

	<p style="text-align: center;">The Order of St James (UK) Newsletter</p> <p style="text-align: center;">May 2023</p> <p style="text-align: center;">www.orderofstjames.info</p>	
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A pastoral month.

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In keeping with Easter, I'd like to be able to say last month has been a good one but it seems to have fallen into the kind of month that is 'the best and worst of times' as part of normal pastoral ministry.

This reference is borrowed from the title of the official history of the US Army Chaplain Corp and the section covering WW2, so it is not original.

It has been a month that has covered many aspects of community ministry, all privileged but not necessarily enjoyable.

I met up with a couple I married several years ago, and was asked if I could be available to do another baptism for them. It will be the second child. What a way to welcome a new child into the world, celebrating the safe arrival of another member of a growing family and all the security that comes with it.

It never fails to make me wonder what kind of life lies ahead for them all. The possibilities and potentials for good are endless and who knows how things will turn out for them all. This is why all who attend a baptism are invited to pray continually for the child or candidate because life is not always 'fair' or 'good'.

However, with my mind full of the story of Easter, I often think of Mary and try to understand a little of what she felt at the birth of Jesus, knowing what she knew, and to remind myself that real love is a costly and often painful business.

The day before I had met with another husband, married in 2019 and I recall baptising their two children at their wedding service. His beautiful bride and the mother of their two children had fought as hard as she could against the cancer that racked her body but was called to that peace only God can give. The sadness and grief and reality of personal loss was overwhelming. One must endure the pain of death and separation and loss before one can be surprised by resurrection. For some it can take a long time and with good reason.

Their service of celebration of life will be later in May and the reality is that whatever we may offer in words and comfort will never be sufficient or cover all the things that need to be said or shared with others.

Healing will take a long time and leave deep wounds simply because of the love we bore for that lovely soul and for their absence in our lives.

The theme of the service will focus on what we have been given rather than what we have lost.

Then there was a wedding which particularly brought up a number of family divisions, mostly regarding inheritance as the groom was not without a penny or two.

It reminded me that financial wealth can be a curse as well as a blessing.

I was grateful that I was not in the groom's position, constantly wondering as to who my real and true friends were, including a bride half his age.

It would have been all too easy to pass cruel judgement and assign base judgement given the assumed circumstances. In the end, this celebration ended in a meal of bitter herbs, full of judgement, suspicion, condemnation, recrimination and envy, even if it was polite and relatively civil to all intents and purposes.

Another kind of cancer that will end in death if not treated, but I got the feeling that there would be no healing of this malaise in the near future or possibly any lasting reconciliation.

Then there was a request from the general manager of one of the large hotels I occasionally help out at – would I have time to see one of the residents of the lodge park on pastoral matters?

Firstly, it was good to be asked.

Secondly it was good that someone had brought that particular need to my attention.

Thirdly, what a beautiful person had reached out for some support.

Getting older and moving closer to death makes people think about the future, even Christians of apparently great faith. Sometimes when we can no longer attend church or find Christian fellowship, those of us who are more able need to reach out and step up to the mark.

In years to come, it may be us who find ourselves in this situation, but whilst we are still able, we should do as our Lord would request of us as He has reached out and continues to reach out to us.

And you would think that as Christians that we would seek to end prejudice of all kinds, especially towards the disabled, but no.....

Over the last few months one of my disabled friends has been subject to hate crimes, originating from neighbours who feel he should be living in a home rather than try to live an independent life where he supports himself financially as best as he can.

Sadly, the people perpetrating this prejudice do not realise that it will only take a brief second to find their lives turned upside down by some unfortunate event. Should that happen, I know that these people will be the very ones demanding that society meet every one of their immediate needs unquestioningly. They certainly would have more than a few words to say when it comes to receiving the kind of behaviour they are presently dishing out to others.

Strange how differently and quickly we can begin to think when the boot is on the other foot.

So what is with people?

Are they so self-focussed that they can't see beyond themselves?

It seems so, but isn't this one of the reasons we still need priests?

Not so much to save people from the evil one and all of his cohorts, but to save people from themselves?

Evil doesn't need to do that much to turn us away from God – just a few little tweaks here and there and we have forgotten God because our needs and desires are so much more important than the needs of others.

And when we succumb to temptation, why do we always feel disappointment and end up with that sense it failed to deliver any long term and lasting satisfaction and fulfilment?

Were we really sucked in that easily, and why does the guilt and feeling of failure or let down still trouble us?

Were the consequences really and truthfully worth the cost (and possible hurt)?

Our spiritual, intellectual and emotional defence is to put the Great Commands into operation, the 'love God' and 'love your neighbour as you would indeed like to be loved'. These put our actions into a proper context.

But why would we know unless someone had told us or showed us there was a different and better way?

Where are the words and actions of the wise when we need them?

Where is our priest or spiritual father/guide/director/counsellor when we need them?

Why does the world keep whispering, 'put number one first, for no-one gives any care about you..... ?'

Let me remind you that we cannot save ourselves, neither does the evil one offer anything better, but only God, and that is not just for the present but from this moment onwards.

And when we recognise this, our eyes are often to the fact God has been beside us in our journey from the very beginning.

Death will come to all of us at some point but what happens beyond that does not mean certain oblivion. Even though the evil one would try to convince us otherwise, there is more to come.

Death may seem final but it is not the end. God is loving, good, infinite and eternal. That is his plan for us too.

He wants to bring those who truly love Him with Him beyond death into perfect and fulfilled eternal life.

What is left is still infinite and eternal but it truly falls short of what is available when we come to love and trust God. Outside of God's love, what is really left?

Truthfully, it doesn't bear dwelling on for long because there is everything that is not of God or part of His intended creation for us, and it is both appalling and horrific. Take away love and what is left?

In God, death is only a temporary separation, the movement from the temporal to the eternal, from all the problems and inevitable destructions of evil to an infinite and incorruptible good.

Death itself can seem insurmountable hurdle for those with little or no faith, and indeed for those whose faith is as yet uninformed, undeveloped, untested and/or uncertain. We must face the inevitable as life and death are all part of the rhythm and nature of life itself. It is not something to be avoided, put off or hidden, but rather embraced and accepted in all of its fullness. Unless we face death, how can we truly know what life is really about or even fully appreciate its breadth, depth and height or the fact that our lives are gifts to those around us as is theirs to us?

The problem we face is that our culture does not want to talk about death or in fact anything that makes us face life in all of its sometimes harsh fullness. This often means that we find ourselves preferring to live with our head in the sands or more comfortable and inevitably disappointing lies rather than the uncomfortable, inconvenient truth and reality of life.

My prayer is that God in His Grace may preserve us from dying with regrets and the realization we have lived a life of wasted opportunities.

It is never too late to come to see the truth and I often think of the penitent thief crucified with Christ.

Luke 23, v39-43

³⁹ One of the criminals who hung there hurled insults at him: "Aren't you the Messiah? Save yourself and us!"

⁴⁰ But the other criminal rebuked him. "Don't you fear God," he said, "since you are under the same sentence? ⁴¹ We are punished justly, for we are getting what our deeds deserve. But this man has done nothing wrong."

⁴² Then he said, "Jesus, remember me when you come into your kingdom¹"

⁴³ Jesus answered him, "Truly I tell you, today you will be with me in paradise."

See also: Matthew 5:25

"Settle matters quickly with your adversary who is taking you to court. Do it while you are still together on the way, or your adversary may hand you over to the judge, and the judge may hand you over to the officer, and you may be thrown into prison."

But I digress a little and must return to our focus.

As in life there are no certainties, there are no guarantees in marriage either.

Falling for the easy lie of 'happy ever after', marriage is for many couples often little more than a leap of optimistic blind faith when facing the abyss of unknowing rather than a considered and carefully thought out decision based on fact. (This is the difference between 'we can always get divorced if it doesn't work out' and 'we are in it for the long haul whatever happens').

For those of us who do give marriage real thought and consideration, we often feel we can be fairly confident about taking this big step, but our confidence is often based on our circumstances staying the same, the 'where we are now' rather than the 'where we might be and what things we may find ourselves facing'.

But things do change. However confident we may feel, life is far from predictable. Some may find 'change' exciting but in others the state of 'not knowing' and uncertainty may bring dread and fear, but whichever camp we find ourselves in, we don't get the choice about 'change' itself. It can't be avoided. Nothing stays the same and as a product of our changing circumstances, change is forced upon us whether we want it or not.

But God knows our frailty. The eternal and infinite constant is God's love for us, and we can take absolute consolation in its ability to shape itself to fully meet our needs whatever circumstances we find ourselves facing. We need not fear any circumstance if we truly love Him.

Romans 8:28

And we know that in all things God works for the good of those who love him, who have been called according to his purpose.

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A Reflection

Perhaps it's not so much what happens to us in Life – it's how we respond. The swiftest way of being prepared to respond in the right way is to read God's Word, Pray and Obey.

The following are passages of scripture collated from **God's Word** and we can be sure and certain that God will speak through them to all of us in some way.

Repentance Luke 18: 13, 14 JESUS SAYS

But the tax collector stood at a distance. He would not even look up to heaven but beat his breast and said "God have mercy on me a Sinner." I tell you that this man, rather than the other, went home Justified before God. For everyone who exalts himself will be humbled, and he who humbles himself will be exalted

Salvation Romans 10:8, 9

But what does it say? The WORD is near you; it is in your mouth and in your heart, that is the word of Faith we are proclaiming. That if you confess with your mouth "Jesus is Lord" and believe in your heart that God raised Him from the dead, you **will** be saved.

Forgiveness 1 John 1 8 - 10

If we claim to be without sin, we deceive ourselves and the truth is not in us. If we confess our sins He is Faithful and Just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness. If we claim we have not sinned we make Him out to be a liar and His WORD has no place in our lives.

Judging Others Luke 6: 27, 28, 37, 38 JESUS SAYS

But I tell you who hear me: Love your enemies, do good to those who hate you, bless those who curse you, pray for those who mistreat you. Do not judge and you will not be judged.

Do not condemn and you will not be condemned. Forgive and you will be forgiven. Give and it will be given unto you.

A good measure, pressed down, shaken together and running over, will be poured into your lap. For with the measure you use, it will be measured to you.

Divisions in the Church 1 Cor 3

Brothers, I could not address you as spiritual but as wordly - mere infants in Christ. I gave you milk, not solid food, for you were not yet ready for it. Indeed you are still not ready. You are still wordly. For since there is jealousy and quarrelling among you, are you not wordly? Are you not acting like mere men?

What, after all, is Apollos? And what is Paul? Only SERVANTS through whom you came to believe – as the **Lord** has assigned **to each his task**.

So then, no more boasting about men! All things are yours, whether Paul or Apollos or Cephas or the world of life or death, or the present or the future-all are yours, and you are of Christ, and Christ is of God.

Wisdom James 1:5

If any of you lacks wisdom, he should ask God

Anger Ephesians 4:25

Therefore, each of you must put off falsehood and speak truthfully to his neighbour, for we are all members of one body.

In your anger do not sin: Do not let the sun go down while you are still angry, and do not give the devil a foothold. Do not let any unwholesome talk come out of your mouths, but only what is helpful for building others up according to their needs, that it may benefit those who listen. And do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, with whom you were sealed for the day of redemption. Get rid of all bitterness, rage and anger, brawling and slander, along with every form of malice.

Be kind and compassionate to one another, forgiving each other, just as in Christ God forgave you.

Love 1 Cor 13 4 to 8

Love is patient, love is kind. It does not envy, it does not boast, it is not proud. It is not rude it is not self-seeking, it is not easily angered, it keeps no record of wrongs. Love does not delight in evil but rejoices with the truth. It always protects, always trusts, always hopes, always perseveres.

Love 1 John 4:7

Dear Friends, let **us** love one another, for Love comes from God. Everyone who loves has been born of God and knows God. Whoever does not Love God does not know God, because God is Love.

This is how God showed his love among us: He sent his one and only son into the world that we might live through him. This is love: not that we loved God, but that He loved us and sent His atoning sacrifice for our sins.

Dear Friends, since God so loved us, we also ought to love one another.

No one has ever seen God; but if we love one another, God lives in us and his love is made complete in us.

Promise John 14 JESUS SAYS

Do not let your hearts be troubled. Trust in God, trust also in me. In my Father's house are many rooms; if it were not so, I would have told you. I am going there to prepare a place for you, I will come back and take you to be with me that you also may be where I am. You know the way to the place where I am going. If you love me you will obey what I command. I will not leave you as orphans I will come to you. Whoever has my commands and obeys them, he is the one who loves me. He who loves me will be loved by my Father, and I too will love him and show myself to Him.

Prayer John 14:13 JESUS SAYS

And I will do whatever you ask in my name, so that the Son may bring glory to the Father. You may ask me for anything in my name, and I will do it.

Matthew 28.18 JESUS SAYS

All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me.

Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you.

And surely I am with you always to the very end of the age.

“Where your treasure is.... there is your heart also.”

Brothers and Sisters, as part of the Body of Jesus Christ, and through Him for the Glory of God:

Let us Be Prepared. Read the Word. Pray the prayer. Trust and Obey.

In Jesus' name. Amen.

Fr. David Startup, OSJ

From Bishop David, OSJ (Wales)

It is said good soldiers work together. Indeed we are soldiers in Christ's army. Spending time with other believers should really increase your hunger for Jesus and your desire to defend His truth. I hope you are blessed with meaningful Christian fellowship. However, if you're lacking in that area, my prayer is that you will all soon find a loving faith community.

As I watch the news programs daily, it is saddening to observe so many knocking our Christian Faith, and yet sad, so many Politicians just spouting out words, with no real commitment or feeling for fellow beings Faith. Again a continuing case of Just Me, Me, Me.

Which leads me to ask 'do they really understand? do they genuinely care?' Or are they living in a completely different world and planet to ourselves. Many Politicians speaking to interviewers and reporters give such outlandish responses, that complicate and only make matters worse.

They really have no idea what it is like to struggle on low wages, a pension, even worse when unemployed and no income. This then leads me to enquire further questions about their sincerity! More importantly that understanding of peoples hurts, pains and distress trying to live and survive from day to day. It is not a case of being political, we all have a duty to speak up when it is necessary

We know that Christians are referred to by many different words in the New Testament - such as believers, disciples, saints, living stones! Heirs, but perhaps one-of the most unusual is soldiers. We may often wish to associate ourselves ***with love rather than war***, but to ignore that we're in a spiritual battle leaves us vulnerable to sin and false doctrine.

Is it not wonderful, when it comes to being soldiers for Christ, hunger for God's ways keeps us fighting and on the right Spiritual path. Jesus referred to such hunger if you recall in the Sermon on the Mount, when He said, ***"blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they shall be satisfied"*** (Matt. 5-6). A longing for

what's biblically good and true means we forfeit some popular nourishments, but will be filled with something far better by God Himself. Perhaps you don't feel much like a fervent soldier.

Do you recall Timothy who was a young pastor in Ephesus who felt the same way. Paul assured him God had not given him a spirit of timidity but of power, love, and discipline; the same is true for every believer (2 Tim. 1-7).

We are called to follow in Paul's footsteps - to be passionate in our pursuit of godliness (1 Cor. 9-25).

This is what's required of us as soldiers of Christ.

Now, I find that good soldiers are hungry for the truth. "Retain the standard of sound words which you have heard from me, in the faith and love which are in Christ Jesus" (2 Tim. 1:13). Whenever the Bible says ***"the faith,"*** it is not speaking of personal faith but the entire body of Christian doctrine. All believers should crave biblical truth enough to seek and defend it.

This is necessary not only for our own personal spiritual protection but also for the church universal. What Paul wrote to Timothy applies to all of us: ***"Be diligent to present yourself approved to God as a workman who does not need to be ashamed, accurately handling the word of truth"*** (2 Tim. 2-15). Handling Scripture accurately requires industrious study in order to interpret it correctly. If our hunger for truth is not strong enough, or is dulled by listening to false doctrine around us, we'll try to support our own ideas using Scripture rather than submitting to what the Word actually says.

One way we do this is by pulling a verse out of its context to validate what we want to believe or how we want to live. For instance, people often use Matthew 7:1 to protect their chosen lifestyle from criticism by claiming that the Bible says, ***"Do not judge."***

However, the context speaks of not judging hypocritically when we ourselves are blinded by our own sins (vv. 1-5). This does not rule out all judgement since a few verses later, Jesus said to evaluate the fruit in others' lives in order to recognise false teachers (vv.15-20).

In addition, a soldier's righteous hunger provides motivation to push through difficulties.

Paul wrote, "Suffer hardship with me, as a good soldier of Christ Jesus. No soldier in active service entangles himself in the affairs of everyday life, so that he may please the one who enlisted him as a soldier". (2 Tim. 2:3-4).

Giving up to slake our thirst in the world means missing the victory. We must be willing to endure the trials of life, knowing our persistence is pleasing to God, and that blessing will follow. (Matt, 5-6).

Lastly, soldiers of Christ long for others to find the peaceable fruit of righteousness, too. Paul, told Timothy, "The Lord's bond servant must not be quarrelsome, but be kind to all, able to teach, patient when wronged, with gentleness correcting those who are in opposition". (2 Tim. 2:24-25). When we start attacking one another rather than

heresy and false teaching, the fight is no longer good. If we use our tongues as weapons of destruction rather than instruments of edification, division and gossip will take root and could destroy a local church. (Eph. 4:29). But when we combine love with truth, the body of Christ is strengthened (Acts 14:22). To close, when you became a Christian, you automatically enlisted in Christ's army.

But take courage, because by His grace He has provided everything you need to fight the good fight, and He promises to satisfy all who long for righteousness.

Prayerfully Yours and in Our Lord's Service.

+David.

A TIME FOR REAPING

Further to my opening message, I feel all our life is a time for reaping, not one day should go by when we do not store some experience for the future.

Perhaps some gladness of true friendship to warm our heart, some new meaning of love and beauty, or some new strength gained by overcoming difficulty.

We know that Dr Albert Schweitzer's work at Lamberene was halted during the Great War, because he was deported and interned in France; but the great man soon began to learn how to reap experience for the future from this unaccustomed situation into which he had been plunged. He put his time there to good use.

He made friends, who were later able to help him in his work, and he committed to memory the beautiful Bach fugues that brought to him a new meaning of love and beauty. From this music he loved, he gained a new strength which enabled him to overcome apparently insurmountable difficulties.

NOT TO LEARN BUT TO WAKE UP

Many of you know, my interest in medicine has always been at the fore in my life, as was law which further guided me into the Ministry. I recently met with a friend at the hospital. It was then I talked to a young doctor whom I got to know who requested if we minded he sit on our table in the cafe of the hospital. He was a young doctor who did brilliantly in all his medical exams and I have no doubt likely to become a famous and eminent surgeon within a few years.

I enquired of him, "Share with me please, what started it all for you?" "Forgive me mentioning it, but as a schoolboy if you recall you were not particularly bright, and you became bored very quickly."

Do you recall when half way up the class there was astonishment at home." Your mum and dad assured you, "don't worry, progress at your own speed and level, do not try to imitate others." The young doctor grinned. "And how right you are, remembering all those years back," he said. "Except that I'm not sure I ever rose to such dizzy heights as half way up not till I was seventeen!" "And why the change!"

He shrugged his shoulders. "Oh," he said lightly with a smile, "just one of those things. I happened to be looking in a book for one thing, and came upon another a saying by a famous Frenchman - 'What matters in learning is not to be taught, but to wake up.'

"I couldn't make head or tail of it. I asked my father. He explained and somehow the penny dropped. I saw how all along I'd just sat dumb and let folk tell me. All at once I wanted to find out for myself and after that , well, there was no holding me! "

And this is what I found myself whilst at school. In addition trying to learn from the genuine hard working and caring teachers when surrounded by others not interested in furthering their education for a good and useful life ahead. All I heard was conversations on football, rugby and absolutely rubbish subjects with no interest to the others in class. Whilst at Secondary school this statement "I wanted to find out for myself" was exactly how I felt.

I left school, left Wales and went to an area known as Stondon Park, Forest Hill, London SE23. At fifteen years of age I attended Brockley night school on evenings after my first job.

Not under pressure from the previous stupidity of others, not wishing to further their education, I managed to gain the qualifications I needed. I recall then attending the Royal Navy and Marines Recruitment Centre at Blackheath.

There I met a fantastic RM officer Major Halliday who took the time to converse with me and enquired what I would like to become within the service(s). With some sage and wise advice I was guided into the Royal Navy Medical Branch.

Something I have never looked back on, but the most sound decision I made in my life. Even today those studies have stayed with me, and shown me that if I wish to succeed in anything, to never give up, to go forward continually and your ambitions will be achieved.

From then on life has been a learning curve and still so today, those experiences have always given me happiness, the will to always continually study no matter how small the subject matter may be.

A LOST PENCIL

When Anne pops out getting her nails done visiting a neighbour, I do much of my writing. On this one occasion I lost my pencil. I mean I misplaced it, somehow. I couldn't find it anywhere - I searched among the papers on the table. I looked under the table, checked my pockets. I remembered I'd been into the kitchen, and even hunted there for about seven minutes. No pencil.

Minutes passed by, and still the search continues. It was only minutes that had passed by and I could not remember in that short time where that pencil was.

You too, may have encountered such a similar situation. The good news was I found it in the end. It was resting on my ear!

Well, well! We sometimes can't see things because they are too near. I wonder if that is why some of us have to go abroad before we know what a nice street we live in?

A COMPASS OF LIFE

He has eternity in the hearts men. Ecclesiastes 33:11.

A compass can be described as an aid for direction, and a moral compass our aid in keeping to the road and path throughout life. A compass was an instrument to determine direction, it is an essential aid to navigate on ships as early as the 11th Century. The magnetised pointer of a compass indicated north, south, east and west as it aligned itself to the earth's magnetic field. Coupled with a sextant for calculating latitude and a marine chronometer for calculating longitude, a compass gave the master the correct heading to take and greatly improved the efficiency of sea travel.

The only problem with a magnetic compass is that it can be influenced by nearby masses of ferrous metal or stray magnetic fields. Then the reading will not be accurate. As Sir Walter Scott put it, "A nasty nail placed near a faithful compass will sway it from the truth, and wreck the argosy." (a large merchant ship).

When God made human beings, he implanted within each person a moral compass - a conscience - to point us in the right direction. However, a conscience can become blunted or rusty through disuse. We can also be led astray all too easily by the presence of another magnetic force or attraction within our lives.

The good news is that God guards his children from human error by giving us his Holy Spirit, who guides us to the truth. He promises in Jeremiah 31:33, "I will put my law in their minds and write it on their hearts. I will be their God, and they will be my people."

We also have his written Word to refer to. With the Spirit and an inerrant Manual to guide our actions, we do not need to fear missing the mark. As long as our needle is set on God himself we have our true North!

Henry Ward Beecher once commented, "Sink the Bible to the bottom of the sea, and man's obligation to God would be unchanged. He would have the same path to tread, only his lamp and his guide would be gone; he would have the same voyage to make, only his compass and chart would be overboard."

Let's be grateful that we have all the equipment we need to make our eternal destination!

For in him you have been enriched in every way - in all your speaking and in all your knowledge . . . Therefore do not lack any spiritual gift as you eagerly wait for our Lord Jesus Christ to be revealed. He will keep you strong to the end, so that you will be blameless on the day of our Lord Jesus Christ. God, who has called you into fellowship with his Son Jesus Christ our Lord, is faithful. 1

Corinthians 5:9.