



The Order of St James Newsletter

January 2021



'A disturbing and turbulent New Year to you all!'

Fr. Ed Elsey, OSJ (Wales)

What an unexpected greeting that would be, instead of the blasé usual: Happy New Year, which promises nothing in particular and shows no real care.

Turbulence is disturbance - as in the water of the pool in the Gospels: of a riotous crowd, rebelling against what they see as injustice; of turning complacency upside down. Afterwards comes a new stability. Will that happen in our New Year?

Those who've come through life-threatening illness or tragedy recognise a 'second chance'. Covid has been horrendous. Even if not afflicted or infected, the underlying fear has been present in most people's minds, if they are honest. They know best what turbulence means.

I'm talking about the year that lies ahead in the work and effective ministry of your Church and your personal faith, in which we all need to rethink our participation and get re-involved as the opportunity and openness of a New Year offers itself to us all. There ought to be things on a personal, professional and community level you will want to shake up during this year: or more probably want someone else to shake up for you. I'm not talking about the old fashioned new year resolutions, although they undoubtedly had their place.

In thinking about the various gifts and styles of our practice of faith, and the work of the congregations to which we belong, I was reading about three different power sources in New Zealand, informed by friends there. I thought the analogy might be thought provoking for us.

In New Zealand the great Waikato river steadily flows to the sea, producing huge amounts of hydroelectricity as it surges along. Then, not so very far away is the great geyser at Rotorua with its shatteringly unpredictable surges of boiling bubbling life, exciting everyone who watches with fear and admiration before going strangely and mysteriously silent again. Underground in yet a third place is a huge and apparently limitless spring which has been quietly and unobtrusively producing in its subterranean depths pure crystal stream for thousands, maybe millions, of years. Steady, unobserved, unsung and largely unknown and unpublicised.

Every church community, rather like any family, needs all such diverse ingredients which add to its geological structure, its spiritual strength. What a good job we're not all the same and can operate according to the strengths, skill and vision God has given us! In this potentially exciting and challenging New Year of 2021, with so much still yet unknown in restriction, discipline, safety awareness and caution, what will you do to show your renewed devotion and commitment to the Lord?

How will you contribute to the overall work of Christ on earth?

Jesus is coming again. That we believe. Or I hope we do! Believe it! Are there things in our lives we need to get straight in time for his coming?

John the Baptist's themes were repentance, judgement and righteousness. His style was passionate, uncompromising, urgent. His demands were specific and costly: generosity, justice and integrity in daily living. He did not hesitate to confront what needed to be confronted and challenge what needed to be challenged. Of course he lost his life as a result, but then self-sacrifice is what many Christians are called upon to offer and accept if the Christian job is to be done properly. If your life *is* spared, it is spared by Him and for His purpose.

Christian confidence is in God's future, not our present. Two hand-made banners in a tiny and attractive church in Monchique in Portugal proclaimed: 'Natal, duo mille anos de amor': Christmas: 2000 years of love." What a lovely description. Well, we are now twenty years in.

Proud of what you have achieved for Him in those two decades? Honestly?

Joseph's immense commitment to God's will has impressed me as I have looked yet again at the Christmas story, which I prefer to consider unadorned by tinsel turkey and tycoons. Epic American films on Abraham and OT Joseph will no doubt be shown again, yet again and tv shows and celebrity out-glitzing the simple manger and Bethlehem's hills and valleys, camels and magi.

I am reminded, throughout the Old Testament, of great stories of complete trust, even to the point of heartbreak, as Abraham is asked to sacrifice the most precious possession of his long awaited Son: prophetic foretelling in Isaiah, seers and prophets, and parallels with the two Josephs' responses to God.

In the Nativity story Joseph has four dreams and seems to obey them without question:

1. To accept Mary as his wife and Jesus as his son
2. To flee into territorial protection of Egypt, probably just south of Massada near Arad, not too far, just far enough to be out of Herod's jurisdiction - just enough is far enough for God: no need for 'the full monty' down to the Nile
3. To return to Israel when the tyrant ruler is dead and the dreadful massacres seem to have stopped for a while.
4. [arguably the most difficult of all to face with humility] To go home to Nazareth, the sub-political hot-bed centre of the North, amid the risk of neighbour's suspicion, scandal and slander...and the ever frequent public stoning Joseph: a man of decisive action as well as great care and sensitivity, trust and commitment. A man incapable of knowing the divine plan - or even as little of it as we are lucky to know with the hindsight of history - and yet willing to perceive himself as a tiny jigsaw piece of what God must have planned for his people until the end of time.

Contrast him with Herod. What a pity Herod didn't have access to similar dreams - and humility to accept real Divine guidance - instead his days and nights were obsessed with fears, panics and insecurities; superstitions, sacrileges and self-aggrandizement. He was a wise and clever man, let's not forget that: but he actually helped to point wiser men to the light - and chose to shut the same light out of his own life.

So close to his reach yet so far from his reason! Afflicted by popular poxes of his time, way before Covid.

Pray for the Herods you know in your life and work.

Pray also that you do not become one.

Herod seeks out Jesus, the Christ, but for the wrong motive

He sees the power of Christ, but for his own use and manipulation, not for the good of humanity.

He [rightly] feels the threatening scrutiny of the Almighty to his self-built adulation, majesty and credit. And he can't 'hack it'.

He says he wants to go and worship the child: but in his heart is jealousy, resentment, destruction and murder.

Like Herod we often mouth correct responses but our heart deep-down speaks a different message.

What threatens you and me most today? Misrepresentation? Compromise? Feelings of helplessness? Anger? Frustration? Even annoyance and distress at the way we see our beleaguered national state church proceeding.

What makes you angry or resentful?

Often that anger and resentment may be justified by events. But can we take our anger, annoyance and just criticism of our materialistic world, lay it before the Lord and ask Him to take it, use it, reform us and redeem us in our everyday life and work for Him?

I wished you a turbulent New Year. Perhaps there are things God is trying to reveal to us in dreams, personal thoughts, in the quietness of our devotions. God comes to us in unexpected ways as well as in the regular worship of our church services. Being alert to the Spirit enables us to recognise God in such ways...so many ways!

I have been reminding myself yet again of the tremendous power of the Psalms, divided so conveniently in the Book of Common Prayer into Psalms of the morning and evening. By rehearsing them again in our day and generation we can remind ourselves of God's faithful record with His people down through the ages.

And His warnings. One can usually find a verse of the psalms for every human situation.

[A choirmaster friend of mine who knew his psalms extremely well from formal Mattins and Evensong maintained he could find a verse for any human situation. He proved it once when I drove under a railway bridge just as a passenger train went over. He came up immediately with Psalm 66,12 'thou dost suffer men to ride over our heads'. Seriously, I recommend the psalms to you as a daily reminder of God's Word to His people of all ages. Try them again].

Above all, pray that this New Year we may give Him time and our ears patience to listen. Pray that He will reveal even a small part of His Will for us as we move forward in faith, in trust, healing, joy - in His service and in the life of our church and fellowship. Perhaps there are things or people in our lives that God has given us responsibility for: a job that makes new or different demands upon us; someone to care for that disrupts our way of life. Maybe we grapple with a responsibility that brings painful consequences or upheaval in its wake: a kind of turbulence we didn't expect nor seek - don't even think we deserve. Pray today for the ability to discern God's voice in your life and to accept ungrudgingly the responsibilities He gives us.

So have a turbulent year! Make some waves. Preach some gospel. Feel some pain. But see God anew and experience Christ with greater love and closeness. Come through your turbulence, stronger.

Then you can experience what God tells us all for this New Year, as he told David in Ps 46 v 10: “Be still [that is, ‘at peace’], and know that I am God “

Alright, if you prefer, a very Happy New Year to us all! Amen.

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JESUS - THE PRIEST

Fr. Ed Elsey, OSJ (Wales)

We usually expect to see our priests in Church in colorful robes and funny old fashioned outfits and a white collar turned around the otherway when they are about town. I was a Lay Chaplain in a British Independent Private School and explained to my students that the reasonfor the funny clothes priests wear - called 'vestments' - is this:

When an ordinary human being, with ordinary human failings and temptations is called to become a priest, he or she has then a special job to do for God, so ceases to appear as Mr Lewistone or Mrs Clarksmith and becomes, for the purpose and duration of the Divine religious service, God's representative to the people.

It is why I dislike [greatly] sermons that tell personal stories about the preacher or what he or she did last week, rather than doing the job of preaching about Christ the Master and God the Father. Too much of the Man and too little of the Master! Many seem to do it gratuitously, I have found, to try and ‘get pally’ with the congregation at the start of telling them off for sin!!

To be a priest in the Jewish order of things dated back to the Book of Leviticus where specific duties and tremendous constraints were placed upon the people of the early tribal wanderings, called by God, out of slavery in Egypt to practise worship of Yahweh [God] as they trekked through the Wilderness, worshipping and obeying God, and eventually established themselves as a Kingdom centered in the fixed worship-city of Jerusalem. They had then arrived at a permanent city and the building of Solomon's Temple was magnificent in every detail, freemasons fixing the rules of building which still govern order and symmetry today. The innermost sanctum of the Temple, shielded by an enormous curtain called the 'Veil of the Temple', was called the Holy of Holies and was believed to be the residing place of God Himself and only the most Holy of High Priests was allowed to enter and make the required sacrifice. But Jesus didn't wear priestly clothes nor practise sacrifices in the Temple. How then could He be described as a priest?

The authorized priests all descended from one tribe - the Levites - and any priest from outside that tribe called to serve in any way in Jewish ritual had to be ordered specially by a change in the Law. Melchizedek in Genesis 14 [17-20] was the King of Salem [translated as King of Peace, a term later given to Jesus] who pronounced blessing on Abram, before the birth of Ishmael and long before the birth of Izzak [Isaac].

He was termed 'a priest for all time'. Nothing was recorded about Melchizedek's birth or death, just his authority as a priest. The Levitical priests were mortal. Melchizedek was not. Jesus is described as descending from Melchizedek.

Recognizing an order of priesthood that pre-dated the Levites and that was, being closer to the Creation of the World, in a direct authority from God to Abram, gave Jesus Christ an automatic right to be a descendent of the earlier tradition. The Canaanite cult at Jerusalem was already deeply rooted in the history of the land from the second Millennium BC! David's arrival, described in 2 Sam 6 & 24, was to supplant that cult with a new form of Jewish worship. Salem was an alternative name for Jebus [Jeru/salem] meaning 'peaceful home for God'.

Jesus had, however, been trained up, from his Bar Mitzvah [that is entering manhood - probably at age 11, though customarily now at 12] to have efficient knowledge of all the traditional texts of Jewish literature and to be able to argue and rationalise the habits and rituals which were required of the descendents of Abraham and the people of Moses. He had, in fact been trained as a priest and at the age of thirty when a trainee priest was allowed to be 'ordained' into the Jewish priestly tradition. He did in fact start his Ministry on earth at thirty, though not through the accepted synagogue ritual or order – instead working as an itinerant preacher, healer and missionary. You know what happened next!

Many historians and theologians believe that the intervening years of his training - between age 12 and 30 - were spent with the highly chaste and spiritual members of the Essene Order - the monks who wrote the Dead Sea Scrolls - living in isolation on the shores of the Dead Sea, being trained as an orthodox priest, skilled in all the scriptures and writings of His time.

Fellow Holy Land visitors will know where I am.

So Christ was a DIFFERENT kind of High Priest.

The Veil of the Temple was torn in two at the moment of Christ's death by Crucifixion. No longer would God be hidden from His People but available for all of us to know and worship. Jesus is from the Tribe of Judah, of the direct lineage from David. Death does not terminate his authority as a priest but carries that Authority back to Heaven, from whence we draw on it as Christians.

Christ is our Great High Priest, having offered once and for all the ultimate sacrifice - that of His Own Life on the Cross. This belief is CRUCIAL to all Christians and as you prepare for Confirmation, this is what you will confess that you believe.

You don't need to remember all the historical side - though I find that side fascinating - but you DO need to see the relevance of Christ's sacrifice and recognise his 'God-ness' as you partake of the bread and the wine in Communion with Him. In His Death and Resurrection is your Life and Rebirth in Him. It is a new Covenant [Binding Agreement] made between God and Man. The old cult has gone: the old Jewish tradition has been super-ceded by our 2000 year-old Christian faith.

Hebrews 9 puts it like this: "If sacrifices cleanse the 'copies' of heavenly things, those heavenly things themselves require better sacrifices to cleanse them.

For Christ has entered, not a sanctuary made with men's hands, which is only a symbol of the reality, but has entered Heaven itself, to appear now before God on our behalf.

He has appeared once and for all at the climax of history to abolish sin by the sacrifice of Himself "

So, Jesus is a DIFFERENT KIND of priest, the greatest of all priests, the priest who without funny clothes seeks to lead us to worship God, not a priest of 2000 years ago but a priest of today, FOR today's people and today's church - a priest for you and me. Recognise him as you support your incumbent and as you seek to contribute to the work of Christ's Church on earth, in any way and in any place, to which you feel He has called you.

So let us Praise Jesus, and God His Father, as we seek to learn more about Him in our work and in our worship.

Amen.

Thoughts of the past and the future.

+Ian, OSJ (UK)

I recently found myself writing to a friend the following:

So what of the year ahead?

I suspect we will see several more months of restrictions and at least two more national lock downs for Covid-19, which ever variant you choose. I suspect this last year has been a warning shot across humanity's bows and that there is worse to come if we don't mend our ways. I don't think these are 'the end times' but they are not far away - we are still in a period of limited grace from what I can discern.

Yesterday was Holy Innocents Day, remembering the babes that Herod's men butchered. I find this celebration personally offensive when we ignore the fact that there has been nearly 42,000,000 lives been destroyed through abortion this year alone. That accounts for 1 in 4 pregnancies currently. The silence of the church on this is appalling.

The fact that God still loves us after all we have done is beyond explanation, but I am glad He still finds it in His Being to do so.

The fact we stand in God's Grace is nothing less than miraculous and speaks of a love in all fullness that we cannot comprehend.

This was coupled with the loss of one of our members, Unice Brierley, OSJ (UK), who died late December and whose funeral will take place late in January.

Unice was 94 and part of the OSJ (UK) Editorial Team. She became a member of OSJ (UK) when she was told to stand down from being a local preacher in the Methodist Church here in Wetherby.

After a lifetime of dedicated service this was a bitter moment for her. At least being part of the Editorial Team, she could continue to use her expertise and share her spiritual wisdom, and any regular readers of the newsletters will have read her offerings. They may not have been to everyone's liking but at least they were honest and from the heart.

Unice was difficult at times. She had high expectations and her strong personality could be both challenging and problematic. She had given her life to the church and now it was time for them to pay back some of that investment.

It ended in disappointment. Yesterday's work was yesterday's news. Today was a new day with new demands and Unice was left behind. Even OSJ (UK) couldn't meet her expectation. We could only do so much.

We could not replace her husband, her church, her fellowship as she became increasingly infirm and more dependent. Our weaknesses were highlighted by her needs and we could not be what she wanted.

Her family were compromised. They offered her care and independence but she refused stubbornly to leave the home she had lived in for so many years. The love and care was there, and it may have been what she needed but it wasn't what she wanted.

I understand and accept that, but you can't always have what you want. Even St John (21, v18) noted the following:

Very truly I tell you, when you were younger you dressed yourself and went where you wanted; but when you are old you will stretch out your hands, and someone else will dress you and lead you where you do not want to go."

Yes, the Gospels recognise the realities of life.

Unice did not want to go into care or to live with family however well-meant or constructed it was. She was granted her prayer. Independent to the last.

She was a tough cookie and wasn't afraid to tell things how they were. Despite this, she couldn't find it in her heart to indict the Methodist Church for her treatment, even if it was well intended. It hurt her deeply.

I would imagine that this and similar stories will be repeated across many generations and many denominations. We do our bit but somehow end up getting left behind or ignored as we get older. It's not intentional but it happens. We become less active, can't do what we used to do, get replaced, forgotten about. 'Out of sight, out of mind' is very applicable.

Pastoral care of every member of a community is paramount.

I also received many communications at the end of 2019 about the state of the C of E and Roman Catholic Church about the inadequacies of their leadership. One in particular raised a particular and common problem.

Firstly, it is not the role of OSJ (UK) to comment or get involved in what happens in other denominationally based groups. They are responsible for their own affairs before God and it is not for us to either get involved or to pass opinion. The bible forbids any individual or group in usurping the authority of God by passing judgement where it is neither applicable nor valid.

Secondly, if we are not members of those groups, our opinions or comments count for little.

Thirdly, if we feel that strongly then we should deal with it ourselves and not expect others to do it for us. There is an expression about making arrows and getting someone else to fire them.

We have a saying in OSJ (UK), 'if you see the need, deal with it'. I think that is plain enough not to expedite further comment on my part.

I find myself wondering what we are about when we complain about the state of things but aren't prepared to do something about it. 'All trousers but no action' springs to mind. Apologies if that offends, but I can't think of anything more appropriate right now.

It's not the Order's way – unless you are prepared to do something to change things then what is the point of complaining? What exactly are we trying to achieve by speaking in this judgemental way and what bitter thoughts or prejudices are we hiding under this verbal smokescreen?

The reality is it is actually better to stay silent rather than condemn ourselves. What I do know is our own words will come back to condemn us, so least said, soonest mended.

The current situation regarding the legislation regarding Covid-19 should be a wake up warning to us all. I suspect not all is as it seems.

HMGov seem (in my opinion) desperate to close churches or destroy them.

The current Covid legislation is intent in silencing the effectiveness of the church as the moral voice of the country.

The current marriage legislation is intent on destroying the churches view of marriage and destabilising the God ordained harmony of society.

HMGov's view of sexuality is in direct contravention of the biblical binary view of sexuality, and it is already being taught in our schools.

We are under attack. Traditional views of marriage as being between one man and one woman (as defined at birth) for the lifetime of both partners are also under attack. We cannot ignore this and need to respond.

This leads on to same sex marriages and gender. The bible is clear on both these matters.

Marriage is between one man and one woman (as defined physically at birth) for life and sexuality is binary and not a matter of personal choice. Let's be absolutely clear, gender is defined at birth, and is not a matter of personal choice.

This all flies in the face of what is being promoted by many organizations and even HMGov, but the fact remains that the statistics actually support the traditionally accepted view. Far more marriages are heterosexual by personal choice and are between 'men' and 'women' as defined at birth. It is the norm.

What people do outside of this norm is up to them, but as a Christian, I will restate there will be a price to pay. God may be gracious but 'rules are rules' – you go against God's word and there will be a price to pay.

The Order's view on homosexuality remains unchanged. You have freedom of will in many things but exercise this God given gift with caution. Your choice is your choice and your responsibility so you take the consequences.

To be absolutely clear, the order's view on same sex 'marriage' remains the same and the words of the bible remain non-negotiable on this matter.

There is still much we need to do as an Order.

Do what you are able with my blessing.

+Ian, OSJ (UK)

Website statistics for December (1st - 29th) 2020: (total 13,324)

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136	Spain
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2	United States
2	United States, Nevada , Henderson , 89074
2	United States, Texas , Houston , 77072
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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.

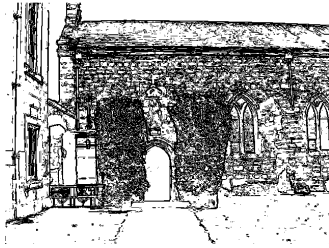
The same applies to the giving of last rites (viaticum).

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.