



The Order of St James Newsletter

March 2021



OSJ (UK) Web Site Update:

The current and familiar website will be replaced over the next few months with a new web site located on a different platform. The addresses will remain the same www.orderofstjames.info and www.orderofstjames.org.

The intention is to keep the existing website in reserve until any problems with the new site are made manifest and resolved. It will still be accessible using www.orderofstjames.co.uk until phased out.

Feedback regarding the new web site has been positive and it certainly has more features than the existing web site. Although it contains much the same information, it has been reduced to just 8 pages instead of the existing 30 pages. It is also brighter and has a more contemporary feel. New features include 'chat', 'subscribe to newsletter' and 'contact'.

Archived documents and newsletters are also held on the new web site and are much more accessible. In particular, previous newsletters are now downloadable by complete year from 2016 onwards. Any previous documents will be available but by e-mail request.

Obviously, the new web site will need some tweaking but I hope it is the step forward it is intended to be.

If you do have suggestions or queries regarding the new web site or spot anything amiss, please do contact me and I will try and resolve matters as quickly as possible.

+lan, OSJ (UK)

Web Site Statistics:

To 24th February, 2021 the web site has had 4,167,799 hits since 2011.

January 2021 had 17,267 hits.

February (at the time of publishing) had 14,673 hits.

Average for February, 2021, is 611 hits per day.

The diagram below shows the locations of the last 50 hits in the last two hours.



Are we engaging with people? I think the figures speak for themselves. +lan

OSJ (Philippines):

This jurisdiction is currently in the process of review as to its future. Fr. John Ruffle, OSJ (Philippines), has stepped down as National Director in favour of developing ministry here in the UK.

A time of grace is being offered for a new National Director for OSJ (Philippines) to be appointed before the Province is wound up.

The appointment is conditional on permanent residency in the Philippines and all necessary safe guarding checks, accreditations and references being confirmed and approved.

Anyone, lay or ordained, called of God to this particular ministry should contact me as soon as is convenient.

This, as with all our posts, is in a voluntary capacity and is unpaid.

+Ian, OSJ (UK)

Contact: fr.ian@tiscali.co.uk

CHRIST'S FINAL GARDEN DAY

Fr Ed Elsey OSJ (UK)

Where would you wish to spend your final days? And with whom would you wish to spend them? My 104 year old friend who when approaching her death, wanted deperately to finish her days at home surrounded by those she loved - and she did, with great dignity and great resistance!

It was the first day of Spring [officially] and her enquiry about which flowers had come out in the garden was bright and cheerful...a question of hope and of time going on.

Sadly, under lock down at the moment, few carefully planned and expressed funeral wishes can currently be adhered to. Love has to be shewn in other ways. On line meditations and services, our own study of the Scripture, whatever version we choose, has to suffice.

I remember years ago walking into the garden of some friends of my parents who were great gardeners and who opened their property to their Church congregation once a year - for funds of course. And no doubt to boast a bit too!

They were, indeed tidy and capable gardeners. Everything looked magnificent.

Much of their time and energy - and probably money too - had been spent on making their surroundings comfortable and exclusive. They had in the corner of the first artificially paved path the motto 'One is nearer God's heart in a garden than anywhere else on earth'. I, at around twelve, being rather a precocious youth, wondered about the other places one might search for God and not find him: the local mill, the local slaughter-house, or the railway station, whose rolling stock had just changed from respectable steam to heretical electric. the factory and the open sea.

No, it was true, if one wanted to find God in respectability then the garden was the place: no challenge, no weeds [in their garden though mine was so different:

it reminded me of the story - oh no I can't tell it again, can I, of the vicar walking past a garden and saying to the gardener 'What a wonderful example of God working with man on the challenge of nature' and the gardener replying acidly: "You should have seen it when God had it to himself!" Of course you've heard it: who hasn't?

Nice gardens on nice days are restful and restorative. Gethsemene on a nice day is beautiful. On a dark night it is filled with foreboding, shadows and uncertainty. Jesus knew it so well in all its moods and times of day.

He often walked that way. But this would be the last time. Our Lord faced such a challenge in a garden - more an organised field, if you've been to the Holy Land and seen the Mount of Olives and Garden of Gethsemene - a dilemma you and I could never imagine how to resolve.

Our Lord wept tears of bitter sweat: the whole of the import of His ministry came to Him in the urgency we have only felt when we have been arrested for something we've heretofore successfully hidden, or when we have faced the most important job decision of our lives, or faced some special kind of danger or alarm. Bills especially red ones we can't afford to pay. Small worries compared with His. Lord, if it is possible, let this cup pass from me.

Here for Him was Gethsemene! Yet he was surrounded by friends. When someone is dying they feel re-assured when one close to them sits by them and holds their hand.

They can't take anyone with them on that long last dark journey. It is faced and experienced alone. But the comfort and re-assurance of that touch of a familiar hand is a help at the last.

So for me, this part of the story is important to me. Two things. One, the disciples still did not realise how soon the end would come. Many days...or just a few hours. How could they know? How could they imagine?

A bit like our awaiting the second coming of our Lord and Master, as He promised. It could be today or years hence: in our lifetime or way beyond. Shall we be found sleeping, or awake and holding that Divine hand? We cannot afford to let it go.

Of course there was nothing more the disciples could do to help their Lord and Master. What was happening in the relentless proximity of the Act of Redemption could not now be stopped or delayed.

The Passover was upon them and the Sacrificial Lamb was marked out. The identification by Judas was prepared, the soldiers ready to make a final surge and resist any opposition.

A number of faiths see Judas as the rather unfortunate but essential factor in the Act of Redemption - someone had to do it - a dirty job. Maybe he genuinely hoped his action might spare his Master from the ultimate sacrifice and humility. To give Him a chance to speak up for Himself.

Our story tells it blow by blow and Our Lord is taken in custody. The disciples have finally woken up to what is happening. They fear for their own human safety - who wouldn't - and they run off into the darkness. They, after all, have to be ready to take up the new witness and development of the faith on behalf of their Lord, post-resurrection.

Are there parallels here for today's church?

1. Your loved one - the church you once knew and loved seems dying and cannot stay longer, much as you would love it to
2. You have to be ready to carry on the work in a different way to a new generation
3. Value the final days while you have them, and continue loving to the end.

The Jewish spiritual expectation of The coming Messiah - three or four claimants a year seemed to present themselves and this seemed like just one more to some leaders -to be put down like the others, quickly and quietly.

This new claim was to be challenged by the purely civil judgment of the Roman overlords as to a possible trouble-maker who might make life easier if he was 'wasted' [that term for political assassination we know to mean executed].

Better for one man to die than for all the hard-pressed Jewish nation to perish. A fairly logical, if disastrous, view.

The gospel and the Church is not about the details of the garden: it is about the relevance of a bit of waste land that was outside the city wall, nearby Jeremiah's cave, and waited to demonstrate what would happen to any unfortunate who had ideas above His station and who declared Himself The Messiah - even if He was: an eventuality the Jews seem not to have considered seriously enough - they had hoped and prayed for a deliverer - this man they could not see as 'the One'!

Crucifixion could take as much as 22 hours before the soldiers finished off the unfortunate humiliated and naked victim of Roman punishment. It was the most cruel of deaths the locals witnessed as Roman justice on an all too frequent basis. An angry and troubled nation ruled by ruthless and determined overlords.

Our Gospel is about identification with the service of Christ and a reliance upon Him alone. His humility in the midst of humiliation is the only way to His power and His Kingdom, His death and His Gateway to Life.

In the Sacrament of the Eucharist we show forth the Lord's death, His love and His service in our lives. It is only so far as we accept His command to the service of others that we can receive His invitation to eat & drink at His table and later in His Kingdom.

Christians are those who carry within them and proclaim by word and deed the story of Jesus, particularly the story of His death and resurrection. They live out this story and affirm its truth, not just historically but by performing it in their own lives.

Each Sunday the Christian community meets together to hear the story of Jesus again and again, to remember what He did and what He said, to break the bread and venerate the wine as the Hebrews celebrated their release from Egypt and establishment as God's people, we re-commit ourselves to God's service.

But in a garden? Why couldn't Jesus have been arrested in the Temple, the Upper Room, the street, the gate, the market [the suq]? He asked the question at his trial. You saw me daily preaching in the Temple, he accused them.

A question for you to consider. In all the Gospel accounts where for you did Heaven and earth meet closest before the Crucifixion? When did God and Man reach the lowest common denominator?

For me, it could be the garden. The garden is the one un-allied place our Lord occupied in the whole of his three years of ministry. No politics here, no religious argument, no hostility, no words, no people: just silence and Our Lord coming closest with his disciples and with His Father.

Even the bustle of a Passover Meal couldn't provide that singularly spiritual moment of togetherness and of departure. Is one nearest God's heart in a garden?

No farewells. No time for that. Suddenly the disciples left him - and fled. He - and they - were on their own. Every man for himself.

For Mary and the disciples on the Resurrection morning the garden also touched

base between earth and heaven. The real work was about to begin. As from our altar of the Mass or the Eucharist, or from the Communion table, we are called to go out renewed in vigour and strength to speak God's Grace and Christ's Love to our world.

We remember the story, try to identify with the pain and the suffering He felt, and we re-enact His death and Resurrection to those we try to persuade to join us and draw in love to the Cross and to the Kingdom.

The Hebrew word for 'remember' is the same as for 're-enact' or 're-happen'. At this time the Christian community remembers the last days of Jesus' life by re-telling the Passion Story day by day and re-enacting what happened. Thus they identify the story that carries them, which they belong to, and which shapes their existence.

When the Easter vigil reiterates the stories of redemption, the Paschal Candle is lit, the action re-presents Christ and re-stores Him to His place in the community and re-members the community as the crucified and risen community which came out of that garden.

The disciples who fled from Him in His hour of trial could do no other. It was fore-written. He would have to face this trial alone.

We have to face our own trial of faith alone. The community can be there to support us before and afterwards but never 'during'.

There are some things, especially the things of faith we have to do alone. Our tears must be as His tears: as drops of blood: so intense must be our suffering and so intense must be our salvation: we know enough about death to know that in His death we are relieved of the burden of death itself and of all fear. His courage is ours. His direct strength from the Father is ours. His Passion is ours but His resurrection is also ours. It is assurance at this pandemic time of doubt and fear, uncertainty and bewilderment.

It is not a question of just identifying again with the action and entering into the Gospel text. No, our experience is real. The drama of death and resurrection and the saving, victorious action of God in Christ will be played out not just by us but in us and through us!

May it be so for His Name's sake. AMEN.

Fr Ed Elsey OSJ

Nails for Easter

A meditation on the crucifixion. +Ian OSJ (UK)

The carpenter considered the task in hand

And chose three nails

Two pieces of rough-hewn wood

And a good Traveller

Who spoke with loving honesty

With heavy stroke the nails were driven in

With sure purpose

They were not meant to be removed
But to forever stay
And fix mankind to God and God to mankind
It hurt
And innocent blood was spilled on innocent ground
By those with guilt
And the earth shuddered at such apparent savagery
In this act
Mankind was intent on pinning God down with nails
And wielding the hammer
Hammered them in
With uncompromising blows of jealous theological intent
Political necessity
And intellectual reasoning
And an unquenchable thirst for power and control
Then mankind held God up
To dark scorn and derision
For when God is dead there is no sin

The good traveller looked from his cross
Half way between earth and heaven
And knew the victors had lost

The defeated had won

The first had come last and the last had come first

Such irony

To give up one's life

Only to find it again in many

And see

The dead wood of the cross turn into the tree of life

Calvary become Eden

The road to hell become the path to Heaven

And the dark become light

Such irony

The carpenters work was true and good

The nails are still there

Holding mankind and God together

In a simple act

Binding me to you

You to me

And us to God

Prayer, the gift of loving.

+Ian, OSJ (UK)

I was told that I must have loved God very much as a child, and my return to the fold was just the return of the prodigal having wandered and got into all sorts of

trouble. It was in 1973 that I met God again in a Methodist Church in my home town. I was kneeling at the communion rail and felt so very empty and lonely, almost as if I was dying away. God spoke to me, a still and quiet voice that came from a long way away. He asked me if I wanted it to be like that for the rest of my life. I didn't need to answer. Through the emptiness and loneliness I felt His love and friendship and I knew where I wanted to be.

Since that time I have been helped so very much by the prayers of so many Christian friends. It is time to return that loving support and take it back to where it is needed. I have seen so many people who need prayer support at work and this is what the Order of St James is about.

I am not a 'good' Christian. I am hard put to keep a sure faith under some circumstances. I struggle with God at times even though I love Him in my own poor way. I have to trust Him because I do not understand so much about His nature, the world, faith, spirituality, love and suffering. There is a lot I find difficult.

However, I do know that God loves us all without condition and I know that prayer brings us closer to God and to each other. It is without question an act of love to pray for someone and it is such a simple thing to do.

John, chapter 4, verses 7 and 8,

'Beloved, let us love one another, for love is of God, and they that loveth, loveth God.....'.

We can show our love by praying for those God brings to us.

ACEDIA AND THE DESERT FATHERS On Sin, part 1.

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Before Sloth Meant Laziness, it was the Spiritual Sin of Acedia.

And why early monks in the desert didn't want to fall asleep during the day.

by Kelsey Kennedy

THE SEVEN DEADLY SINS MAY seem familiar and, with that familiarity, less a matter of life and death and damnation. Sure, greed and envy aren't great, but who hasn't overindulged in this or that without grievous consequences? But when the

list of Christian cardinal sins was first created, they were a big deal: eight of the biggest threats to a devout life as a monk

in the desert. Eight? One among those that isn't included among the sins today, called acedia, was perhaps the greatest threat of all to those monks.

Acedia comes from Greek, and means "a lack of care." It sounds a little like today's sloth, and acedia is indeed considered a precursor to today's sin of laziness.

To Christian monks in the fourth century, however, acedia was more than just laziness or apathy. It was more like dejection that made it difficult to be spiritual, avoiding ascetic practices, boredom that led to falling asleep while reading, and frustration with life in a monastery—but the meaning is nuanced and has changed over time. The evolution of the word’s use shows just how much the concept of cardinal sin has shifted through the centuries.

To Evagrius of Pontius, acedia was the most noteworthy of the eight vices that he felt could tempt monks to abandon their religious lives. The Greek monk listed gluttony, fornication, avarice, sadness, anger, vainglory, pride, and acedia as threats to devout monasticism in *Of the Eight Capital Sins*, but argued that acedia was “the last of the sins to conquer.” Overcoming the other seven didn’t mean a monk was safe, but overcoming acedia, according to Evagrius, brought one closer to God.

Evagrius was a member of the Desert Fathers and Mothers, a group of devout Christian monks and hermits who lived in the Egyptian desert beginning in the third century. By the time Evagrius joined their ranks in the late 300s, there were several thousand monks living in organized communities.

They spent their days fasting, working, and worshipping, often in isolation. When the sun and the heat peaked, life could be quite uncomfortable. So it makes sense that Evagrius dubbed acedia the “demon of noontide,” a reference to Psalm 91.

Siegfried Wenzel, in his book *The Sin of Sloth: Acedia in Medieval Thought and Literature*, wrote that “in the end acedia causes the monk to either give in to physical sleep, which proves unrefreshing or actually dangerous because it opens the door to many other temptations, or to leave his cell and eventually the religious life altogether.” Acedia could be resisted, but only through endurance, prayer, and sometimes even crying.

John Cassian, a student of Evagrius’s, translated the list of eight sins to Latin and his writings on the subject helped spread the concept of the cardinal sins beyond the Desert Fathers. But as soon as acedia left the desert, the demon of noontide started to become a whole different animal.

The first major edit of the original list happened in the 6th century, when Pope Gregory I shortened it to the seven deadly sins that track roughly what we’re familiar with today. He lumped acedia in with another vice, tristitia, or sorrow. The two terms were often used interchangeably until sloth became a more common catch-all. At issue was whether acedia and tristitia were still just concerns for solitary monks, and how dangerous they really were for laypeople.

Pope Gregory I, dictating chants, by Antiphonary of Hartker of the monastery of Saint Gall, circa 1000. Even in the Middle Ages monks still struggled to define and clarify acedia. Peter Damiani, a Benedictine monk in the eleventh century, addressed the vice in some of his writings, where “acedia almost amounts to heaviness of the eyelids,” wrote Wenzel.

St. Rodulpus, according to Damiani, fought acedia by “tying ropes to the ceiling of his cell, putting his arms through, and singing the psalms.” St. Bernard of Clairvaux agreed with Evagrius’s definition of acedia (as, essentially, the temptation of midday siestas), while Adam of Perseigne felt acedia was an aversion to physical discomfort. Others likened it to a “spiritual loathing” or “inner emptiness.”

Few of these interpretations of acedia made much sense outside the desert or the cloisters. Thomas Aquinas’s definition of sloth in the thirteenth century still carries the connotations of acedia—a spiritual affliction—but it’s clear by then that monks aren’t the only ones affected. Sloth, he wrote, “is sadness about one’s spiritual good.”

Geoffrey Chaucer defined “Accidie” as indolence and idleness. Modern interpretations of acedia liken it to depression or ennui, though some religious groups view acedia and depression as separate maladies.

The evolution of the sin, from a matter of spiritual inadequacy to the laziness of sloth, reflects the complexity of the history of Christianity and our conception of what is dangerous to the mind and soul.

ABRAHAM - JOURNEYS of FAITH Genesis 22, 1-19

The death of a University student on a local city road recently was a tragedy deeply felt by friends, University staff and not least by his family. Years of preparation to tune a fine brain, develop skills of learning, fight for a place at one of the best Universities in the country and almost complete course, an offer already made for an engineering job in Africa and plans made to move and start a promising career: all shattered in seconds by two joyriders in a stolen van.

And the questions asked: how does God allow this to happen and what is the purpose of it all, if at all. A kind of sacrifice that put Abraham's dilemma into a kind of modern context for me, in my thoughts.

What could a parent possibly feel like to suddenly receive a Divine command: sacrifice your son, your only son, at the top of the mountain to demonstrate your faithfulness to me.

Place into that context for yourselves the terrible burden of such a decision for someone you have cared for and love dearly: set against your faith and faithfulness and desire to please God. Or someone you know who has, in a moment, lost the one they love, because of someone else's carelessness, wildness, irresponsibility or rage...or even too early, in your view, because of virus or terminal illness.

Because God rarely asks us to give up anything, except perhaps our Sundays, to Him and we would fail to understand such a call, least of all contemplate obeying it. In those days, of course human sacrifice was not unknown and Abraham was one of the first to understand our God did not desire it of his faithful people. Mind you, by starting the bloody tradition of sacrificing animals instead he had obviously only understood part of the Divine intention. I wonder what Abraham's reaction would have been had he stood by the Cross on Good Friday nearly 2000 years later. They're still sacrificing men!! After all they've learned and the suffering they've known!!

Do not imagine that because this was happening then and not now it was in any way significantly different for Abra'am, coming so far with Yahweh and having achieved or struggled to achieve so much. And yet he sets out to obey, loading wood upon his back and kindling upon his son's, or the other way round maybe, and starting up the mountain, building the gathered stone altar and facing the throat wrenching question:

'Where is the animal for the burnt offering, Daddy?' 'Don't worry about that, son, the Lord will provide.'

The Lord had provided so far. Father figure of the Jewish nation, a man of exceptional intelligence and strong character, qualities of leadership rarely seen today and he had assembled the remains of the Habiru into a recognisable tribe, setting off to find a 'better country' even if it means taking someone else's on the way.

A stranger in a foreign country, as he is described in the Book of Hebrews. Until recently thought to have been called around 1921 BC, and Isaac offered for sacrifice around 1872 BC, the first pyramid being built in 2,200 BC, but subject to constant re-dating as history emerges and refines. He perceives God's will in very absolute terms and is unwavering in his obedience to reach what he perceives as the designed goal for his 'chosen people'. Signs and miracles seem to confirm what he thinks true. Down to Egypt but thrown out over a dodgy deal, dubious diplomacy and deceitful politics. Back northwards, advised by passing angels, embarking on a covenant painful at least for males in the tribe and giving birth to a successor to preserve the nepotism that is often practised by great leaders and tyrants alike - rather ironically appropriate as we read of Indonesia today.

Leaving the doomed cities of the plain, Sodom and Gomorrah, condemned incidentally for many more sins - some very familiar and nodded at nowadays. Checking Jewish records and the Mishnah - ie the vast store of Jewish traditions and sayings - many more sins than those customarily quoted by bigots of today who love condemning things from ivory towers of imagined perfection. Look no further for the accounts of extortion, exploitation of privilege, abandonment and ill-treatment of the poor, selfishness and social arrogance, self betterment and chicanery. A thoroughly wicked lot. Wickedness and folly covers, as the proverb has it, 'a multitude of sin'. So those eager to throw stones about homosexuality alone, look carefully at your own lives, lest you be judged for some of the other things you forgot about! Wasn't it our Lord who said, 'let him who is without sin cast the first stone - and many slunk guiltily away!

If we are indeed genuine followers of Jesus Christ, then our whole life should be based upon the ideal and aim of sacrifice, after His example. Our faith should make us ready to give up what we value and to endure hardship, inconvenience, even persecution , if required to, to advance the Kingdom of God and to work for the salvation of others for Him.

Our sacrifices may be of many kinds: list yours in an order of priority - not more than 5 in your list please, for homework. Then take your homework to the Lord in prayer and ask his strength for the task ahead of you. Otherwise you have no hope of achieving it. The Jewish nation made the mistake of interpreting the favour and privilege they had from God without the duty and obligation - and tremendous world wide opportunity - of sharing it with others, leading the world to peace and prosperity and drawing men and women throughout the world to the one true God as demonstrated through them and for them.

God's Son was sent to reinforce, reinterpret and renew the message through His new Covenant, death and resurrection. And his Great Call to 'Go into all the world and preach the Gospel of Christ, making disciples of all nations, baptising them in the Name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit. and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And I am with you always, to the very end of the age'. [Matt 28, 19-20]

We remember with gratitude and admiration those true followers of Christ who gave up so much for the freedom of our faith today and our confidence in Christ Jesus.

Luke records Christ as promising that:

‘there is not one man who has left house or wife or brothers or parents or children, for the sake of the kingdom of God, who will not receive manifold more in this time, and in the age to come eternal life’.

Brave men and women who gave up peace and security, answered the call and went, leaving family and friends, security and sentiment.

In heaven, perhaps, not before, we may truly sense the great tapestry, the cloud of witnesses, the face to face fulfilment and freedom from suffering and everlasting peace promised from of old. Broken threads will be joined up, broken relationships re-united, and broken lives renewed.

Until then our faithfulness will be considered and judged. Romans 4, 23 reminds us that Jesus was put to death for our sins and raised to life to justify us, and in John 8, 56 Jesus says ‘Your Father Abraham rejoiced at the thought of seeing my day; he saw it and was glad.’ implying, we think that the Jewish leaders were missing out on all that joy.

Harriet King, writing in 1880 suggests:

‘Measure thy life by loss instead of gain; Not by wine drunk but wine poured forth; For love’s strength standeth in love’s sacrifice; and whoso suffers most hath most to give.’

Patience will be required. We shall be asked to meet and deal with people we find totally undesirable, a nuisance and a liability. But our patience will be rewarded in Christ. From the Mishnah comes a lovely folk-story about Abraham.

A wandering Semite came into Abram's camp. Under the customary and sacred laws of hospitality he was bound to offer the man food, drink and shelter and a maiden to serve him.

So severely scornful, abusive, ungrateful, whinging and carping was the man, complaining about every mortal thing under the sun that Abraham was seriously thinking of breaking the rules and throwing the man out of camp, when the Lord appeared to Abraham and said, 'Abram, this man is forty years old. I have put up with him for forty years: surely you can put up with him for a day or two!'

Good job God is patient with us, isn't it? Wouldn't he, by our rules, have dropped us long ago with some of the things we've done to grieve and disappoint Him.

Hubert van Zeller in his book 'Consideration' declares: 'Standing before God the only thing we have to offer Him is ourselves. And the extraordinary thing is that this is exactly what He wants.'

So when we are tempted to blame God for the everyday tragedies and loss of life we read about, experience or know, remember that His world is a dangerous and a beautiful place; that He gives us our freedom, the opportunity to sin and the great news of redemption from that sin.

As the hymn says: 'the vilest offender who truly believes, that moment from Jesus a pardon receives.'

Restoring us all to the favour, acceptance and love of a faithful Father. His final blessing from the cross was not for those who had loved him, although that came earlier. It was for the repentant thief who was assured a place in paradise that day, with the Risen Lord Jesus.

'Remember. O Lord, what thou has wrought in us and not what we deserve. As you have called us to your service, make us worthy of that calling.'

So our theme this morning is Journeys of Faith. We are on that journey. There will be times of trial, times when we feel no-one is listening to our prayers, time when suffering seems to blot out all positive thought and delight, times when absolute failure seems to predominate all our good deeds and intentions.

May our testing time be supported with the power of the Holy Spirit, the love and healing of the Lord Jesus, and the assurance of the Almighty Power of our God, then and now, and for eternity.

Of course sometimes the testing is just that. We do not have to make the supreme sacrifice but God needs to know He can count on us if necessary or if others fail Him we must not. Isaac was not sacrificed and fulfilled the promise of leading a great people into a love relationship with the Almighty, failing and succeeding by degrees, as the Jewish nation - the faithful ones - is today.

And the land from Beersheba to the Great Sea was theirs for the taking...as the Lord God had promised.

Come back to our reading. I love that first verse where God calls Abraham, simply by name. and he replies: Here I am. 'Abraham!' 'Here I am, Lord'. God knew he was there, as he later knew Samuel was there, but again comes the call by name. 'Samuel!', 'Here I am Lord, Speak Lord for thy servant is listening.' And Isaiah in chapter 6. 'Who will go for us' And Isaiah replies: 'Here am I. Send me.'

Another sermon idea could speak of the journey from sacrifice and surrender to service and spirituality, from sin and subjection to sonship and sainthood. Hallelujah for all that promise. Rejoice in it. That's hopefully why you're here this morning.

So when we hear God speaking to us, by name, may we have the courage and faith to respond: Here I am Lord. Send me.
May it be so for His Name's sake. AMEN.

Emergency Measures, OSJ (UK):

It has been decided that given the situation we find ourselves in currently that two new temporary measures have been implemented for **all** members of OSJ (UK), whether in the Ministry Team or the Ministry Support Team.

Any member of OSJ (UK) may self-administer communion using the form suggested, and that includes to their families and all who are in need if they cannot receive communion from a priest or Eucharistic Minister through unavailability.

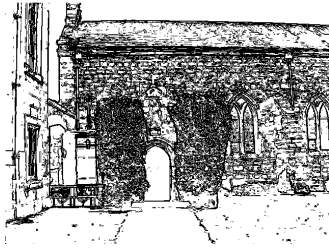
The same applies to the giving of last rites (viaticum).

Forms of approved service are available with instructions to download using the two links below:

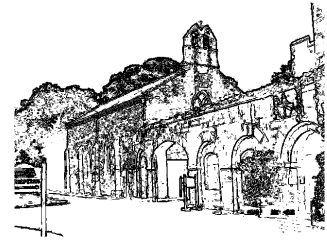
1. [Self-administered Communion](#)
2. [Last Rites \(Emergency Measures\)](#)

Also to be noted, services at St Leonard's have been temporarily suspended until further notice. This is particularly regretted.

+Ian, Executive Bishop, OSJ (UK)



**St Leonard's Chapel,
Hazlewood Castle, Yorkshire,
LS24 9NJ
OSJ Services, 2021.**



Unless otherwise stated:

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

Services take the form of a short and very gentle communion service, lasting 20-30 minutes.

Covid-19 precautions in place: St Leonard's will remain closed until further notice.

3rd January, 2021

7th February, 2021

7th March, 2021

4th April, 2021

2nd May, 2021

6th June, 2021

4th July, 2021

1st August, 2021

5th September, 2021

3rd October, 2021

7th November, 2021

5th December, 2021

17th January, 2021

21st February, 2021

21st March, 2021

18th April, 2021

16th May, 2021

20th June, 2021

18th July, 2021

15th August, 2021

19th September, 2021

17th October, 2021

21st November, 2021

19th December, 2021

We use a non-alcoholic wine so children may take part too.

There is no requirement to be baptised or confirmed, only to treat with due respect.

All are very welcome and all may receive regardless of tradition or denominational background.

Additional Services:

Remembrance Sunday: 7th November 10.35 a.m.

Midnight Mass: 24th December 11.20 p.m.