in the true sense of the Word it does not mean that we will never have to face these things head on - it's all in the Bible! Where is God in times of disaster, tragedy and sadness? Why does God allow these bad things to happen? Why does not he not protect us from these terrible things.

Questions that seem to be asked quite a lot nowadays by non believers - and believers alike. But we know the answer don't we.

God made humankind with the ability to choose. He gave us *freedom* to choose. We are not forced into a relationship with Him. He allows humankind to reject Him and commit good or evil acts in the process.

He could force us to be loving. He could force us to be good. What kind of relationship would that be? Puppets on a string. I'm sure that there would be a worldwide rebellion.

And for all sorts of reasons we're not too far away from that now. The Lord always tells us to look after the poor and needy and the oppressed. In short, those with plenty, in authority, have n't so tens of thousands of the deprived of this world are on the move looking for a better life and a lot of them are very, very angry. A lot of them are willing to work hard for a better living.

We have our free will because God gave it to us. We are at His mercy.

In a sense what happens to us is not as important as how we deal with it!

This psalm was chosen because it is so relevant for today. Things don't change.

Deceit is rife - oppression of the weak and the groaning of the poor, whether through natural disaster or human greed is developing out of all proportion. That was just Just one example - but a mighty big one! Surely there is enough to go round in terms of food? The more well off "Masters"

amongst us choose not to help those in need, instead greedily saving things for a rainy day - well, they're having that in abundance now!

What we do know and David states it categorically in verse 7:-

"O Lord, you will keep us safe and protect us from such people for ever".

If we know about things, we can manage the situation better.

God can also protect us from *ourselves* if we let Him! Self deceit.....

Are we honest with God? Do we tell him what we are really thinking and feeling? Do we change facts for our own benefit in telling him what *we think* He wants to hear?

If we can't be honest and straight forward with ourselves we can't be honest with God.

Deceit is a brick - one of many - in the wall of evil that keeps so many people away from God. This wall must be demolished.....

God may not always take away the immediate circumstances that overwhelm us or bring us immediate relief from heavy consequences, but He is always there for us to call to Him in prayer and His Word is always faithful and true.

We must keep ourselves near to God in His Word and in prayer. This is why we need to take time to pray and study His Word together. It is why we should discipline ourselves to Prayer and the Word every day.

'Tis said "Knowledge is Power" How true!

The more we know God and about God the more protection we will have.

God will take action and so will we.

In this life, on this side of heaven, we will have struggles in the fight against sin, from the outside and even more, from the inside—in our own hearts. But God has given us the means to press on.

His perfect Love for us.

Let's take full advantage to take refuge in the place of safety that God Himself provides for us. Let's take advantage of returning that Love to God and sharing that Love with others.

Love changes everything. Let us put love where there is none.

Perfect Love casts out all fear, deceit and Evil.
Amen.

-oOo-

TRY, TRY, JUST KEEP TRYING. "Unto the end." Matthew.24:13.

Rt Rev David Bennett, OSJ

The name of Zacchaeus! Did you ever hear of him? What do you know of him? Let us count up all the things we know about him. He

was a Jew, but he was in the employ of the Roman government, and was thought of as a traitor to his country. He was rich, and had a fine house in the city of Jericho. He was a success in life, and was the chief man among the publicans or tax collectors. He was very small, and could not see over the heads of other people when in a crowd. He was anxious to see Jesus, so he pushed his way out of the crowd, climbed up a tree, and there he saw Jesus, and Jesus saw him, and they became friends.

You remember the story, Zacchaeus when he found he could not see Jesus because of the great crowd, he did not turn away and go home. He tried again, and overcame all obstacles and at last found himself with Jesus as his guest in his own house.

The only way to succeed is to try. Even the birds and cattle fail and try again, until they win. The beautiful salmon that swim in the great rivers and the beautiful trout that dart so quickly from stone to stone leap the rapids and falls of the rivers, and go up and up to the head waters where they make their homes. In a great rushing river with its seething currents, its spray and foam, you can see the great salmon again and again jump out of the water and make a flying leap up in the rushing, roaring waterfall. Some fail, but others try and try again and when they win they rush far up the stream where they make their homes and lay their eggs. There are just two kinds of fish in the sea, swimmers and drifters, and there are just two kinds of people. There are those who drift with the current and do what everyone does, and there are those who direct their lives according to a purpose.

Did you ever hear the proverb, "God helps those who help themselves," which means that God gives aid to those who try? There is an interesting story about William Carey, the great missionary to India. You know he was a cobbler, and in his shop he had a map of the world and thought about the world and prayed for it, and at last God called him to go out to India as one of the first missionaries. He was a great man, his motto was:

"Expect great things from God. Attempt great things for God."

He overcame many things by trying and he learned this great lesson in his early life. When he was a boy he was very ambitious and never permitted anything to beat him if he could help it. In his play as well as in his work he always wanted to succeed. There was a tree near his home that none of his male friends had been able to climb. He was eager to climb that tree and tried and tried again but always failed. But he said, "It shall not beat me. I mean to climb that tree." So every day he tried to climb the tree, but made no progress. One day, however, after tearing his clothes and scratching his legs he got more than half way up, when down he fell, all in a heap, and when he tried to get up he could not. His leg was broken.

He was just a lad and he suffered a great deal. For six long weeks he lay on his little bed unable to get up. Then he began to walk around the house and soon he was out in the yard. What do you think he did? Well, the first thing he did was to go to that very tree and try to climb it again and he did. He went to the top and down again and he was satisfied.

That was the stuff out of which the great missionary hero was made. Little wonder he is still remembered for the great work he did in India. It was the same talent to keep on and on to try again that brought Zacchaeus face to face with Jesus. Let nothing keep you from Jesus, your best friend. Take for your motto the words of William Carey: "Expect great things from God. Attempt great things for God." With all blessings in Our Lord's Service, +David .

-oOo-

The Infancy Gospel of James: some pre-Christmas reading.

I have been asked my opinion of the Infancy Gospel of James and I do suggest it is worth reading, but it isn't 'Gospel' and it isn't part of the Bible we know.

It is however considered to be part of early church/Gnostic teachings and as part of my general approach to any Gnostic writings, anything that refers to hidden or secret knowledge is immediately suspect, but there may be some worth in this particular early writing.

The Bible we have is sufficient in itself but we also know that there are other sources for the Word of God that also exist, books like 'The Imitation of Christ', 'The Little Flowers of St Francis', the writings of Cardinal John Henry Newman, and perhaps even 'Don Camillo' can speak to us of both the nature of man and God, and their relationship.

However, the Bible remains the primary source and everything should be judged against it. These writings often help bring God's Word to life and give us deeper understanding and encouragement, but they do not conflict or contradict the Bible. Neither do they claim equality or precedence.

What you may get out of reading the Infancy Gospel of James is an understanding of where some of the side stories surrounding the Nativity originate. Therefore read, enjoy, but keep in context.

THE INFANCY GOSPEL OF JAMES

CHAPTER 1

(1) In the histories of the twelve tribes of Israel, Joachim was an extremely rich man. (2) He always brought a double offering to the Lord, (3) telling himself, "My offering for all the people is from my surplus and my own offering to the Lord God is for forgiveness, to atone for my sins."

(4) As the great day of the Lord was drawing near and the children of Israel were bringing their offerings, however, (5) Reubel stood in his way, saying, "You cannot offer your gifts first because you have not conceived a child in Israel."

(6) And Joachim became extremely frustrated and went away to the history of the twelve tribes of his people, saying to himself, "I will look in the history of the twelve tribes of Israel and see whether I am

the only one who has not conceived a child in Israel." (7) And he searched and found that all the righteous people had raised children in Israel. (8) And he reminded himself about the patriarch Abraham and that the Lord God gave his son Isaac to him in his last days.

(9) Then, Joachim was extremely frustrated and did not appear to his wife, but gave himself to the desert and pitched his tent there. (10) He fasted forty days and forty nights. (11) All the while, Joachim was saying to himself, "I will not go down for food or drink until the Lord my God visits me; prayer will be my food and drink."

CHAPTER 2

(1) Then, his wife Anna mourned and lamented greatly for two reasons, saying, "I lament that I am a widow and I lament that I am childless."

(2) When the great day of the Lord was drawing near, (3) her servant Juthine said to her, "How long are you going to humble yourself? Do you not see that the great day of the Lord is approaching? You are not allowed to mourn. (4) Take this headband which the leader of the activity gave me. I am not allowed to tie it because I am your slave and it has a royal mark."

(5) Then, Anna said, "Get away from me. I did not cause these things, even though the Lord God has humbled me greatly. Perhaps a crafty person has given this to you and you have come to cause me to partake of your sin."

(6) And her servant Juthine said, "Should I invoke a curse on you because you did not hear my voice? The Lord God has shut your womb and he will not give you offspring in Israel."

(7) So Anna also became extremely frustrated and removed her mourning garment, washed her head and clothed herself with her wedding dress. (8) Around the ninth hour, she went down to her garden to walk around. She saw a laurel tree and sat down under it. (9) And after a rest, she petitioned the Lord, saying, "God of my ancestors, bless me and hear my prayer, just as you blessed our mother Sarah and gave her son Isaac to her."

CHAPTER 3

(1) And Anna looked up to the heavens and saw a nest of sparrows in the laurel tree. (2) Immediately, Anna cried out mournfully, saying to herself,

"Oh me, who gave birth to me? What womb caused me to grow? (3) For I was born cursed in front of the children of Israel. I am reviled and they treat me with contempt and cast me out of the temple of the Lord my God.

(4) "Oh me, what am I like? I am not like the birds of the sky, for the birds of the sky are fruitful before you, Lord.

(5) "Oh me, what am I like? I am not like the domestic animals, for the domestic animals are fruitful before you, Lord.

(6) "Oh me, what am I like? I am not like the wild animals of the earth, for the wild animals of the earth are fruitful before you, Lord.

(7) "Oh me, what am I like? I am not like these waters, for these waters are fruitful before you, Lord.

(8) "Oh me, what am I like? I am not like this earth, for the earth produces its fruit in season and blesses you, Lord."

CHAPTER 4

(1) Suddenly, an angel of the Lord stood in front of her, saying, "Anna, Anna, the Lord God has heard your prayer. You will conceive and give birth and your child will be spoken of everywhere people live."

(2) And Anna said, "As the Lord God lives, whether I give birth to either a male or a female child, I will bring it as an offering to the Lord my God and it will be a servant to him all the days of its life."

(3) Next, two angels came, saying to her, "Look your husband Joachim is coming with his flocks." (4) For an angel of the Lord had gone down to Joachim, saying, "Joachim, Joachim, the Lord God has heard your prayer. Go down from here. Look, your wife Anna has conceived in her womb."

(5) Immediately, Joachim went down and called the shepherds, telling them, "Bring ten lambs without spot or blemish here to me;

the ten lambs will be for the Lord God. (6) Bring twelve tender calves; the twelve calves will be for the priests and the elders. (7) And bring one hundred male goats; the one hundred male goats will be for all the people."

(8) Then, Joachim came with his flocks. Anna was standing at the gate. (9) When she saw Joachim coming with his flocks, Anna ran and wrapped herself around his neck, saying, "Now I know that the Lord God has blessed me greatly. See, the widow is no longer a widow and the childless woman has conceived in her womb."

(10) And Joachim rested for the first day he was home.

CHAPTER 5

(1) The next day, when he was presenting his offerings, he said to himself, "If the Lord God will be reconciled to me, he will make it clear to me with the priest's metal disc." (2) And Joachim presented his offerings and paid attention to the priest's metal disc until he went up to the altar of the Lord. And he saw no sin in it. (3) Joachim said, "Now, I know that the Lord God has been reconciled to me and has sent all my great sins away for me." (4) And having been justified, he departed from the temple and went to his house.

(5) And his wife's pregnancy came to term. After nine months, Anna gave birth (6) and she said to the midwife, "What is it?"

(7) The midwife said, "A girl."

(8) Anna said, "My soul exalts this day." And she put her baby to bed.

(9) After her days were completed, Anna cleansed her menstrual flow

(10) and gave her breast to the child and gave her the name Mary.

CHAPTER 6

(1) Day by day, the child grew stronger. (2) When she was six months old, her mother set her on the ground to test whether she could stand. And after walking seven steps, she came to her mother's breast. (3) And her mother picked her up, saying, "As the Lord my God lives, you will not walk on this earth again until I take you to the temple of the Lord."

(4) And she made a sanctuary in her bedroom and would not permit anything common or impure to pass through it. (5) And she called the pure daughters of the Hebrews and they played with her.

(6) When the child's first birthday came, Joachim held a great celebration. He invited the high priests and the priests and the Sanhedrin and the whole nation of Israel. (7) And Joachim brought the child to the priests and they blessed her, saying, "God of our ancestors, bless this child and give her name eternal fame among all generations."

(8) And all the people said, "Let it happen, amen."

(9) And he brought the child to the high priests and they blessed her, saying, "Exalted God, look upon this child and give her a final blessing which will not be succeeded."

(10) And her mother took her up to the bedroom-sanctuary and gave her breast to the child. (11) And Anna composed a song for the Lord God, saying, "I will sing a holy song to the Lord my God because he has examined me and removed my horrible disgrace from me. (12) And the Lord God gave me the fruit of his righteousness, of one nature, but manifold before him. (13) Who will proclaim to the sons of Reubel that Anna nurses a child? Do you hear? Hear this, twelve tribes of Israel: Anna nurses a child!"

(14) And she gave the child rest in the bedroom-sanctuary and went out and served them. (15) When dinner was completed, they departed feeling good and glorified the God of Israel.

CHAPTER 7

(1) She cared for the child for months. When the child turned two years old, Joachim said, "Let's take her to the temple of the Lord so we can relate the message we were given."

(2) And Anna said, "Let's wait until the third year, so that she will not seek her father or mother."

(3) And Joachim said, "Let's wait."

(4) When the child turned three, Joachim said, "Let's call the pure women of the Hebrews. (5) Let them take up lamps and light them so that the child will not turn back and her heart will never be led away from the temple of the Lord." (6) And they did these things until they went up to the temple of the Lord.

(7) And the priest welcomed her. Kissing her, he blessed her and said, "The Lord God has magnified your name for all generations; (8) through you the Lord will reveal deliverance to the children of Israel in the last days."

(9) And he set her down on the third step of the altar and the Lord God poured grace upon her. (10) She danced triumphantly with her drinks and every house in Israel loved her.

CHAPTER 8

(1) And her parents went down, marveling at and praising and glorifying the Lord God because the child had not turned back to look at them. (2) While Mary was in the temple of the Lord, she was fed like a dove and received food from the hand of an angel.

(3) When she turned twelve, a group of priests took counsel together, saying, "Look, Mary has been in the temple of the Lord twelve years.

(4) What should we do about her now, so that she does not defile the sanctuary of the Lord our God?" (5) And they said to the high priest, "You have stood at the altar of the Lord. Go in and pray about her.

And if the Lord God reveals anything to you, we will do it."

(6) And the priest went in taking the vestment with twelve bells into the holy of holies and prayed about her. Suddenly, an angel of the Lord stood before him, saying, "Zachariah, Zachariah, depart from here and gather the widowers of the people and let each one carry a staff. (8) And the one whom the Lord God points out with a sign, she will be his wife." (9) So the heralds went out to the whole surrounding area of Judea and the trumpet of the Lord rang out and all the men rushed in.

CHAPTER 9

(1) Throwing down his axe, Joseph went out to meet them. (2) And after they had gathered together with their rods, they went to the high priest. (3) After receiving everyone's rod, the high priest went into the temple and prayed. (4) When he was finished with the prayer, he took the rods and went out and gave them to each man, (5) but there was no sign among them. Finally, Joseph took his rod. (6) Suddenly, a dove came out of the rod and stood on Joseph's head. (7) And the high priest said, "Joseph! Joseph! You have been chosen by lot to take the virgin into your own keeping."

(8) And Joseph replied, saying, "I have sons and am old, while she is young. I will not be ridiculed among the children of Israel."

(9) And the high priest said, "Joseph, fear the Lord your God and remember what God did to Dathan and Abiron and Kore, how the

earth split open and swallowed them because of their rebellion. (10) Now fear God, Joseph, so that these things do not happen in your house."

(11) Fearing God, Joseph took her into his own possession. (12) And he said to her, "Mary, I took you from the temple of the Lord and now I bring you into my house. I am going out to build houses, but I will come back to you. The Lord will protect you."

CHAPTER 10

(1) Meanwhile, the priests were meeting together, saying, "Let us make a curtain for the temple of the Lord."

(2) And the high priest said, "Call the pure virgins from the tribe of David to me." (3) And the servants went out and sought and found seven virgins. (4) And the high priest remembered that the child Mary was from the tribe of David and was pure before God. (5) So the servants went out and got her.

(6) And they brought the women into the temple of the Lord. (7) And the high priest said, "Cast lots to see who will spin the gold and the pure and the linen and the silk and the violet and the scarlet and the true purple threads."

(8) And Mary was appointed by lot to the true purple and scarlet threads. And taking them, she went to her house. (9) This was at the same time Zachariah fell silent and Samuel replaced him until

Zachariah could speak again. (10) Mary was spinning the scarlet thread which she had taken.

CHAPTER 11

(1) And she took the cup and went out to fill it with water. (2) Suddenly, a voice said to her, "Rejoice, blessed one. The Lord is with you. You are blessed among women." (3) And Mary looked around to the right and the left to see where this voice came from. (4) And trembling she went into her house. Setting down the cup, she took the purple thread and sat down on the chair and spun it.

(5) Suddenly, an angel stood before her saying, "Do not be afraid Mary. You have found grace before the Lord of all. You will conceive from his word."

(6) Upon hearing this, however, Mary was distraught, saying to herself, "If I conceive from the Lord God who lives, will I also conceive as all women conceive?"

(7) And the Angel of the Lord said, "Not like that, Mary. For the power of God will come over you. Thus, the holy one who is born will be called son of the most high. (8) And you will call his name Jesus, for he will save his people from their sins."

(9) And Mary said, "See, I am the servant of the Lord before him. Let it happen to me according to what you say."

CHAPTER 12

(1) And she made the purple and the scarlet thread and carried it to the high priest. (2) And taking it, the high priest blessed her and said, "Mary, God has magnified your name. You will be called blessed among all the generations of the earth."

(3) Then, Mary went gladly to her cousin Elizabeth. (4) And she knocked at the door and when Elizabeth heard, she threw down her scarlet thread and ran to the door and opened it for her. (5) And she blessed her and said, "Where have you come to me from? Why should the mother of my Lord come to me? See how the child in me leaps and blesses you."

(6) But Mary had forgotten the mysteries which the angel Gabriel had told her. And looking into heaven she said, "Who am I, Lord, that all the generations of the earth will bless me?"

(7) She spent three months with Elizabeth. (8) Day after day, her womb swelled and she was afraid to go to her house and hid herself from the children of Israel. (9) Mary was sixteen years old when these mysterious things happened to her.

CHAPTER 13

(1) In the sixth month of her pregnancy, Joseph came from his house-building and went into the house to find her swelling. (2) And he struck his face and threw himself on the ground in sackcloth and

wept bitterly, "How can I look to the Lord God? What will I pray about her, for I took her as a virgin from the temple of the Lord and did not guard her? (4) Who has set this trap for me? Who did this evil in my house? Who stole the virgin from me and defiled her. (5) Has not the story of Adam been repeated with me? For while Adam was glorifying God, the serpent came and found Eve alone and deceived her and defiled her - so it has also happened to me."

(6) And Joseph got up from his sackcloth and called her and said to her, "After having been cared for by God, what have you done? (7) Did you forget the Lord your God? You who were raised in the holy of holies, you who received from the hand of an angel, do you know how much you have humiliated yourself?"

(8) Then, she wept bitterly, saying, "I am pure and I did not know a man."

(9) And Joseph said to her, "Where did this thing in your womb come from then?"

(10) But she said, "As the Lord my God lives, I do not know where it came from."

CHAPTER 14

(1) Then, Joseph was extremely frightened and kept quiet about her, pondering what he should do. (2) And Joseph said to himself, "If I hide her sin, I will be rebelling against the law of the Lord. (3) And if I

expose her to the children of Israel . . . well, I am afraid that the child in her might be angelic and I will be betraying innocent blood to a judgment of death. (4) What then will I do about her? I will send her away from me secretly."

(5) And night overtook him. And suddenly an angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream, saying, "Do not fear this child. For the child in her is from the Holy Spirit. (6) She will bear a son for you and you will call his name Jesus. For he will save his people from their sins."

(7) And Joseph arose from his sleep and glorified the God of Israel who had given grace to him. (8) And he guarded the child.

CHAPTER 15

(1) Then, Annas the scribe came to him and said to him, "Joseph, why have you not appeared to our travelling group?"

(2) And he said to him, "Because I was worn out from the trip and rested my first day back."

(3) And Annas turned and saw Mary pregnant.

(4) And he ran off at top speed to the high priest and said to him, "Look at Joseph, the one you bear witness for. He has broken the law badly."

(5) And the high priest said, "What is this?"

(6) And he said, "The virgin which Joseph received from the temple of the Lord, he defiled her and has stolen her wedding festivities and has not revealed it to the children of Israel."

(7) And he said to him, "Has Joseph done these things?"

(8) And he said to him, "Send a servant and he will find the virgin pregnant."

(9) And the servants went and found her just as he said and they led her with Joseph to the law court.

(10) And the high priest said to her, "Mary, what is this? How have you humiliated yourself? (11) Did you forget the Lord your God, you who were raised in the holy of holies and received from the hand of an angel? (12) You who heard their songs and danced before them, what is this?"

(13) And she wept bitterly, saying, "As the Lord God lives, I am pure before him and I did not know a man."

(14) And the high priest said, "Joseph, what is this?"

(15) But Joseph said, "As the Lord lives, I am pure from her."

(16) And the high priest said, "Do not lie, but speak the truth. You

stole your wedding festivities and did not reveal it to the children of Israel (17) and you did not bow your head before the mighty hand that it should bless your seed."

(18) And Joseph was silent.

CHAPTER 16

(1) And the high priest said, "Return the virgin which you took from the temple of the Lord."

(2) And Joseph, becoming tearful [...]

(3) And the high priest said, "I will give you the water of the Lord's wrath to drink and it will make your sin clear in your eyes." (4) And taking the water, the high priest gave it to Joseph to drink and sent him out into the desert. And he returned unharmed.

(5) And he made the young girl drink also and sent her out into the desert. And she came back unharmed. (6) And all the people were astonished that their sins were not revealed. (7) And the high priest said, "If the Lord God has not revealed your sins, I will not judge you either." And he released them. (8) And Joseph took Mary and went away to his house, rejoicing and praising the God of Israel.

CHAPTER 17

(1) Then, there was an order from the Emperor Augustus to register

how many people were in Bethlehem of Judea. (2) And Joseph said, "I will register my sons. But this child? What will I do about him? How will I register him? (3) And my wife? Oh, I am ashamed. Should I register her as my daughter? The children of Israel know that she is not my daughter. (4) This day, I will do as the Lord wants."

(5) And he saddled his donkey and sat her on it and his son led and Samuel followed. (6) And they arrived at the third mile and Joseph turned and saw that she was sad. (7) And he said to himself, "Perhaps the child within her is troubling her." (8) And again Joseph turned around and saw her laughing and said to her, "Mary, what is with you? First your face appears happy and then sad?"

(9) And she said, "Joseph, it is because I see two people with my eyes, one crying and being afflicted, one rejoicing and being extremely happy."

(10) When they came to the middle of the journey, Mary said to him, "Joseph, take me off the donkey, the child pushing from within me to let him come out."

(11) So he took her off the donkey and said to her, "Where will I take you and shelter you in your awkwardness? This area is a desert."

CHAPTER 18

(1) And he found a cave and led her there and stationed his sons to watch her, (2) while he went to find a Hebrew midwife in the land of

Bethlehem.

(3) Then, Joseph wandered, but he did not wander. (4) And I looked up to the peak of the sky and saw it standing still and I looked up into the air. With utter astonishment I saw it, even the birds of the sky were not moving. (5) And I looked at the ground and saw a bowl lying there and workers reclining. And their hands were in the bowl. (6) And chewing, they were not chewing. And picking food up, they were not picking it up. And putting food in their mouths, they were not putting it in their mouths. (7) Rather, all their faces were looking up.

(8) And I saw sheep being driven, but the sheep were standing still.

(9) And the shepherd lifted up his hand to strike them, but his hand remained above them. (10) And I saw the rushing current of the river and I saw goats and their mouths resting in the water, but they were not drinking. (11) And suddenly everything was replaced by the ordinary course of events.

CHAPTER 19

(1) And I saw a woman coming down from the mountain and she said to me, "Man, where are you going?"

(2) And I said, "I am seeking a Hebrew midwife."

(3) Replying, she said to me, "Are you from Israel?"

(4) And I said to her, "Yes."

(5) Then, she said, "And who is giving birth in the cave?"

(6) And I said, "The one who has pledged to be married to me."

(7) And she said to me, "She is not your wife?"

(8) And I said to her, "She is Mary, the one who was raised in the temple. I won her by lot to be my wife. (9) She is not yet my wife, but has a foetus from the Holy Spirit."

(10) And the midwife said, "Really?"

(11) And Joseph said to her, "Come and see."

(12) So the midwife went with him. (13) And they stood near the cave and a dark cloud was hovering over the cave. (14) And the midwife said, "My soul glorifies this day, for today my eyes have seen a miracle: salvation has come to Israel."

(15) And immediately, the cloud withdrew from the cave and a great light appeared in the cave so that their eyes could not bear it. (16) And a little while later the same light withdrew until an infant appeared. And he came and took the breast of his mother, Mary.

(17) And the midwife cried out and said, "How great this day is for me, for I have seen this new miracle."

(18) And the midwife departed from the cave and met Salome and said to her, "Salome, Salome, I have to describe this new miracle for you. A virgin has given birth, although her body does not allow it."

(19) And Salome said, "As the Lord my God lives, unless I insert my finger and investigate her, I will not believe that a virgin has given birth."

CHAPTER 20

(1) And the midwife went in and said, "Mary, position yourself, for not a small test concerning you is about to take place."

(2) When Mary heard these things, she positioned herself. And Salome inserted her finger into her body. (3) And Salome cried out and said, "Woe for my lawlessness and the unbelief that made me test the living God. Look, my hand is falling away from me and being consumed in fire."

(5) And Salome dropped to her knees before the Lord, saying, "God of Abraham and Isaac and Jacob, (6) do not expose me to the children of Israel, but give me back to the poor. (7) For you know, Lord, that I have performed service and received my wage from you."

(8) Suddenly, an angel of the Lord appeared, saying to her, "Salome, Salome, the Lord of all has heard your entreaty. (9) Stretch out your hand to the child and lift him up and he will be salvation and joy for

you."

(10) And Salome went to the child and lifted him up, saying, "I worship him because he has been born a king to Israel." (11) And at once Salome was healed and left the cave justified.

(12) Suddenly, there was a voice saying, "Salome, Salome, do not proclaim what a miracle you have seen until the child comes to Jerusalem."

CHAPTER 21

(1) Now, Joseph was about to depart to Judea when there a great commotion in Bethlehem of Judea. (2) For astrologers had come, saying, "Where is the one who has been born king of the Jews? For we saw his star in the East and came to worship him."

(3) And when Herod heard, he was shaken up and sent servants to the astrologers. (4) And he also sent for the high priests and questioned them in his palace, saying to them, "What has been written about the messiah? Where will he be born?"

(5) They said to him, "In Bethlehem of Judea, for so it has been written." (6) And he let them go.

(7) And he questioned the astrologers, saying to them, "What sign did you see about the one who has been born king?"

(8) And the astrologers said, "We saw a star shining with incredible brilliance amidst the constellations and making them seem dim. And so we knew that the king had been born in Israel and we came to worship him."

(9) And Herod said to them, "Go and search. If you find him, report to me so that I also may come and worship him."

(10) And the wise men departed. Then, the star which they had seen in the east led them until they came to the cave and stood over the head of the child. (11) And when the astrologers saw him with his mother Mary, they took gifts out of their bags: gold, frankincense, and myrrh.

(12) And having been warned by the angel not to go into Judea, they returned to their country by another road.

CHAPTER 22

(1) When Herod saw that he had been tricked by the astrologers, he flew into a rage (2) and sent his executioners, telling them to destroy all the infants that were two years old or younger.

(3) And when Mary heard that all the children were being destroyed, she was afraid and took the child and wrapped him up and put him in a stall of cows.

(5) And when Elizabeth heard that John was being sought, she took

him and headed for the hills. And she looked around to find where she could hide him, but there was not any good place. (7) Then, as Elizabeth sighed, she said with a loud voice, "Mountain of God, take me, a mother with her child." For Elizabeth was too afraid to go up higher. (8) And at once, the mountain split open and received her. And there was light shining through the mountain to her. (9) For an angel of the Lord was with them, guarding them.

CHAPTER 23

(1) But Herod continued seeking John. (2) And he sent his servants to Zachariah at the altar, saying to him, "Where did you hide your son?" (3) But he replied, saying to them, "I am here as a servant of God and am serving in his temple. How should I know where my son is?"

(4) And his servants departed and reported to him all these things. Outraged, Herod said, "Is his son destined to rule Israel?"

(5) And he sent his servants again, saying to him, "Tell me the truth? Where is your son? Do you know that your blood is under my hand?" (6) And the servants departed and reported these things to him.

(7) And replying, Zachariah said, "I am a witness of God. Have my blood. (8) The Lord will receive my spirit because you are shedding innocent blood at the entrance of the temple of the Lord."

(9) And around daybreak, Zachariah was murdered, even though the children of Israel did not know that he had been murdered.

CHAPTER 24

(1) Then, at the hour of greeting, the priests departed and the blessing of Zachariah did not greet them as usual. (2) Expecting Zachariah, the priests waited to welcome him with prayer and to praise the most high God.

(3) When he failed to come, they were all afraid. (4) One of them courageously went into the sanctuary and saw hardened blood next to the altar of the Lord (5) and heard a loud voice saying, "Zachariah has been murdered and his blood will not be wiped away until vengeance comes."

(6) When he heard these words, he was afraid and went out and told the priest what he had seen and heard. (7) And gathering up their courage, they went in and saw what had happened. (8) And as the panels of the temple cried out, they ripped their robes from the top down. (9) And they did not find the corpse, but they found his blood which had turned to stone. (10) And fearing, they went out and reported to the people that Zachariah had been murdered. (11) And all the tribes of the people heard and they mourned and wept for three days and three nights.

(12) Then, after three days, the priests deliberated about who they should appoint to take the place of Zachariah. (13) And the lot went to Simeon. (14) For he was the one to whom it had been revealed by the Holy Spirit that he would not see death until he saw the messiah

in the flesh.

CHAPTER 25

(1) I, James, wrote this history when there was unrest in Jerusalem, at the time Herod died. (2) I took myself into the desert until the unrest in Jerusalem ceased. (3) All the while, I was glorifying God who gave me the wisdom to write this history.

(4) And grace will be with all who fear the Lord. Amen.

+Ian, OSJ

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Please remember all those who are serving or have served on our behalf as members of the Armed Forces, and their families and friends, as we approach Remembrance Day in November.

Yet again, there are political moves to question the value and future of military Chaplains in our Armed Forces. Please give this in prayer to God too.

+Ian, OSJ



St Leonard's Chapel,
Hazlewood Castle, Yorkshire,
LS24 9NJ

OSJ Services 2017



Services take place on the FIRST and THIRD Sundays of each month at 6.00 p.m.

Services, unless otherwise stated, take the form of a short and very gentle communion service, lasting between 20 and 30 minutes.

All are very welcome and all may receive.

1st January, 2017

15th January, 2017

5th February, 2017

19th February, 2017

5th March, 2017

19th March, 2017

2nd April, 2017

16th April, 2017

7th May, 2017

21st May, 2017

4th June, 2017

18th June, 2017

2nd July, 2017

16th July, 2017

6th August, 2017

20th August, 2017

3rd September, 2017

17th September, 2017

1st October, 2017

15th October, 2017

5th November, 2017

19th November, 2017

3rd December, 2017

17th December, 2017

We use a non-alcoholic wine so children may take part too.

There is no requirement to be baptised or confirmed.

Additional Services:

Remembrance Sunday: 12th November 10.35 a.m.

Midnight Mass: 24th December 11.20 p.m.

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|  | <p style="text-align: center;">The Order of St James Newsletter</p> <p style="text-align: center;">November 2017</p> |  |
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"What is the meaning of the Parable of the Wedding Feast?"

To understand more fully where Jesus was going with this parable we need to look at the Jewish culture surrounding marriage at this time.

The parents of the "betrothed couple" generally drew up the marriage contract. Even more surprising , or not, the intended bride and groom would meet, sometimes for the first time, when this contract was signed. The couple would then be regarded as married but would live apart until after the ceremony took place. The bride staying with her parents, and the groom leaving to make their home ready - which could take a while.

When their home was all "fit for purpose" the groom would return for his bride unexpectedly, without notice, the marriage ceremony would take place, and the wedding banquet would follow on...

The wedding banquet was one of the happiest and most joyous events in Jewish life and could last for up to a week.

In His parable, Jesus compares heaven to a wedding banquet that a king had prepared for his son (Matthew 22:2). Many people had been invited, but when the time for the banquet came and the table was set, those invited refused to come (verses 4-5). In fact, the king's servants who brought the joyful message were mistreated and even killed (verse 6).

The King, enraged at the response of those who had been invited, sent his army to avenge the death of his servants (verse 7). He then sent invitations to anyone his servants could find, with the result that the wedding hall was filled (verses 8-10).

During the feast the king noticed a man "who was not wearing wedding clothes" (verse 11). When asked how he came to be there without the furnished attire, the man had no answer and was promptly ejected from the feast "outside, into the darkness, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth" (verses 12-13). Jesus then ends the parable with this statement: "For many are invited, but few are chosen" (verse 14).

In the parable then:

The King is God, our Father - the Son being honoured is Jesus.

The king is God the Father, and the son who is being honoured at the banquet is Jesus, who according to John's Gospel "came to that

which was his own, but his own did not receive him” (John 1:11). Israelites held the invitation to the kingdom, but when the time actually came for the kingdom to appear (see Matthew 3:1), when John the Baptist announced the coming of Jesus' kingdom they did not believe. Indeed many prophets, including John the Baptist, had been murdered.

There are many totally justifiable and understandable reasons for not doing something as accepting an invitation. In this case it is not because the invited guests ***could not*** come to the wedding feast, but that they ***would not*** come (see Luke 13:34). Everyone had an excuse.

The King had sent invitations to his own, but with very poor response.

In today's terms a typical example of human nature, to be offered the blessings of God and to refuse them because of the attraction of more entertaining things which usually turn out to be materialistic and some just could not care less. The wedding invitation is then extended to anyone and everyone, total strangers, both good and bad. This refers to the gospel being taken to the Gentiles. This part of the parable is a forewarning of the Jews' rejection of the gospel in Acts 13. Paul and Barnabas were in Pisidian Antioch, where the Jewish leaders strongly opposed them.

The words of the apostles repeat the King's estimation that those invited to the wedding "did not deserve to come": "We had to speak the word of God to you first. Since you reject it and do not consider yourselves worthy of eternal life, we now turn to the Gentiles" (Acts 13:46). The gospel message, Jesus taught, would be made available to everyone whether they were Hebrew or not. That's how it is today.

The offer for use of the wedding garment is very interesting. It was customary for wedding guests to be given clothes to wear at the banquet. It was unthinkable not to wear them. It was regarded as an insult to the Host who would regard the guest as arrogant and not wanting to take part.

This was Jesus' way of teaching the inadequacy of self-righteousness. From the very beginning, in Jesus God has provided a "covering" for our sin. To insist on *covering ourselves* is to be clad in "filthy rags" (Isaiah 64:6). Adam and Eve tried to cover their shame, but they found their fig leaves to be woefully scant. God took away their handmade clothes and replaced them with skins of (sacrificed) animals (Genesis 3:7, 21). In the book of Revelation, we see those in heaven wearing "white robes" (Revelation 7:9), and we learn that the whiteness of the robes is due to their being washed in the blood of the Lamb (verse 14). We trust in God's righteousness, not our own (Philippians 3:9).

Just as the king provided wedding garments for his guests, God provides salvation for mankind through the sacrifice of Jesus. Our wedding garment is the righteousness of Jesus, and unless we have it, we will miss the wedding feast of eternal life. The cross is the only way to salvation (John 14:6).

For his crime against the king, the improperly dressed guest is thrown out into the darkness. For their crimes against God, there will be many who will be consigned to “outer darkness”—existence without God for eternity. Christ concludes the parable with the sad fact that “many are invited, but few are chosen.” In other words, many people hear God's call, but only a few take any notice and do something about it.

To summarize the point of the Parable of the Wedding Feast, God sent His Son into the world, and the very people who should have celebrated His coming rejected Him, bringing judgment upon themselves. As a result, the kingdom of heaven was opened up to anyone who will set aside his own righteousness and by faith accept the righteousness God provides in Jesus. Those who reject God's gift of salvation and focus instead on their own strength, their own materialistic desires and “good” works will spend eternity basically Godless.

The self-righteous Pharisees who heard this parable did not miss Jesus' point. In the very next verse, "the Pharisees went out and laid plans to trap him in his words" (Matthew 22:15).

The Parable of the Wedding Feast is also a warning to us, to make sure we are fully relying on God's provision of salvation, not on our own good works or religious service.

How close to God are we?

How often do we obey Him?

And thereby hangs another tale.

Rev David Startup, OSJ.

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Exodus 20: 1-4 7-9 12-20

The theme this reading is based on the Ten Commandments given to Moses on Mount Sinai. Amazingly these commandments are just as relevant now as they were 3000 years ago.

Lets just remind ourselves of the story.

The Ten commandments were given to the people of Israel after God

delivered them from bondage in the land of Egypt. They were given to the people as part of the covenant God offered to them – a covenant that they were free to accept or reject, a covenant in which God promised to be their God and to watch over them and protect them. Through lapses of disobedience it took them 40 years to actually arrive at the promised land.

Those of us who are parents I am sure we have often said to our children don't do this? Or do that? Striving to keep them away from dangerous situations. It isn't that we want to scare our children about the danger of the world but that we want them to avoid injury and because we love them.

We have to convince our children that it is necessary to follow rules through life and that these rules will help protect them from the traumas of life. This seems to be a problem with some children these days, there are no rules so children become unruly, After what you see on T.V. about Football, and the behaviour of players to referees and what they have to put up with, it is not only children.

God was doing this on Mount Sinai. He was being a parent. His children needed a framework to live within after being controlled by Egypt. He had brought the children of Israel out of Egypt. God is a parent warning his children about things that might harm them. God said "Worship me only. Don't make idols. Don't use my name wrongly. Keep the Sabbath. Honour your parents. Do not kill, , commit adultery, steal, lie or covet.

Then God caused thunder and lightning, rumbling and magnificent noises to issue forth from the holy mountain. And the people were afraid. They wondered “Is God going to destroy us because we have broken most of those commandments already”

They had come from Egypt, a land of many idols and Gods each of which represented a different aspect of life. When God told them to worship him it wasn't so hard for them, he was one more God to add to the list. But when he said “You shall have no other Gods before me” that was very difficult to accept. If they didn't learn that the God who had led them out of Egypt was the only true God they could not be his people no matter how faithfully they kept the other commandments. God wasn't acting as a killjoy but just stressing that he was God .

God was acting like a parent, warning his children about things that might harm them and leading them to a life of practical holiness and to worship and know their God.

It shows just how far some people of today have strayed from the commandments of God. Going back quite some time I saw a programme on television asking the general public what Ten Commandments they would suggest and to send in their views as to what should be the Ten Commandments of today. I am afraid I didn't listen to them all their suggestions they made me cringe, The only one of Gods Ten commandments that they thought was relevant for today was Honour your

father and mother. Even today 3000 years later God knows our need, times have changed but human beings don't. Oh we are taller, larger generally healthier than they were 3000 years ago, but the basic model hasn't changed, the same things that exceeded design specification then still exceeds design specification today

We have only to look around, wars and threats of war, governments issuing laws by the dozen, some relevant and many which seem extremely non essential. Terrorism, famine and corrupt rulers. Attitudes don't seem to have changed..

Today we allow many things to become Gods to us. Money, fame, work and pleasure can become Gods when we concentrate too much on them for personal identity.

Some people do set out to make as much money as possible and concentrate their lives on nothing else, but many don't set out intentionally to worship these, but with the amount of time they spend on them, especially work and the resulting money, they can take over their lives completely. You have only to look around as you come to Church and see people washing and polishing their cars. Their Gods?

God know this, and he knows our hearts, that is why he has given us his law. And as hard as that law may seem at times, holding to that law keeps us safe

There is nothing in the life of Christ, or in his message that makes the law of God less relevant to us than it was to the people of Israel 3000 years ago.

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We repeat the summation of the commandments, used by the rabbis and Jews “Hear O Israel, the Lord our God, the Lord is one, you shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your should, and with all your mind, and with all your strength”. The second is this “You shall love your neighbour as yourself” There is no other commandments greater than these. In the older versions of the Communion Service we actually repeated the Ten Commandments in full. This is now only said on special services. Although other denominations can opt to repeat them at communion.

Gods name is special because it carries his personal identity. Using it frivolously or in a curse as is so common today, that we may fail to realise how serious it is. The way we use Gods name conveys how we really feel about him. We should respect his name and use it appropriately speaking it in praise and worship rather than curse or jest.

The Sabbath was a day set aside for rest and worship. God commanded a Sabbath because humans need to spent unhurried time in worship and rest each week.

A God who is concerned enough to set aside a day each week for rest is indeed wonderful, especially in the rat race of the present world.

The pressures of modern life do make it inevitable that many people do have to work on a Sunday, some from choice but many from necessity, such as nurses, doctors, firemen, police. If they follow God's commandments they can have a day of rest at another time in the week.

Personally I always feel that I need this day of rest to go to Church and recharge my batteries by worshipping God with other people and listening to his word. After which I feel able to face anything the world throws at me during the coming week

Many people don't see it this way and think God gave the Ten commandments to make our lives miserable and difficult. They think God doesn't want us to have any fun, which is far from the truth. God wants us to have fun and be happy, his commandments are not restrictions to life but a great assistance if we keep them they save us from behaviour that hurts our bodies, souls and spirit. They are part of His framework for us.

We were created to love God and our neighbours. We weren't designed to hate or be self-centred. When we do hateful things we damage ourselves just like a tool used for the wrong purpose.

We only need to look around the world to-day to see what hate can do, this

hasn't changed over 3000 years, but you can also look round the world and see what love can do. Our response to natural disasters , our response to war and cruelty, and nearer home our efforts to help people who are suffering and homeless in our communities

So keep the Ten Commandments – with God's help. If you have trouble remembering them, just remember what Jesus said. He said that the whole of the law was summed up in two commandments. Love God and love your neighbour. If you keep these two commandments you will have God's help to keep the other 8 commandments.

Keep the commandments because God has commanded it. Keeping the commandments will not save us. Only Christ can save us But if Christ is our Lord then we will do what he and his Father have told us to do.

But just in case that isn't enough. If the fact that God has commanded these things is not enough for you, then keep them out of your own self-interest. Keep them to save yourself from the pain and heartache that will result when you break them. God didn't give these commandments to make our lives difficult or to take our fun away. These commandments were given because our Father in heaven loves us and knows what we need

Listen to that love – the love of a loving parent – the love of God and be faithful...

Unice Brearley, OSJ.

A Relationship With Jesus

"How do you plead?"

"Guilty, your Honour."

A hushed silence sweeps over the courtroom. The people wait expectantly as the Judge prepares to speak. Sunlight filters through the Venetian blinds creating contrasting bars of light and dark across the hardwood floor. Flies buzz around the shackled prisoner's head and sweat runs down his face. The ladies fan themselves with their homemade fans made of legal papers and pages of newspapers. The Judge pours Himself a glass of water and takes a sip; then He turns to the prisoner and says, "I have no choice according to the Law except to pronounce you guilty and sentence you to death."

The crowd gasps all at once. They know that their crimes are far more serious than this prisoner's crimes and they now realise they will be sentenced to death also. The guards laugh and pull at the prisoner's chains to lead him off to the executioner.

"Wait!" shouts the Judge. The guards stop and the prisoner looks over his shoulder.

"This prisoner is my brother," says the Judge as He takes off His robe.

"Unshackle him and let him go. I will take his place."

So the Judge pays the price of the crimes of the prisoner and lays down His life for His brother.

Does this ever happen in real life?

Yes it does! Jesus our Judge has already paid the price for our sins by His atoning work on the cross. You need to accept this by believing, trusting and obeying Jesus.

First, we must understand that we all are commanded to believe in Jesus. If we choose to reject Jesus, we'll face eternal separation-- death-- from God.

Jesus answered, "The work of God is this: to believe in the one he has sent." (John 6:29 NIV)

Even committing one small sin is the same as breaking all the law. For whoever keeps the whole law and yet stumbles at just one point is guilty of breaking all of it. (James 2:10 NIV)

Everyone of us has sinned and lost the right to have a relationship with

God.... for the bible clearly states, 'all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God,...' (Romans 3:23 NIV)

We all deserve to die (a spiritual death) for our sins:

- For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord. (Romans 6:23 NIV)

- Just as man is destined to die once, and after that to face judgment. (Hebrews 9:27 NIV)

Nothing we can do, no matter how good it may be or no matter how good we think we are, can make us good enough to have a relationship with God without Jesus Christ. We cannot earn our way to heaven. We can only have a relationship with God through Jesus Christ because of His gift of mercy and grace.

'... he saved us, not because of righteous things we had done, but because of his mercy. He saved us through the washing of rebirth and renewal by the Holy Spirit... '(Titus 3:5 NIV)

'For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith-- and this not from yourselves, it is the gift of God-- not by works, so that no one can boast.' (Ephesians 2:8-9 NIV)

But God sent Jesus-- the Author and the Lord of Life-- to be the way back to a right relationship with God. Christ's death on the cross paid the penalty that we deserve for going our own way.

But God demonstrates his own love for us in this: 'While we were still sinners, Christ died for us.' (Romans 5:8 NIV)

'For Christ died for sins once for all, the righteous for the unrighteous, to bring you to God. He was put to death in the body but made alive by the Spirit...' (1 Peter 3:18 NIV)

If you want to receive the eternal life God offers and be in right standing with God, you must invite Jesus into your life to be your Lord and Saviour. 'Yet to all who received him, to those who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God--' (John 1:12 NIV)

'Here I am! I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears my voice and opens the door, I will come in and eat with him, and he with me.'
(Revelation 3:20 NIV)

Why not invite Jesus into your life right now and be saved?

Pray this prayer:

"Jesus, please come into my life. I want to turn from living my life and

going my own way. Come now and live Your Life in me. Cleanse me from my sins. I receive You as my Lord and my Saviour. I will live for You all the days of my life. Amen."

If you prayed this prayer from your heart, you can be assured that you have eternal life.

Jesus said, "I tell you the truth, whoever hears my word and believes him who sent me has eternal life and will not be condemned; he has crossed over from death to life. (John 5:24 NIV).

Lord Jesus, we hear your Word and believe in the Father, The Son and The Holy Spirit. AMEN.

+David, OSJ (Wales)

-oOo-

News from St Leonard's:

The chapel has now been furnished with 160 brand new Carmelite Missals thanks to the kindness and generosity of the Carmelite Priory at Oxford.

All that was needed was to pay for carriage. These easy to use books have now been installed and are ready for use.

Hazlewood Castle was the home of the Carmelites from the mid 1970's to the mid 1990's, so St Leonard's has a long standing connection with the Carmelite Order.

The Carmelite Mass is not the only form of service OSJ provides at the chapel for visitors.

We continue to use a range of services based on good quality sacramental material sourced from other parts of the worldwide Christian family, each according to need.

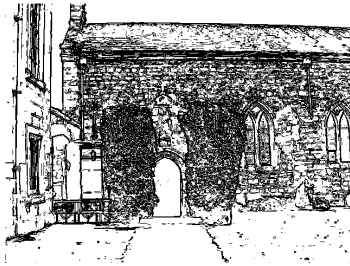
The Chapel of our Lady of the Crag, Knaresborough.

A link with OSJ has now been established between the trustees and OSJ for providing a number of masses each year at this small Medieval pilgrimage chapel and wayside shrine.

The chapel was formerly under the ownership and administration of Ampleforth Abbey but it is now held in charitable trust.

The trustees are very keen to develop the use of the site as the chapel itself is quite small and services are generally held in the open air.

+Ian, OSJ (UK)



St Leonard's Chapel,
Hazlewood Castle, Yorkshire,
LS24 9NJ

OSJ Services 2017



Services take place on the FIRST and THIRD Sundays of each month at 6.00 p.m.

Services, unless otherwise stated, take the form of a short and very gentle communion service, lasting between 20 and 30 minutes.

All are very welcome and all may receive.

1st January, 2017

15th January, 2017

5th February, 2017

19th February, 2017

5th March, 2017

19th March, 2017

2nd April, 2017

16th April, 2017

7th May, 2017

21st May, 2017

4th June, 2017

18th June, 2017

2nd July, 2017

16th July, 2017

6th August, 2017

20th August, 2017

3rd September, 2017

17th September, 2017

1st October, 2017

15th October, 2017

5th November, 2017

19th November, 2017

3rd December, 2017

17th December, 2017

We use a non-alcoholic wine so children may take part too.

There is no requirement to be baptised or confirmed.

Additional Services:

Remembrance Sunday: 12th November 10.35 a.m.

Midnight Mass: 24th December 11.20 p.m.

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|  | <p style="text-align: center;">The Order of St James Newsletter</p> <p style="text-align: center;">December 2017</p> |  |
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LET US BE BRAVE, COURAGEOUS AND FAITHFUL.

Let us be strong. Let us be courageous and let us be faithful, both in public and private life in spite of the vexations and defects of the present day. Let us be courageous, and not blush for our faith; let us proclaim our beliefs, defend our religion, and support its undertakings. The faithful remain as disciples to Jesus Christ where many high in government office! do nothing but remain silent; but who are quick to step in and take credit and the limelight when such genuine religious followers should receive the appreciation when disasters and severe traumatic events have occurred.

So Let us be courageous not allowing ourselves to be dismayed by the efforts which duty demands, intimidated by human respect, nor seduced by interested ambition. Let us be courageous, not allowing ourselves to be deceived by the specious maxims which seduction places at the service of cowardice: "We must go with the times! We must do as others do!" We must go with the times in what is good, not in what is evil; we must do like others, when others do well, not when they do ill.

Let us step back a moment! Do you really and honestly know what a disciple is? This is a word, one of the terms commonly used and heard in the church. Yet, what exactly does it mean this word? Who qualifies and can be called a disciple, and what's required to become one? We cannot deny it, it's a term Jesus often used when calling people to follow Him, and before He ascended to the Father, He told His followers to make disciples of all nations. Matt.28:19.

This word 'disciple' is an interesting one. Not only does disciple mean a learner even a student, one who follows another's teaching, the word itself indicates discipline too. A variety of definitions have been used to describe this relationship. I would define a disciple as one who's accepted Jesus Christ as Saviour, accepted Him as Lord, and received Him as one's very life. A disciple who can truly say,"it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me." (Gal.2:20).

All disciples can be called Christians, but not everyone who attends church is a disciple. Those who attend church, simply sit in a pew listen to sermons without applying what they learn, or sharing their faith, are not disciples. A true disciple hungers for Christ and His Word, and as a result grows in his or her Christian life.

The sad fact is today many churches are more focused on their numbers than that of discipleship, but Jesus was never impressed by the crowds that followed Him.

He did make hard hitting difficult statements on occasions that caused many people to leave Him. This was the situation in Luke 14:25-33. When large crowds were following Him, He told them what was required to be His disciple.

I am reminded of the words contained in Luke 14:28-30 especially, where it intimates if you do NOT do your preparations first then you will not succeed in your endeavours. The statement of the Tower. "Suppose one of you wants to build a tower. Will he not first sit down and estimate the cost to see if he has enough money to complete it?" For if he lays the foundation and is not able to finish it, everyone who sees it will ridicule him, saying, 'This fellow began to build and was not able to finish.'

Is this not reminiscent of a few Clergy, and Bishops that we know ourselves who have neither the conviction, training nor love for our Lord Jesus Christ's ministry and ultimately fail the test. Their Ministry is built upon self inflated ego and of self, dressing up and in pursuit of titles etc that mean nothing! this behaviour will never advance their Priestly vocation.

First of all, our loyalty, love and devotion to Christ MUST supersede our love for everyone else. "If anyone comes to Me, and does not hate his own father and mother and wife and children and brothers and sisters, yes, and even his own life, he cannot be My disciple"

(v.26). Christ is not advocating that we should hate our family members. He's making a contrast between degrees of love. To be Christ's disciple, our obedience to Him takes priority over what our loved ones may expect or desire.

Throughout history, Christians have had to make hard choices in order to follow Christ, and we may be required to do the same. At certain times in my life, I have had to make crucial and heart wrenching decisions that resulted sometimes in misunderstanding, criticism, and opposition from people I love. Although it was a very painful experience, I did learn what's demanded of a disciple of Christ. Sometimes our choices will look ridiculous to those around us, but disciples must be committed to obedience to Christ no matter what the consequences might be.

The second requirement for a disciple is death to self. "Whoever does not carry his own cross and come after Me cannot be My disciple" (v.27). Sometimes we think our cross is an illness, problem, or heartache we must bear, but that's not what Jesus meant. The cross was an instrument of execution that resulted in death.

Sometimes believers must die in order to stay true to Christ, but most of us will probably not be called to a sacrifice so extreme. However, every disciple must undergo the death of the self-life. We are no longer to live as we did before salvation.

Instead of being attached to our former sins and lifestyles, we are to attach ourselves completely to Christ. We must be available to obey Him in whatever He calls us to do and in whatever He says we are to surrender. Any time we put qualifiers on our obedience, we are not acting like Christ's disciple.

Third, discipleship is costly (vv.28-32). Jesus used two stories to illustrate this truth. One I discussed earlier about The Tower. He described the importance of counting the cost before building a tower and of evaluating an army's strength before going to war. Many people will sign up for an easier gospel that promises them only benefits, but that's not the message Jesus preached.

When He called His disciples to follow Him, they left everything behind and devoted themselves fully to Him. They and countless other disciples throughout church history have endured hardship, suffering, and persecution, yet today we sometimes mistakenly assume the Christian life will be easy.

Now the next and fourth requirement for discipleship is full surrender of all we own. Jesus said, "So then, none of you can be My disciple who does not give up all his own possessions" (v.33).

When a rich, young ruler came to Jesus and asked what he should do to inherit eternal life, Jesus told him to sell everything he owned

and give it to the poor (Mark 10:17-22). He knew this young man was attached to his possessions, and that's what was keeping him from wholeheartedly following Christ.

Although Jesus doesn't call all of us to literally give up everything we own, we must recognise that God is the owner of all we possess, and we are just the caretakers. Therefore, we should hold everything loosely. A true disciple of Christ walks through life with a detachment from the things of this world in order to become fully attached to Christ.

Discipleship is what God desires for each of us. And the rewards of being Christ's disciple are worth every sacrifice. Yes, the cost may seem high, but Jesus hasn't left us to manage on our own. He's given us His Spirit to guide and empower us and has promised that He will be with us to the end of the age. So take comfort in His Faithful presence.

Finally, isn't it wonderful to know that Jesus is our Teacher in every situation we face? Let this truth encourage you when you're uncertain about a direction or decision. If you're His disciple, you can trust that He will guide you on your path and teach you His truths along the way.

+David, OSJ (Wales)

Today is the second Sunday in Advent and our readings concentrate on John the Baptist and his being called out of the desert to be the forerunner of our Lord. As Isaiah quoted in chapter 40 verse 3. A voice cries out in the wilderness prepare a road for the Lord and as Malachi quotes “I will send my messenger to prepare a way for you”..

To be prepared for what is to come among us at Christmas we must take stock of ourselves. When we do so, we recognise not only our failings, but also our needs, as fallen parts of God's creation, which only the Creator can attend to. So the call to preparation becomes more acute, placing before us the prospect that the aching yearning at the core of our separation from God, might be healed.

John the Baptist came out of the desert and starting preaching all around Jordan, his was a preaching of repentance for the forgiveness of sins, baptizing in the river Jordan.

True Repentance has two sides. Turning away from sin, and turning back towards God. To be truly repentant you must do both. We can't just say we believe then act just as we did before, nor can we live a morally correct life without a personal relationship with God. This was what the Jews were trying to do at this particular time. They had made rules and

regulations but had strayed from a personal relationship with God.

Under Jewish Law at that time there was only one high priest he was appointed from Aaron's line and he held the position for life, but the religious system had become so corrupt. The Roman Authorities had deposed Annas and replaced him with his son-in-law Caiaphas. Although Annas was still considered High Priest by the Jews as they believed the position was for life.

This was the atmosphere into which John the Baptist was called to preach repentance. His cry was "Turn away from your sins and be baptised and God will forgive your sins"

In John's day, before a King took a trip, he sent his messengers out to tell those he was planning to visit so that they could prepare the way. The same thing happens to-day. When the Queen, or any other ruler goes visiting arrangements are made and preparations made at the point of arrival.

Similarly John proclaimed "Prepare the way for the Lord, make straight paths for him. Handel in his Oratorio the Messiah, which was mainly taken from Isaiah proclaims this and we are reminded every Christmas in this wonderful Oratorio.

God in history.

Some people say that the Bible is an obscure book that they cannot understand. When asked why they mention the long list of names and family trees that they find ,completely baffling. John in his account starts at the beginning; God does not come to 'no time in particular', he came at a specific time when there was feuds, tensions and liaisons that affected the people of the time. Times don't seem to have changed much do they?

The story of God being born among us, brings some issue in Christian teaching. God becomes a real man. God lives a real life. God is involved in everyday life of everyday people. God shares the sufferings and struggles the hopes and joys of human life. This he still does to-day providing we give our lives to Him.

In this historical situation God's word comes to the one we call John the Baptist. He received the word of God and share it with the people. If it is the way of God to share our common life then this also is still true to-day God is speaking in our situation for our time and one of the challenges for the Church is to speak God's word for each generation. We are urged to ponder. Where is God acting in the world's life to-day?

Where is God's work, concern and presence now?

What is God's word for to-day?

Christians have got to work this out together and make it heard loud and clear.

Saved to Serve.

At that time for Israel freedom to worship without fear was crucial. In some countries to profess Christianity invites persecution even nowadays. We do not face this, but are attitudes to religious freedom changing.. There was an article in the newspaper last Sunday about the B.B.C. discriminating against religion.

The Sunday Times last November reported London's Islington council proposed to change the name of St Mary Magdalene Primary School (opened in 1710) dropping the word "Saint" for fear of causing offence to other religions. Local people – including Muslims and Jews – expressed outrage to the plan. They had no objection to the word "Saint", as they recognize the history and tradition of this country. The vicar commented that parents felt the Islington Council had "been running an anti-Christian agenda" If so, it is not alone, there are countless attempts to edit out Christian and post-Christian traditions across the country, with excuses about giving offence. We hear them regularly on T.V. and read about them

in the newspapers.

The link between nation and faith is very important. What dangers may lie in this? Does the fact that we are now living in a multi-faith country affect OUR freedom to worship. A small-mid-western town in the USA suffered a spate of religious hate crimes one Hanukkah and Jewish homes displaying menorahs targeted. The local newspaper encouraged townspeople to support the victimized Jews by displaying menorahs in their windows, Every Hanukkah since has seen practically the whole town displaying menorahs.

What else might prevent us from feeling free to worship? What weighs us down? Is anything standing now between you and open-hearted worship of God? Today's passage is full of a sense of freedom. Do you feel free at this point before Christmas. This passage is alive with gratitude, praise and joy. Do we experience these qualities? What in our lives express them? How does our worship express them? Or do we feel harassed at the thought of everything there is to be done before the big event. Seek to worship and praise as God wants and we will feel alive on Christmas Day and not worn out,

A new beginning.

John quotes from the book of the Prophet Isaiah chapter 40 about

preparing the way of the Lord, making his paths straight, filling in every valley and smoothing out the rough ways.

This is at the time when the people of Israel and Judah have been in exile in Babylon for 70 long years. They had been cut off from their homeland their Temple, their customs and their culture. Now God tells them through the prophet that they have been forgiven for their godless and wicked ways. They are to return to their homeland. Their way home across the desert is to be prepared and a new road built. The journey is to be made easy. They are to be set free to rebuild their homes, their Temple and their future. And by this act the whole world will see the saving acts of God.

In just the same way John says God is to do a new thing for the people. God is offering a new start. They can come to him to be baptised to turn from their old ways, and being forgiven begin a new life. This is how John sees the coming of Jesus. It is an opportunity for a new beginning, when God comes among them in Jesus. Repentance means turn around, change direction. If they do this they will be ready to receive the Messiah and find a new future, just as the people of old come home to begin again.

This Advent season is a time when we prepare for new beginnings. We look back and see all the mistakes and failures. We have the opportunity to say “sorry” and God allows us to start again. As Isaiah saw the return from exile as a great act of God which the world would see. So John see

the people's repentance, baptism and new beginning as a wonderful act of God. Our preparations, repentance, renewal at Christmas will help the world to see the saving power of God. So what are the matters which we should say sorry for.

How does God in Jesus enable us to break out of bondage and find a new freedom? Some will say that they are set free in worship. Some will say that they find a new freedom in friendship with Jesus. Others find release and renewal in the company of other Christians.

John offered baptism. The symbolism is that the people went down into the River Jordan where they were washed of their sins and were ready to receive the Lord of Glory. Christian baptism add to there washing the idea of being drowned to the old life and rising up to a new life in Christ, is that how we view baptism – being buried with Christ and rising to a new life in him?

John and Isaiah see that the world will witness this great act of God's salvation. The challenge is, that as we are made new in Christ Jesus, The world will see wonder and be amazed.

How can we make the community around us aware of the great act of God in coming at Christmas the world in its present state certainly is in need of God's repentance and freedom!

Rest for the Weary Matthew 11:16-19, 25-30

I think we can be forgiven for thinking that Jesus is getting a little bit "fed up" with people not doing what he suggests.

It's not a matter of Him saying "do as I say not as I do", Jesus quite clearly not only "talks the talk" he "walks the walk". Verses 16-19 tell us how Jesus was criticising the attitude of those around him. it seemed it didn't matter a jot what he said to them or what He did, His listeners mostly took the opposite view or interpreted what he said in a different way. They felt uncomfortable and "unjustly" challenged by Jesus - "he was rocking the boat". he was disturbing their very comfortable, unchallenged and self centred lives.

I suspect even today those who do not know Him - but only know of Him - feel the same way too when faced with His comments.

Let's focus our attention on verses 28 to 30

28 "Come to me all you who are weary and burdened and I will give you rest. 29 Take my yoke upon you and learn from

me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. 30 For my yoke is easy and my burden is light."

I remember more vividly and perhaps some of you do too an older version:

"Come unto me ye that travail and are heavily laden and I will refresh you".

Hearing that during a communion service, as a youth, somehow made me feel content and relieved. Fifty years later, I now know now exactly what he meant then - and even more so now.

Nowadays, it seems every one of us has some sort of cross to carry, some sort of burden to bear, some worry, some problem or a seemingly unsurmountable challenge .This offer from Jesus brings us some assurance that we need not be alone with our "heavy loads".

There are many of us - a growing number of us - who have to face the fact that our bodies neither do what they used to do, nor exactly what we ask of them. Some of us, after

living with our partners for most of our lives now live alone and the challenge of living in this world alone can be a very heavy one to bear. Others have the burden of broken relationships. When in conflict with someone one cares about, that burden can also be so heavy to carry.

There are other kinds of burdens we have to face too. Sin, temptation, guilt, conflicting loyalties, providing for our families. Life, this earthly life is filled with stress, with cares and anxieties and worry, with situations that demand of us to make choices that sometimes are not at all pleasant to make or live with.

Jesus is saying in our up to date language, come to me all of you who are struggling with life in any way and those of you who have problems that you cannot deal with by yourselves - and I will help you. Jesus knows that each and every one of us has a difficult path to follow in life. Life is not easy - we live in a world that is filled with sin. Sin makes life difficult.

If we had obeyed God in the first place, we would not have these problems and burdens to cope with now. Just think how different the world would be if Adam and Eve had done

the right thing and if all peoples that on earth do dwell - had obeyed the ten commandments.

Jesus helps to explain how He can help use carry our load by using oxen and a yoke. A yoke being a heavy wooden harness that fits over the shoulders of an ox and the other end is attached to some equipment to pull. Oxen would generally be used in pairs to work together and actually be yoked together as one working unit. Jesus is saying that if an individual works with Him, He, Jesus will bear most of the weight of our problems, struggles and cares.

Jesus is tell us then, very clearly, that we don't have to live life alone, we don't have to live with all of our failures, with all of our worries and frustrations, with all of our burdens, we must give them to him. He will shoulder them with us. He will take most of the weight of our burdens upon himself.

He will carry our burdens, he will lighten our load.

Jesus goes on to say that he will not make our load heavier by adding other things in place of those he has taken away. He tells us he is gentle and kind and he will give rest for our souls.

Jesus tells us he doesn't replace our burdens with any of his, he won't put demands upon our lives, he won't give us things we have to do. 30 "For my yoke is easy and my burden is light."

It seems that a lot of people have a view of Christianity in which Jesus will replace one set of burdens with another life of always doing good, of living a perfect life, of being po faced, or walking about with their head hung down, not smiling, not enjoying life not having fun.

On the contrary, Jesus relieves our burdens so that we can smile, so that we can enjoy life, so that we can live in his love, so that we can walk with heads held high, looking around and enjoying all the creation that God has made for us.

He does carry our burdens and replaces them yes, but not with the strictness of the law of "do's and don'ts" but with the security of love, with the gentleness of compassion, with the tenderness of forgiveness. When our lives are filled with that, with love, with compassion, with forgiveness, then we will be free to look around and reach

out with the love of Jesus to those who are hurting, to those who need our help in carrying the burdens of their life.

Jesus wants us to go to Him, to place our burdens on him. Then we will be free to live life to the full, to enjoy life, to take risks for others, to share Jesus life with others so that they might experience the great good news in their lives. We all need someone to share something with. As Christians, as people who have shared the Good News with Jesus and who know Him rather than know of Him, we can be willing to listen to the life stories of others, to shares with them their brokenness, to walk besides them in their journey and share something of ourselves and share something of our Lord Jesus with them to make their burdens lighter.

We are called together as the Body of Christ, not as individuals, but as a living working body which shares with each other, the hurts, the heartaches, the problems of life. Do we really want to feel in the true and spiritual sense of the word "Light Hearted".

Do we really, really want to be "free" inside?

Do we really, really want to increase and maintain our Love for, and faith, in Jesus?

Hebrews 11.1 says, "Now faith is being sure of what we hope for and certain of what we do not see."

Let us do what he asks then - Talk to Him, listen to Him - and give Him our burdens.

Jesus says,

28 "Come to me all you who are weary and burdened and I will give you rest. 29 Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. 30 For my yoke is easy and my burden is light."

FOR GOD'S SAKE - AND OURS - LET US DO WHAT HE ASKS. Amen.

OSJ (Philippines) Update

Rev John Ruffle OSJ (Philippines)

Greetings from Gladdys, our young son Luke and myself in the Philippines! We hope this message finds you all well. We have been in the Philippines since early November, and will remain here until after Christmas by the grace of God.

So here is our update:

Since the middle of 2016, President Rodrigo Duterte has been in office. He is a controversial figure, partly due to his alleged anti-Christian stance, but most particularly in his crack-down on drugs, which has resulted in thousands of extrajudicial killings. However, San Carlos City, where we are based, (over 200 km north of Metro Manila) appears largely unaffected by the culls initiated by President Duterte. People aren't really speaking about politics; life is hard enough as it is without risking flak from being overheard saying the wrong thing! The new president aside, in the seven years that I have been visiting this country, I've seen small developments, but nothing as dramatic as the changes I've seen in the past three years, from 2014 to 2017.

The changes I've observed are largely economic. I've been amazed to see three new malls being built here in our large market town, providing much needed employment for hundreds of people. More Korean and Chinese MPVs are on the road, but still most people travel by dilapidated jeepneys or tricycles - which are everywhere. Lashed-together jeep-like cars with hand-built bodies ("owner-type jeep") are not so abundant now, and for the first time I'm seeing proper tractors

ploughing fields in place of cows and my beloved, primitive yet highly versatile single cylinder kuligligs.

Roads are tidier, many more are paved in concrete, and concrete hollow-brick houses are more frequently replacing bamboo homes; but the gulf between rich and poor seems to be increasing. It's not the poor are getting poorer; their lot seems to be improving - very slightly. The rich, meanwhile, are becoming richer, largely as a result of Filipinos working abroad and sending money home.

The Bureau of Agriculture and Fisheries has been offering motorised combine harvesters at an 85% discount to "...qualified irrigators' associations, farmers' groups and local government units" (1) in a bid to speed-up mechanisation of grain harvests. The Philippines lags behind its main SE Asian farming neighbours in agricultural productivity and imports rice from Thailand and Vietnam. The downside of these advances is that the subsistence economy is being forced off the land, and GMO crops are being vigorously promoted (2).

School Feeding Programs ...they've gone viral!

The most dramatic improvements I've observed are within DepEd, which is the state school system. Some will recall that the Order of St. James sponsored a rural village "School Feeding Programme" for malnourished primary age children starting in 2010. I am happy to announce that we have closed the program because DepEd is now sponsoring a mandatory nation-wide School Feeding Program for the

severely wasted (malnourished). (3)

We recently visited a school of 800 pupils, and I was brought to tears as I saw around 100 children receive a hot meal along the lines that OSJ Philippines used to provide – but sponsored by the Philippine Government. The children say grace together before and after their meal, and so there is no compromise with the State.

The generosity of donors - mostly in the UK - who enabled us to run the School Feeding Program for 3 vital years was an important aid for families struggling with poverty and malnutrition prior to the introduction of the state-sponsored scheme. During that time, the government contribution was zero. Of course, many other NGOs were also feeding children back then, many on a much larger scale than was possible for us. However, with excellent local help from teachers and parents, our “seed” of feeding up to 150 rural undernourished children has now (indirectly) transformed into a government programme where 1.5 million school children are fed every day at every school (4) at an annual cost of 8.9 billion pesos (£62.8 million pounds) (5). Thank you for the support you gave by faith: to me, that’s real prosperity!

In the last week of November, I visited another rural elementary school where, as well as taking a couple of classes, I was guest speaker for a special school assembly. What a wonderful school this is, with neatly painted murals; beautifully-illustrated English books donated by a local university, and a sprinkling of computers with internet connection. (See my photo of the Kuliglig outside the school

gates!) My visit coincided with National Reading Day, and I was I able to speak about the Bible, and also led prayer in two classrooms. My brother and sister-in-law teach at this school, and with other staff have transformed the campus since last time we visited. It's been a real labour of love for them – especially as it was teaching at this school that the pair of them first met some 12 years ago!

The Catholic Church still permeates all levels of society, although Metro Manila has many other worldly influences contending for attention. The Jehovah Witnesses have built a new state of the art "Remote Translation Office" complex on the edge of San Carlos City, and this week I saw a mosque for the first time: a brand-new building located in a small village. Among Protestant groups, the Latter-Day Saints remain active, and the only time one is likely to see another European is when you encounter one of their American missionaries. "Iglesia ni Cristo" is another cult, but of entirely Filipino origin. They have built "cookiecutter" buildings across the country, all pretty much using one basic design. Whether I've had my eyes closed as I've been perched on the back of the motorcycle, I can't tell, but they appear to be less numerous than previously.

The southern-most island of Mindanao has been in the news internationally as the only bastion of Islam here, although Roman Catholics still comprise the majority even in Mindanao. However, five provinces within Mindanao are Moslem majority areas, and form an Autonomous Region with their own government. The threat of militant Islam should not, therefore, be underestimated.

What is growing rapidly across the nation are the post-charismatic "new" Christian nondenominational fellowships that are springing up everywhere, featuring lively worship bands and stand-up preaching; but devoid of any genuine sacramental understanding. Most of the congregants are coming from Roman Catholic backgrounds, and although the Catholic charismatic element is strong, the Catholic Church is still lagging behind in terms of youth engagement and evangelisation. There is a Catholic program of "basic ecclesial communities" but I've seen little evidence of this in operation, other than the charismatic "Couples for Christ" and "Singles for Christ".

We are all called to be disciples of Jesus, and this is a core value for all of us who name the name of Christ. A disciple attempts to cultivate a meaningful personal devotional life, and seeks to "gossip the gospel" whenever he or she may. It is also understanding that offering prayer for people who are troubled or who are sick is a far more appropriate response than simply quoting scripture texts at any moving target or racking-up "conversions" so-called.

In contemplating Gladdys' and my role in this nation now and in the future, I am avoiding all temptation for a false triumphalism. I have no desire to drum-up support for any projects that may not have lasting value and impact, or -worse- may not be culturally relevant. I'd rather "be" a presence for Christ here in the community, than to "do" projects. However, we still have the completed blueprints for the chapel project, and count them as precious, even though we are not yet building. I recall the words of a wise Filipino priest a few years ago when he advised us, "You cannot build a place of worship until

the people of worship have been built." How true that is: discipleship and the free flow of the Holy Spirit comes first.

I do wish to help Pentecostals and other Protestant groups to grasp what Catholics actually believe, regardless of our differences. I would love to see joint worship meetings between Catholics and the "new" emerging charismatic church communities. There is much we can learn from one another. One challenge is that independent churches often seek to promote themselves as "having a corner on the truth" - not necessarily because their leaders actually believe it, but because the pastor may be economically dependent upon tithes and offerings to sustain their lifestyle and church programmes.

More exposure to the actual beliefs of Catholics (and not the folk stories that often pass as "catholic") would help clear up misconceptions, and also help expose the subtle manipulation of Scripture that form the backbone of a number of unsound or extreme teachings, including the highly attractive yet heretical "health and wealth" gospel. God does bless and prosper – but our commitment must be repentance, total surrender and death to self, then worshipping God and loving others on Jesus' terms, rather than our own terms.

Meanwhile, I am enjoying conversations with other Catholics in helping to affirm their faith in Jesus, emphasising the need for the "conversion of the heart".

This in itself is most rewarding, because few lay Catholics here have a

deep understanding of what they believe or why they believe it. To help address these and other issues, I've also been able to spend more time writing, (sans power cuts!), the fruits of which I trust in the Lord will be evident in due course.

I hope this little update and overview offers a glimpse of what I see happening in this still developing nation in SE Asia.

Gladdys and I would like to thank our OSJ family members, especially Mama and Papa Elmo Quiros and everyone's hospitality and unfailing help with transportation that makes everything possible! - San Carlos City, Pangasinan, Republic of the Philippines. November 30th, 2017.

Philippines government & other sources cited: (1)

<http://bit.ly/2jvv4Yi> (2)

<http://bit.ly/2hXiqku> (3)

<http://www.deped.gov.ph/orders/do-39-s-2017> (4)

<http://www.deped.gov.ph/orders/do-51-s-2016> (5)

<http://bit.ly/2j0V6mQ>

The wedding Fair: a not too serious look at the dark side of getting married

Location - Rudding Park, but it could be anywhere in reality.

I look after their beautiful church for the duration of the wedding fair and speak to any families/couples coming in and asking questions about church weddings whilst the main business is conducted over in the House. It is often quiet in the church but not so this time. There was a steady stream of people and some had to wait nearly an hour to get some time with me.

Family groups typically were comprised of the bride to be and her parents, her sisters(s) and/or best friend, and the groom. Usually the couple are freshly engaged and the bride to be is nailing her man's colours to the mast before he changes his mind.

She is bright eyed and lost in the magical world of 'Bottomless Pit' and in seconds is the world's expert in all things 'wedding'. Ownership of the impending event in all its glory is clear. This is in contrast as to who is actually going to pay for all this.....

Dad usually is caught between two different positions. He wants to do his daughter proud but keep hold of as much hard earned savings as possible. He is often quietly patient in manner but distracted as the new car he was hoping for seems to become a smaller and more distant possibility.

Mum on the other hand is directing her daughter's attention to small details, pew ends, whether particular flowers will be in season, who will sit where and whether they can get away with not asking aunty Gladys.... Mum has already sorted out in her mind what she is wearing and the seating plan at the wedding breakfast.

Bride to be's sisters and/or best friend are usually only bothered about whether they are going to be bride's maids and whether they can have a reasonably decent dress. Interesting to see their tactics in play as they talk about colours and dress styles, whether shoes and matching jewellery, make up and hair are also included. They are aware that the bride to be is pre-programmed to make them wear bin bags so she outshines them all. They have their work cut out.

The groom is smiling even though his thoughts are towards watching football at home and having a couple of beers. He tries to look interested but he isn't. He knows it will not be worth his while to mention this. He nods wisely when asked if he prefers taupe tie backs or blush, but has no idea what the girls are taking about and nor does he care.

He occasionally looks at his watch as he tries to work out whether they will get home for the end of the match. Bride to be makes a note of this and will make sure he doesn't, even if it just to remind him who is in charge.

The groom to be wonders whatever possessed him to ask her to marry him. This wasn't in his long term plan but then he'd never had one.

He had thought that asking her would be enough to keep her happy but he never thought it through really. Now he was faced with having opened a Pandora's Box that couldn't be closed. He now realizes there is no chance of escape and he is cornered.

He would like to be involved but he has given up trying. She only wants his opinion providing it agrees with hers and she is not above telling everyone what his opinion is before he has been asked. Easier to give in gracefully and enjoy a quiet life. Just so long as he gets to choose his own best man, can have a hip flask and arrive by helicopter.

Smiles, checks watch again but gets spotted and the look of 'you're dead if you do that again'. He sighs. The game won't be worth watching anyway as they will only lose again.

Bride to be finds out Fr. Ian is not her friend..... She is not happy when he says, 'If you made the adult and grown up decision to live together, you should make the adult and grown up decision to pay for your own wedding.' Dad smiles hopefully. Mum sees the new kitchen she'd not mentioned yet.

Bride to be's face says 'no chance' but she says nothing. Instead she does her very best 'I want a puppy' look towards her dad.

Dad sighs again as he sees his new car driving into the distance again. This car, if he ever gets it, will have more mental delivery mileage on it than any other car he has bought.

Fr. Ian smiles and looks forward to the oncoming battle of wills regarding good Christian stewardship of funds (or good old fashioned 'Yorkshire tightness' if you prefer - it's the same thing in reality). He whispers to dad and the groom, 'I'm on your side. Remember that!'

The groom to be looks a little more hopeful and is just about to say something but it is short lived. The bride to be glares at him and reminds him just whose side he really is on.

Bride to be makes a mental note sort out her groom to be on the way home in the car and not to book Fr. Ian for her wedding. How dare Fr. Ian be difficult when he is supposed to be a Christian and agree with her in everything she wants at this most holy and important and special day in her life.

Maybe if she went to church once in a while it might help her argument.

The group walk away wondering whether the smell of a chocolate fountain will clash with vanilla scented candles at the drinks reception, or should they just stick with full size fake blossom trees and hanging tea lights.

Getting married raises so many difficult question, but 'Why get married?' might be the one basic question couples make assumptions about but never actually discuss. What they also often forget is that 'getting married' is a small part of two other things that are equally as important, the 'being married' and 'staying married'. Again, making assumptions is unwise. It is those two things need continually working on and should be giving equal, if not more, care and attention to than the 'getting married' part.

My best three pieces of advice to all couples are simple.

1. It's not just 'one day', it's 'every day thereafter'.
2. It is not 'happy ever after' either unless you put the hours in.
3. Marriage is what you make it or what you allow it to become' and if you want a truly Christian marriage then you need to make room for Christ.

+Ian, OSJ (UK)



St Leonard's Chapel,
Hazlewood Castle, Yorkshire,
LS24 9NJ

OSJ Services 2017



Services take place on the FIRST and THIRD Sundays of each month at 6.00 p.m.

Services, unless otherwise stated, take the form of a short and very gentle communion service, lasting between 20 and 30 minutes.

All are very welcome and all may receive.

1st January, 2017

15th January, 2017

5th February, 2017

19th February, 2017

5th March, 2017

19th March, 2017

2nd April, 2017

16th April, 2017

7th May, 2017

21st May, 2017

4th June, 2017

18th June, 2017

2nd July, 2017

16th July, 2017

6th August, 2017

20th August, 2017

3rd September, 2017

17th September, 2017

1st October, 2017

15th October, 2017

5th November, 2017

19th November, 2017

3rd December, 2017

17th December, 2017

We use a non-alcoholic wine so children may take part too.

There is no requirement to be baptised or confirmed.

Additional Services:

Remembrance Sunday:

12th November 10.35 a.m.

Midnight Mass:

24th December 11.20 p.m.