
	<p style="text-align: center;"><b>The Order of St James (UK) Newsletter</b></p> <p style="text-align: center;">December 2021</p> <p style="text-align: center;"><a href="http://www.orderofstjames.info">www.orderofstjames.info</a></p>	
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**A CHRISTMAS MEDITATION:**

Fr. Ed Elsey, OSJ

Luke's account of the birth of Jesus Christ is probably the most familiar and most used account over the Christmas period and source for many favourite carols. I grew up with them as a chapel - going boy - we had no choice but go with our parents but I carried on as I liked the experience, and as organist and choirmaster I cannot begin to calculate the thousands of carols I have taught to choirs, adapted harmonies for and thrilled congregations, and myself, with the power of the mighty pipe organ at services and in improvisations as congregations left to celebrate their own Christmases at home and in parties.

A joy and a delight.

In Luke 1, 26 the angel announces to Mary [way back in March in our calendar] that she would bear the son of God on earth - the Annunciation - and as her pregnancy developed, the only update we hear is when Elizabeth, also expecting her child, John, later called the Baptist, is thrilled by the baby's movement as Mary and she compare notes. A lovely story often under-rated or taken for granted.

Then again, In ch. 19, as Christ entered Jerusalem, riding on a donkey [the foal of an ass], his followers and supporters cried out 'Blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord, Hosanna in the highest'. The religious authorities challenged him to silence these wild cries of prophetic recognition, fearful of Roman reaction to any kind of unauthorised demonstration, quickly put down with violence and instant punishment. But 'the Master' replied: "I tell you, if they keep quiet, the very stones will cry out".

This challenges me, especially after a year of pandemic destruction and injustice, worldwide but also here in our own country. I could get political, though have vowed not to do so. Agreed improvements to life in general and voted change of laws to protect and defend the innocent, seem to take such a long time - too long - to come to fruition, committees and commissions tending to roll justice into the long grass and nothing seems, to those suffering and tolerating wrongs and suffering, to get done.

Lots of talk [as Greta calls it 'bla bla bla'] but where is the action which could be and ought to be so prompt and immediate. I have quoted before the hymn which includes the words: "still the weary folk are pining for the hour that brings release". If we as Christians do not sing the high praise of our Lord and Master, nor cry for justice, we are failing to respond to the Call which has changed our lives for truth and redemption.

We must and should 'cry out'.

Letters to your MP or to councils which claim to be speaking for you, may seem to be ineffective or pointless. I can assure you they are not. Cry out and make your position known. Don't glue yourself to the road, maybe, but make your voice heard. Cry out!

Thus I draw your attention again to the analogy of the stones - you are living stones, appointed. 1 Peter 2:5 NIV You also, like living stones, are being built into a spiritual house to be a holy priesthood, offering spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ.

Your protest, your cry, may indeed lead to some sacrifice - you may find rejection, ridicule, abuse or challenge, but we are promised the words to deal with such offences.

As in my Christmas anthology, provided for the Order last year at this time, I give you again the - to me delightful and thought provoking - poem by Richard Wilbur, as a personal meditation for your thoughts, prayers and protest at this crucial time in our country's and our world's need and crossroads.

Richard Wilbur wrote the following poem based upon Luke 19, 39-40

*'Some of the Pharisees from among the multitude said unto him, Master, rebuke thy disciples. And He answered and said unto them, I tell you that, if these should hold their peace, the very stones would immediately cry out.'*

A stable lamp is lighted  
Whose glow shall wake the sky:  
The stars shall bend their voices,  
And every stone shall cry.  
And straw like gold shall shine;  
A barn shall harbour heaven,  
A stall become a shrine.

Yet he shall be forsaken,  
And yielded up to die;  
The sky shall groan and darken,  
And every stone shall cry  
For stony hearts of men:  
God's blood upon the spearhead,  
God's love refused again.

This child through David's city  
Shall ride in triumph by;  
The palm shall strew its branches,  
And every stone shall cry.

Though heavy, dull and dumb.

And lie within the roadway

To pave his Kingdom come.

But now, as at the ending,

The low is lifted high;

The stars shall bend their voices

And every stone shall cry.

And every stone shall cry,

In praises of the child

By whose descent among us

The worlds are reconciled.

***“War is NOT the only Instrument of Death.”***

Remembrance Sunday also known by its original name as Armistice Day is the remembrance for the ‘fallen.’ Many associate this day and the ‘fallen’ to be for the Armed Services personnel. In reality we are reminded to ‘remember’ ALL people.

Not just military personnel, but civilians like ARPs, (Air Raid Precautions) Police Fire and Ambulance Officers and so many others, Bus Drivers, Doctors, Nurses.

We must never forget all the Bomb Disposal Officers (even today) who attend bomb scenes rendering munitions safe. Individuals who go to rescue those trapped and seriously injured persons when bombs were being dropped around them, upon our cities and towns exploding whilst they themselves were putting their own lives on the line to save others. Knowing instant, imminent death could be present, yet they never gave in to save another’s life. It is a noteworthy reminder what the Bible and Gospels state about death!

***“Heaven and earth will pass away, but my words will not pass away”*** (Mark 13:31). This passage from the Gospel of St. Mark is a passage in which the evangelist gives us a glimpse of Jesus' intimate discourse with four of his disciples: Peter, James, John, and Andrew. Because chapter 13 begins by telling us that he took these four disciples only to the Mount of Olives overlooking Jerusalem, sat down - as every teacher does - and opened his heart to them.

Chapter 13 - and part of it, quoted in the Gospel words above - speaks of the end of things: the end of Jerusalem, the end of the world as we know it. Somehow each of us has this personal experience, not because we are in a hurry, at the point of death when everything is over. There is a very wise

saying: the poor man has no pocket full of jingling money. This means leaving everything you have, including debt, behind. Take with you what you have done in your life with your neighbour.

Generations that were destroyed in the 20th century; humanity itself has begun to destroy itself. And why? And where did all this come from?

On Remembrance day we gather before the highest state authorities to do what we do every year to remember whole generations who saw the end of their lives abruptly because of the decisions of others, because of the unrest between the peoples and the wickedness of men. Not only today should we salute the memory of these innocent victims. Whenever I go to a military cemetery, I am immediately reminded of the victims of these wars, my heart aches when I see how young they were: 18 years old, 19 years, 21 years, 25 years. Generations that were destroyed in the 20th century; humanity itself has begun to destroy itself. Why? And where did all this come from?

In the Gospel quoted above, the Lord speaks to us about the end of things to teach us how precious life really is. Because if everything passes, but until it passes, ***I have the duty, the responsibility and the joy to do everything I can to make my life a life of people, to enjoy it, not to burn it.*** Isn't this what we try to teach our children? Do not fall into addictions so as not to destroy your life, so as not to end it prematurely and abruptly. Then there are sad to say this..... those who are sent for slaughter by the State itself.

Because when you read the tragedy of the world conflicts we had in the 20th century but also other conflicts, so young that because of the radicalisation

that is done to them, the brainwashing that is done to them, instead of becoming messengers of life, they become instruments of death. *Some tragedy is this, that we humans still sow death instead of promoting life. How wise is the prayer "You have taught me the way of life" Psalm 16:11), not the way of death, the way of life.*

The choices of today's politicians and future generations must be pro-life choices from beginning to end, not becoming involved in these constant conflicts throughout the world. This equally applies to ALL human beings. Sadly yesterday, and more poignantly an explosive device was detonated at Liverpool one minute to the eleventh hour, on the eleventh day of the eleventh month. The question must be asked, for what cause, what purpose, what surely is the mindset of these person(s) who kill innocent human beings. Why cannot these individuals dialogue with others, discuss what their problem, difficulty or obstacle is? Otherwise these acts become murder.

Today we greet whole generations of young people, not only yesterday but also today, killed, permanently injured, permanently disabled in the conflicts that **WE HUMANS** create with the lack of ability to dialogue. With greed for the land of others, with the social injustices that are at the root of conflicts, with the lack of justice in the distribution of the world's wealth, with the effects of that all that, is the enhancement of human dignity, and with the gruesome exploitation of land resources to enrich the few and starve millions.

This is the root of the war, and we, when we commemorate the victims of the conflict, when we place the wreaths in front of the monuments, must



remember this tiny but essential question: **what should I do?** I listen to the one who teaches me the way of life, not the one who teaches me the dark alley of death. Therefore, the choices of today's politicians and of tomorrow's generations must be that of pro-life choices from beginning to end because it is not only war that is an instrument of death but in our hearts we have so much seeds sown to death ”.

**Grant them, O Lord, eternal rest, rest in peace.**

+David

## **Marriage:**

+Ian, OSJ (UK)

*I recently updated our web site to make a feature page on 'marriage'. I feel it deserves its own space even though it should really be part of the 'service and sacraments' page.*

*This move very much comes as a response to the current situation regarding 'marriage' in general. Hopefully it will serve some purpose and make couples seriously think about the rationality of their intention.*

*Who knows, the material may even form part of an informal means of 'marriage preparation', although I don't think such a thing really exists?*

*Many couples now come from homes where marriages did not survive, so there is no model/example for them to adopt. They have nothing concrete to base their understanding of what marriage is or can be.*

*We need to demonstrate that there is something much better on offer in Christian marriage. The additional source/study material is not listed on the website but may be interest and good usage.*

**Marriage** is a really big deal for OSJ (UK) and we have devoted a separate page for this topic even though it should be a part of 'Sacrament and Service'.

So many of the couples we receive have little idea about what Christian marriage entails and it is a clear sign that they have been let down by the way HMGov, society and the media have mis-represented and de-valued marriage, and also by the church in its silence and lack of commitment and understanding in preparing couples for a successful future together.

True marriage is so much more than portrayed. We want to see all marriages succeed but it means challenging many of the myths and unrealistic expectations that supposedly go with 'happy ever after'.

**Twelve biblical basics of marriage:**

1. marriage is a calling and sacrament, not a matter of temporary convenience, but instead is intended for the life of both partners, and is not only built on mutual love and affection but shared faith and biblical understanding
2. marriage, once entered into and established, cannot be undone
3. marriage is between a man and a woman (as physically defined at birth)
4. marriage is to the benefit of society as a whole in that it provides a good foundation for social stability built on relational boundaries, mutual trust and integrity.

5. marriage is intended for the procreation of children (even if that involves medical intervention)

6. and mutual comfort. It is a self-contained unit where everything that is needed for its purpose can be found,

7. children are a gift of God entrusted into the protective care and stewardship of both parents and the Christian community.

8. marriage, or anything described as 'marriage', between those of the same sex (as defined by birth, self-determination or by other choice or process) is contrary to scripture.

(same sex couples must look beyond their union if they wish to have children and that simply works against the whole principle of Christian marriage being something that is 'self-contained')

9. the deliberate termination of life (e.g. abortion, euthanasia, etc.) is contrary to scripture.

10. sexually or physically intimate relationships between same sex couples (as defined above) is contrary to scripture.

11. sexually or physically intimate relationships outside of marriage, regardless of gender, are contrary to Holy Scripture.

12. surrogacy is therefore not within the scriptural boundaries of biblically based marriage although adoption is.

## **Taking Christian marriage seriously:**

The implications of these statements are manifold and you should really give them some serious thought.

Sad to say, many couples drift in to marriage. It's easy to see why, but that doesn't make it 'right'.

Marriage remains the traditional, tried and tested cornerstone of a stable society and provides the best environment for bringing up children. However, it's not something to be entered into lightly or without some serious thought and consideration. It is not without its problems.

Marriage is God ordained and it comes with lifetime responsibilities and commitments.

Once entered into, it is meant to be for the lifetime of the couple. The only biblically based exceptions would be infidelity of one of the partners or a failure to consummate the marriage.

Divorce, if things go wrong, is not part of God's general plan, even if there is provision for 'divorce' in civil law.

Marriage is not for everyone, and choosing to remain single is equally as valid.

Marriage is rarely what you think it is going to be. 'Happy ever after' takes a lot of effort and time and it isn't 'a right'.

'Marriage' doesn't 'fix' things. We have to do that ourselves.

Marriage is a shared lifetime's 'work in progress' rather than a moment in time that needs no further attention.

No two marriages will be the same and you shouldn't judge your marriage against someone else's. It's God's gift to you and it is unique.

Don't want someone else's marriage or try to be like another couple. You have your own path to tread.

Marriage is still between a man and a woman, and is intended to be for life and for the procreation of children.

The marriage vows remain a statement of that fact: - in modern commercial terms you might say 'sold as seen - buyer beware - no returns - no refunds - no guarantees - all sales are final'.

A priest/minister/pastor is not obliged to marry a couple if he or she feel the couple is making an error of judgement or is unprepared or is approaching marriage with wrong intent or coercion is being applied.

### **The practicalities of marriage:**

For those who are getting married I caution both to be aware of the following:

get it right, marriage is heaven,

get it wrong, marriage is hell.

A marriage is conceived well before a wedding, but a wedding does not make a marriage.

Don't expect perfection in your partner. Remember that you are not perfect either. Make allowances, not excuses.

Marriage is not a game and not to be undertaken on a whim of romance. There is a massive difference between 'Love' and 'Lust' and it is easy to confuse the two when in the early years of a relationship.

Great sex (or any other kind) is not a sufficiently good reason for getting married. Marriage is and needs so much more. Don't equate or mistake sex with or for 'love', and loving someone doesn't make them the right person to be married to.

Don't make assumptions either. Two people 'in love' don't automatically think the same about things in life. Ask the obvious questions and be sure about what you are getting yourself into.

Getting married and staying married are two very different things.

Marriage is rarely 'happy ever after'. There will be many ups and downs and marriage isn't always an easy path.

Marriage is absolutely what you make it or what you let it become. It's no one else's fault if it goes wrong, it's down to you both. It is also not just one person's fault if it fails. It takes two to fall out and have a row.

Marriage is about relying on your partner and not looking for sympathy elsewhere. It's your marriage and up to you to sort it out. If you need to go looking elsewhere for 'support and comfort' then you have already betrayed your marriage vows.

Marriage is intended to be totally self-contained.

Marriage is not above receiving some occasional good advice from family and friends, but you should look at their marriages as to determining if their advice is sound or not.

Marriage is not primarily about 'happiness'. That is something ethereal that is hard to quantify. It is different to different people.

Happiness depends entirely on how you interpret the things that happen to you. An insulin dependent diabetic may bemoan their medical problems but someone in late stage Parkinson's would happily change place with them. A blind man would happily pay thousands of pounds for new glasses if he could just see again, whereas I doubt you would be happy paying that much, even if they were designer frames.

'Happiness', contrary to popular opinion, isn't 'a right' or something to be expected or demanded. You have to work hard for it.

You get what you get and need to make the best of it.

For many people, if they put as much effort into making life work for them rather than expending the huge amounts of effort complaining, life would actually be a lot better for them. Look at what you have rather than what you don't have, and be thankful.

The marriage vows themselves don't mention 'happiness'. That is something you have to create for 'yourselves' rather than for 'yourself'. It's a subtle but important difference. Marriage is about 'us' not 'me'.

Marriage is about the other person and their needs. There is no room for selfishness in marriage. Selfishness will destroy families and friendships, and it will destroy marriages just as quickly.

Holding grudges and not letting go of past wrongs is ultimately an act of selfishness.

Constantly bringing other people's faults and mistakes up is selfish too and it shows a distinct lack of forgiveness. It is also a form of emotional blackmail and control based on creating guilt whilst denying forgiveness.

They are both symptoms and indicators of things going wrong in a marriage and they need to be dealt with. If you don't deal them they will ultimately destroy what you have.

The bible teaches us that we are not perfect. That would be something we should all remember. We can be wrong, we can make mistakes, and we can misunderstand or misread situations.

Thinking we are right all the time puts us on a par with God, and God we aren't! If you are not sure about that then try walking on water, calming storms, healing the sick, making the blind to see and raising the dead.

A little humility goes a long way in bringing a failing marriage back from the brink.



## **Marriage checklist:**

This is a lot to consider. If you can't remember it all, at least try to remember these key seven facts about marriage:

1. Get marriage right, it is heaven. Get it wrong, marriage is hell.
2. Marriage is what you make it or let it become. It is your responsibility, no one else's.
3. You can live with people but you can't always be married to them. Likewise a wedding doesn't make a marriage.
4. Divorce is never 'a fresh start'. There are always consequences that have to be lived with and you can't undo or hide from the past.
5. Marriage is sacrificial, and is much an act of faith as it is of trust. There is no room for selfishness in marriage.
6. 'Love' and 'lust' should never be confused. Being 'in love' is very different from 'loving' someone.
7. Marriage is a calling of God to a sacramental life, between one man and one woman (as defined physically at birth), intended for life, and for the procreation of children.

Having children is not something to rush into either. They don't fix things, they tend to test things to their limit. If your relationship isn't secure when you have children they will find every weak spot and use it against you.

**Divorce: for the record:**

Divorce is not part of God's general plan for marriage although there are some exceptions.

Divorce is rarely the desired 'solve all' solution when things go wrong.

If you think things can't get any worse if your marriage begins to collapse, then getting divorced will usually prove how wrong you could be.

Divorce inevitably is about accusation, fault and blame, and is ultimately an admission of personal failure. There is no such thing as a 'no fault' divorce and proceedings can become extremely vindictive, especially where money and children are involved. The acrimony, bitterness and fall out will usually last long after a divorce and persistently interfere with the development of new relationships.

Divorce has significant and far reaching consequences for the individuals involved and for society in general.

It is a misconception that you can walk away from marriage (or any long lasting relationship) as if nothing ever happened, and start over. There is nothing further from the truth as the past has consequences that can't be hidden, wounds that refuse to heal, deep scars that ache and hurts that reappear without being invited. Your previous relationship cannot be totally escaped and it will haunt and shape your new ones. There will be memories, guilt and doubts that just won't go away. Divorce is rarely the end of the matter or 'final'.

The other thing that people don't realise is that divorce will divide families and friends, and the ripples of divorce will travel far and wide in ways that can never be anticipated.

Divorce is never just between a husband and wife.

The damage to their children is perhaps the worst kind, particularly in the way it affects their ability to trust. If you can't trust the people who say they love you then just who can you trust? The effect on their ability to hold and maintain future relationships is significant and lasts a lifetime.

**In summary:**

Getting married is a huge responsibility and it is not to be undertaken lightly.

It needs great forethought and a life time's dedication. The old saying, 'marry in haste, repent at leisure,' still holds true.

A good marriage will allow both husband and wife to flourish equally as a couple and as individuals.

Regrettably, those who seek to take control of their marriage will destroy it - marriage is about 'us' and 'our needs' rather than 'me' and 'my needs'.

Marriage has no room for selfishness.

'Happy ever after' is a work in progress and doesn't magically happen on its own. It takes a lot of continued effort and dedication. It is a life time commitment for both partners.

Simply put, marriage is what you make it or let it become and the responsibility lies with you. Source: the OSJ (UK) website, +Ian OSJ (UK)

### **Supporting material:**

These sources are not designated as copyright and are used in that context for further study. The opinions and interpretations of Holy Scripture as expressed are not necessarily those of OSJ (UK) but are worthy of further discussion.

From [Marriage, Divorce and Remarriage – Christian Bible Reference.org](http://Marriage, Divorce and Remarriage – Christian Bible Reference.org)

### ***Background***

In Biblical times, marriages were commonly arranged by the parents of the bride and groom. The parents sometimes allowed their children to have a say in the choice, but frequently they did not (Genesis 21:21, 24:1-4, 38:6, Judges 14:1-2). Dating and courtship did not precede marriage. The negotiations by the parents resulted in a *betrothal*, a binding agreement pledging the bride and groom to marriage. Girls and boys were typically betrothed shortly after puberty, and the betrothal lasted for one year. Then the groom took the bride into his home, and the marriage was consummated with sexual intercourse.

Various ceremonies and feasts accompanied the wedding day at different times in history, but the wedding was not performed, sanctioned or blessed by religious officials. As far as is known, there was no exchange of marriage vows, and our commonly used marriage vows do not come from the Bible. The marriage was neither a civil nor a religious matter, but numerous religious obligations came as a result.

## ***Institution of Marriage***

Marriage was instituted by God as a lifelong commitment (Genesis 2:18-24, Matthew 19:3-9, 1 Timothy 4:1-5). In Old Testament times, everyone was expected to be married and have children (Proverbs 18:22, Jeremiah 29:6). However, Jesus was unmarried and said remaining unmarried (celibacy) was a good choice for those who could accept that life and devote themselves to God (Matthew 19:10-12).

The apostle Paul was also unmarried. He said remaining unmarried was a good and holy alternative, but it is better to marry than to be tempted into immorality by passion (1 Corinthians 7:8-9). Peter and many of the other apostles were married (Matthew 8:14, 1 Corinthians 9:5), so marriage is compatible with committed service to God.

## ***Dating and Choosing a Spouse***

There are some mentions of courtship in the Bible (Judges 14:7-8, Ruth 3:7-11, Song of Songs 2:8-14). But most marriages were arranged by the parents of the bride and groom, and dating as we know it today was not practiced. The Bible does not give any rules or advice about dating.

The Israelites were prohibited from intermarrying with the pagan peoples who surrounded them (Deuteronomy 7:1-4), and the apostle Paul advised Christians to marry only other believers (1 Corinthians 7:39, 2 Corinthians 6:14). However, an already married Christian should not divorce a nonbelieving spouse (1 Corinthians 7:12-16).

There is no indication in the Bible that we are predestined to marry a certain person or that there is one special person or "soul mate" that we should find and marry. Except for the preference to marry another Christian, we are free to marry whomever we wish (1 Corinthians 7:39).

### ***Family Responsibilities***

The family of Biblical times had the husband as "lord" of the household and the wife as his helper. The husband worked diligently to provide material needs and protection while the wife worked diligently at domestic chores. In New Testament times, society was very much male-dominated, and the status of women was not much higher than slaves. Both slaves and women were advised to passively accept their status in society (1 Peter 2:13-16, 2:18-19, 3:1-2, Colossians 3:18-19, 3:22).

Some Christians feel they should live according to the authoritarian Biblical-era model of marriage, but contemporary marriages are typically quite different. Regardless of how we divide the roles, responsibilities and decision making in our marriages, we must be sure the marriage fulfills its essential family functions and provides a loving environment for children to grow into responsible well-adjusted adults.

### ***Love***

Unselfish love is the "glue" that holds marriages together. In marriage, we must subdue our own egos and selfish pride for the sake of the family. The excitement and romantic feelings of a new relationship fade in time, and the husband and wife will begin to see and resent each other's faults. That is when true "Christian Love" (kindness, respect, benevolence) must take over.

True Christian love is not just a feeling; it is something we must make the effort to practice every day. The Apostle Paul states it most eloquently in this passage from First Corinthians:

Love is patient, love is kind. It does not envy, it does not boast, it is not proud. It does not dishonor others, 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. (TNIV, 1 Corinthians 13:4–7)

### ***Forgiveness***

No two people always see things the same way. There will be times when words and actions are angry and hurtful. There will be disagreements and hurt feelings. To keep the marriage strong, we must try to understand our spouse's viewpoint and forgive instead of holding a grudge (Matthew 6:14-15, 18:21-22, 18:33-35, Mark 11:25-26, Luke 6:37).

### ***Sex***

Sex is a wholesome and normal part of a marriage relationship, and it is for pleasure as well as for reproduction (Genesis 2:24, 18:9-12, Proverbs 5:15-19, Song of Songs 4:1-16). The apostle Paul said neither husband nor wife should deny sexual pleasure to the other:

The husband should fulfill his wife's sexual needs, and the wife should fulfill her husband's needs. The wife gives authority over her body to her husband, and the husband gives authority over his body to his wife.

Do not deprive each other of sexual relations, unless you both agree to refrain from sexual intimacy for a limited time so you can give yourselves more completely to prayer. Afterward, you should come together again so that Satan won't be able to tempt you because of your lack of self-control. (NLT, 1 Corinthians 7:3-5)

The Bible does not give any rules for how sex should be practiced between husband and wife except for a prohibition against sex during menstruation - a woman's period of "uncleanness" (Leviticus 18:19). However, the Old Testament rules about unclean foods and practices are not binding on Christians (Mark 7:1-5, 7:14-23, Romans 14:13-14). Of course, the lack of specific rules does not imply that any abusive, exploitative or nonconsensual act would be allowable. Those things are prohibited by other Bible teachings.

Adultery is one of the most frequently and severely condemned sins in the Bible (Exodus 20:14, Matthew 19:16-19, Hebrews 13:4). Even lustful thoughts that may lead to adultery are prohibited (Matthew 5:27-28). Adultery frequently damages the marriage relationship in ways that can never be undone, and it often leads to divorce.

### ***Remarriage After Death of a Spouse***

After a husband or wife dies, the Bible permits remarriage to another, and it is even encouraged in some cases (Romans 7:1-3, 1 Corinthians 7:8-9, 7:39, 1 Timothy 5:14).



## ***Divorce and Remarriage***

### **Biblical Grounds for Divorce**

In the Old Testament Law, a man was allowed to divorce his wife if he found something indecent about her (Deuteronomy 24:1-4), but wives did not have the same privilege. Jesus saw the injustice and pain of divorce, though, and said that neither husband nor wife should separate from the other (Matthew 5:31-32, Mark 10:2-12, Luke 16:18). Jesus also said that remarriage after divorce constitutes adultery:

Some Pharisees came to him to test him. They asked, "Is it lawful for a man to divorce his wife for any and every reason?" "Haven't you read," he replied, "that at the beginning the Creator 'made them male and female,' and said, 'For this reason a man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife, and the two will become one flesh'? So they are no longer two, but one. Therefore what God has joined together, let no one separate."

"Why then," they asked, "did Moses command that a man give his wife a certificate of divorce and send her away?" Jesus replied, "Moses permitted you to divorce your wives because your hearts were hard. But it was not this way from the beginning. I tell you that anyone who divorces his wife, except for sexual immorality, and marries another woman commits adultery." (TNIV, Matthew 19:3-9)

The word translated in the passage above as "sexual immorality" was *porneia* in the original Greek Bible text. It means illicit sexual intercourse, including adultery, incest, etc.

As quoted in Matthew, sexual immorality by one partner is sufficient reason for divorce, but it does not require divorce. In many cases the husband and wife can be reconciled even after adultery. As quoted in Mark and Luke (Mark 10:11-12, Luke 16:18), Jesus did not mention sexual immorality as grounds for divorce.

No other grounds for divorce are mentioned in the New Testament. The New Testament teaches strongly that marriage should be a lifelong commitment. Things such as lack of commitment, different values/beliefs, in-law problems, stress, incompatibility, lack of concern/consideration, sexual problems, growing apart, illness, incapacity, boredom, sexual desires, desire for happiness or other reasons are not Biblical grounds for divorce.

The Apostle Paul echoed Jesus' sentiment:

Now, for those who are married I have a command, not just a suggestion. And it is not a command from me, for this is what the Lord himself has said: A wife must not leave her husband. But if she is separated from him, let her remain single or else go back to him. And the husband must not divorce his wife. (TLB, 1 Corinthians 7:10-11)

### **Lasting Damage of Divorce**

Divorce is a genuine tragedy. It often leaves the marriage partners embittered, disillusioned and financially poorer. It robs the children of the love and security of a healthy family and denies them a good role model for their own future marriages.

Children from families where there is conflict and/or divorce are more prone to anxiety, poor school performance, drug abuse and delinquent behavior. These problems can persist into adulthood.

Adult children of divorced parents tend to have lower educational attainment, lower income, more children out of wedlock, higher rates of divorce themselves, and a lower sense of well-being.<sup>4, 5</sup>

### **Other Reasons for Divorce**

Unfortunately, some marriages cannot be saved. A viable marriage is a contract of mutual support, love and respect:

However, each one of you also must love his wife as he loves himself, and the wife must respect her husband. (NIV, Ephesians 5:33)

If anyone does not provide for his relatives, and especially for his immediate family, he has denied the faith and is worse than an unbeliever. (NIV, 1 Timothy 5:8)

If an unbeliever abandons the marriage, the other partner is freed from the marriage bond (1 Corinthians 7:15).

The Bible does not have a specific teaching about other intolerable situations. But if one partner seriously violates the marriage contract, as by physical/emotional/sexual abuse, illegal activity, financial irresponsibility, etc., the marriage contract has been unilaterally broken.

The other partner must take whatever actions are necessary to escape from the situation and to protect self and children.

Reconciliation is preferable, but if that is not possible, different church denominations have different procedures for formally ending the marriage.

### **What Is a Marriage?**

Marriage traditions in Biblical times were very different from today. Marriage was neither a religious nor a civil matter, and the couple was considered married when they were betrothed.

However, once married, the laws and customs of the time strongly prohibited adultery and provided physical and financial protections for the spouses and their children (Exodus 20:14, Leviticus 18:20, 20:10 Deuteronomy 25:5-6, Proverbs 22:6, Malachi 2:13-16, Matthew 5:32, Mark 10:2-12, Romans 7:2, Hebrews 13:4, Ephesians 5:22-25, 6:4, 1 Timothy 5:8).

In today's world, it is the legal marriage that provides similar protections.

Merely having sex or living together does not provide the legal protections for spouses and children that the Biblical model of marriage provided.

### **Should I Be Married in a Church?**

There is no requirement in the Bible to marry in a church ceremony or to be married by a minister or priest. However, some churches do not accept civil weddings as valid.

### **Can I Marry Someone of a Different Race?**

Yes. The Bible does not oppose or prohibit interracial marriages.

### **I Had Sex with My Boyfriend/Girlfriend/Fiancé Before Marriage; Can We Still Get Married?**

Yes, there is nothing in the Bible which would prohibit marriage. In fact, it is recommended by one Old Testament passage (Exodus 22:16).

### **What Does the Bible Say About Polygamy or Bigamy - Having More Than One Wife or Husband?**

There is no specific teaching about polygamy or bigamy in the Bible.

Levirate marriage was practiced in Old Testament times. If a man died leaving no male heir, his brother was expected to marry his widow and produce children (Deuteronomy 25:5-10).

This, and other forms of polygamy, were acceptable in Biblical times, although only wealthy men could afford multiple wives.

King Solomon was the most notable polygamist with his 700 wives and 300 concubines (1 Kings 11:3-4).

Most Christian churches have consistently opposed polygamy as a perversion of God's plan for marriage (Genesis 2:18-24, Matthew 19:4-6, 1 Corinthians 6:16).

Polygamists were prohibited from holding church offices (1 Timothy 3:2, 3:12).

## **Is it Okay For a Couple to Be Separated but Still Legally Married?**

The Bible does not say anything specific about this situation.

In Biblical times, couples were temporarily apart due to military service (2 Samuel 11:6-11) or family visits (Luke 1:39-40, 1:56).

Jesus' apostles were likely away from their wives for at least part of the time they were serving Jesus (1 Corinthians 9:5, Mark 6:6-10).

Similarly couples of today may have to be temporarily apart because of family situations, jobs or military service.

However, if a couple separates because of marital problems, they are no longer living according to the Biblical model of marriage (Genesis 2:24, Matthew 19:4-6, 1 Corinthians 7:3-5, 7:10-11, Ephesians 5:33).

## **Can I Remarry My Ex-spouse?**

Two Old Testament passages (Deuteronomy 24:1-4, Jeremiah 3:1) prohibit a man from remarrying his former wife *if she has been married to another man since the divorce*. However, Christians are not bound by the Old Testament Law

The New Testament does not have a specific teaching on this topic. However, if ex-spouses can be reconciled, remarriage seems to be in accordance with the spirit of New Testament teachings (Mark 10:2-12, 1 Corinthians 7:10-11), particularly if neither partner has remarried since the divorce.

## **I Remarried After Divorce.**

### **Should I Divorce or Separate from My New Spouse?**

### **Should I Go Back to My First Spouse?**

The Bible does not have a specific teaching on this subject. At first glance that may seem to be what the apostle Paul is saying in this passage:

To the married I give this command—not I but the Lord—that the wife should not separate from her husband (but if she does separate, let her remain unmarried or else be reconciled to her husband), and that the husband should not divorce his wife. (NRSV, 1 Corinthians 7:10–11)

However, Paul was writing about the case where a couple has separated but have not divorced and remarried.

The additional sin of another divorce and the emotional pain caused to the current spouse and others involved would violate other Bible principles. In most cases, the first marriage could not be restored.

When these factors are considered, intentionally breaking up a second marriage seems like an unworkable and unwise choice.

### **Can I Be Forgiven If I Divorced and Remarried?**

Yes. The Bible says all sins will be forgiven if a person repents (turns away from sin) and also forgives other people.

## **Does the Bible Say I Cannot Receive Communion in Church If I Remarried After Divorce?**

No. That is a rule in some churches, but the only teaching about Communion in the Bible is general in nature (1 Corinthians 11:26-28).

## **Does the Bible Say I Should Separate from My Non-Christian Wife/Husband?**

No. Here is what the apostle Paul wrote: (NRSV, 1 Corinthians 7:12-14)

To the rest I say — I and not the Lord\* — that if any believer has a wife who is an unbeliever, and she consents to live with him, he should not divorce her.

And if any woman has a husband who is an unbeliever, and he consents to live with her, she should not divorce him.

For the unbelieving husband is made holy through his wife, and the unbelieving wife is made holy through her husband.

Otherwise, your children would be unclean\*\*, but as it is, they are holy.

*\* Do take note of this qualification by Paul. It not something he received from the Lord but is his own 'considered wisdom'. It therefore cannot be treated as 'canonical', more a matter of individual conscience before God, but is a practical response to what become mixed faith marriage after one partner converts to Christianity.*

*\*\* The choice of the word 'unclean' is of significance and perhaps hints at existing prejudices shown in the Christian community of the time towards children born of both Christian and Pagan parentages. The whole passage is a neat theological argument presented by Paul to those who believe mixed marriages were a matter of grave concern, that the faith of one Christian partner was sufficient to make the marriage 'holy and acceptable' in God's eyes, and therefore any children that resulted from that union.* +Ian



## **BIBLE VERSES ABOUT MARRIAGE AND DIVORCE**

(source: kingjamesbibleonline.org)

**Matthew 19:9** - And I say unto you, Whosoever shall put away his wife, except it be for fornication, and shall marry another, committeth adultery: and whoso marrieth her which is put away doth commit adultery.

**Mark 10:9** - What therefore God hath joined together, let not man put asunder.

**Luke 16:18** - Whosoever putteth away his wife, and marrieth another, committeth adultery: and whosoever marrieth her that is put away from her husband committeth adultery.

**1 Corinthians 7:15** - But if the unbelieving depart, let him depart. A brother or a sister is not under bondage in such cases: but God hath called us to peace.

**Matthew 19:4-6** - And he answered and said unto them, Have ye not read, that he which made them at the beginning made them male and female,

**1 Corinthians 7:1-40** - Now concerning the things whereof ye wrote unto me: It is good for a man not to touch a woman. (*Read More...*)

**1 Corinthians 7:39** - The wife is bound by the law as long as her husband liveth; but if her husband be dead, she is at liberty to be married to whom she will; only in the Lord.

**Mark 10:12** - And if a woman shall put away her husband, and be married to another, she committeth adultery.

**Genesis 2:24** - Therefore shall a man leave his father and his mother, and shall cleave unto his wife: and they shall be one flesh.

**Matthew 19:8** - He saith unto them, Moses because of the hardness of your hearts suffered you to put away your wives: but from the beginning it was not so.

**Deuteronomy 24:1-4** - When a man hath taken a wife, and married her, and it come to pass that she find no favour in his eyes, because he hath found some uncleanness in her: then let him write her a bill of divorcement, and give it in her hand, and send her out of his house.

**Matthew 5:32** - But I say unto you, That whosoever shall put away his wife, saving for the cause of fornication, causeth her to commit adultery: and whosoever shall marry her that is divorced committeth adultery.

**1 Corinthians 7:12-15** - But to the rest speak I, not the Lord: If any brother hath a wife that believeth not, and she be pleased to dwell with him, let him not put her away.

**Ephesians 5:33** - Nevertheless let every one of you in particular so love his wife even as himself; and the wife see that she reverence her husband.

**Proverbs 18:22** - Whoso findeth a wife findeth a good thing, and obtaineth favour of the LORD.

**Matthew 19:6** - Wherefore they are no more twain, but one flesh. What therefore God hath joined together, let not man put asunder.

**1 Peter 3:7** - Likewise, ye husbands, dwell with them according to knowledge, giving honour unto the wife, as unto the weaker vessel, and as being heirs together of the grace of life; that your prayers be not hindered.

**Malachi 2:16** - For the LORD, the God of Israel, saith that he hateth putting away: for one covereth violence with his garment, saith the LORD of hosts: therefore take heed to your spirit, that ye deal not treacherously.

**Matthew 5:31-32** - It hath been said, Whosoever shall put away his wife, let him give her a writing of divorcement:

**Ephesians 5:22-33** - Wives, submit yourselves unto your own husbands, as unto the Lord.

**Matthew 19:3-12** - The Pharisees also came unto him, tempting him, and saying unto him, Is it lawful for a man to put away his wife for every cause?

**Mark 10:11-12** - And he saith unto them, Whosoever shall put away his wife, and marry another, committeth adultery against her.

**2 Corinthians 6:14** - Be ye not unequally yoked together with unbelievers: for what fellowship hath righteousness with unrighteousness? and what communion hath light with darkness?

**The Parable of the talents - St Matthew 25: 14-30** +David, OSJ (Wales)

(Where Jesus is speaking to his Disciples)

Have you ever thought how often there is a bit of a sting in the tail of the parables that Jesus tells?

There certainly is one here! In St Matthew Chapter 25:14-30.

The story is familiar to us all: the man going on a journey, leaving his property with three of his servants. Two of them work hard and double their money. The third panics and hides his share to keep it safe. When their master returns, he is impressed and congratulates the first two but is not happy with the third. Look at the extent of his unhappiness: he takes away what he had received and throws him out! Surely, some people would think, “that is a bit of an over-reaction”. I’m sure the people who were listening to Jesus were not expecting that.

Have you ever heard the expression ‘use it or lose it’?

It is often used to describe the best way to offset the problems that come with ageing. It also refers to something that you must use by a specific date or you lose the opportunity or right to have it.

In some fields of work, where there is flexibility about when holidays are taken, an employer might implement a policy that if you do not take your annual leave entitlement by the end of the year, you lose the days you have not taken.

One might say that the parable Jesus told is an early example of the 'use it or lose it' principle.

The idea in the parable is one which many churches have used in fund-raising. You may have done it in the past. The idea is quite simple. You give those who want to take part an amount of money. Let us say £5, which is in line with the five talents of the parable. Those receiving the money would use it in some way to raise money for their church. I confess I never became involved, I never had ideas of what I could do to raise money. Perhaps I am rather like the third servant, although I would not bury the money. Fortunately, so far as I am aware, no church trying this scheme has ever adopted the 'cast into outer darkness' idea if a person did not make money.

Let us return to the parable. The number of servants in today's story isn't important, but the fact that the master entrusts them with his enormous wealth is important. All that the master owns is in their hands, but each in a different amount; and that matches our experience, doesn't it? The good things of this earth – the wealth, the power, the ease and comfort – are distributed widely and unevenly.

But that is not what this parable is about when it speaks of coins or, in the more traditional translations, 'talents'.

According to some authorities, a talent was a measure of silver equal to about 15 years of income for a common worker of the land or a carpenter in a workshop. Rather, it is about the unique wealth that God distributes to his chosen people, to his servants – to us. It is the wealth of the Torah as the Jews understood it, the riches of the gospel as we understand it. God has given to each of us a measure of all that he has. Some have more, some less; but each has more than enough – an incredible abundance, in fact.

The first servant receives five talents. In today's terms, that would be 75 years of labour. The third servant, the one-talent person, the person we often think of as having very little – but still having something – had the equivalent of 15 years of work-free living given to him. Each of us has more than enough given to us by God: more than enough faith, more than enough love, and more than enough forgiveness.

We have been given everything; we have been given the gospel of God's grace and mercy, of his healing purpose, of his divine power, each according to what God knows we can do with it. God knows our abilities – just as the parable states that the master knew his servants' abilities – and God knows that even the least well-endowed is endowed with an incredible amount.

And then what happens?

As soon as the master was gone, the servants take action. The first two immediately invest the money – they spend it, in other words – in the hope of receiving even more than they first had.

They take a chance and engage in some sort of venture, a venture in which – as we all know from the laws of business and high finance – there is always a chance of losing everything.

They don't delay about this, they act immediately; as does the third servant, the one who has been given over 6000 denarii. He takes his precious treasure and does what the rules of the day suggest he should do – that he ought to do. He carefully buries it, keeping it safe until the day of his master's return. He does the equivalent of putting it under the mattress, rather than taking the risk of putting it into some highly speculative stock-market investment.

What's so wrong with being cautious?

Discretion and deliberateness are virtues, not vices. I am sure we have all heard the saying 'discretion is the better part of valour', an expression that probably came originally from Shakespeare.

As we find out when the master returns and each servant is asked to give an accounting for what has been entrusted to him, the third servant regards his master as a harsh man – not one who would take kindly to any form of loss – so he deems it better to preserve his own safety and security by keeping the money safe rather than risk everything by risking the loss of the money. It was an accepted financial practice in the day of Jesus to safeguard precious things by burying them – hidden treasure like that of pirates, kept safe until the day it is needed. The one-talent servant does nothing unusual by burying the money. He shows only what can be regarded as a high degree of caution. Indeed, we may think that he is too cautious; but we can't really fault him – or can we?

The twist or surprise, the part of the parable that confounded the original hearers of the tale, is the fault that the master finds with the one-talent person. Read again how the parable ends (verses 24 to 30)....

And this is the problem. Why is God so good to those who double what he has given to them, and so mean to those who simply keep what he has given them safe for his return? What has gone wrong?

It begins in the attitude of the third servant. "Sir, I know that you are hard to get along with. You harvest where you do not plant and gather crops where you haven't scattered seed. I was frightened." The servant was afraid and, because of his fear, nothing was produced for the master. The servant was entrusted with substantial – if not astonishing – wealth and did nothing with it.

He was afraid.

The late Nelson Mandela, in his Inaugural Speech in 1994, used the following quote about fear; about the kind of fear that the one-talent servant seemed to have. It is the kind of fear that keeps us from risking the treasure God has given us, from sharing the gospel with deeds of love, of power, and of commitment.

He quotes Marianne Williamson, an American spiritual teacher and author.

"Our deepest fear is not that we are inadequate. Our deepest fear is that we are powerful beyond measure. It is our light, not our darkness, that most frightens us. We ask ourselves, who am I to be brilliant, gorgeous, talented and fabulous?



Actually, who are you not to be? You are a child of God. Your playing small doesn't serve the world. There's nothing enlightened about shrinking so that other people won't feel insecure around you. We were born to make manifest the glory of God that is within us. It's not just in some of us, it's in everyone. And as we let our light shine, we unconsciously give other people permission to do the same. As we are liberated from our own fear, our presence automatically liberates others."

The fear that Mandella – or Williamson, if you will – is talking about may help us understand the slave who hid the talent in the ground. Psychologists understand the dynamics of fear, fear of failure and fear of success. The third servant's fear and Mandella's intuition of fear are, however, deeper than those psychological dynamics.

It is profoundly spiritual in character. His fear is rooted in the cosmic conflict of good and evil. It is the human propensity for sin in action. It is a refusal to act, to share ourselves and our lives (ie all our energy, stamina, health, strength, emotional well-being, creativity, knowledge, wisdom, ability, gifts, graces, and even all our material possessions) in response to, and in accordance with, God's gracious kingdom-creating, community-building presence.

This refusal to act is the spiritual decision to NOT let that mind be in us that is in Christ Jesus. It is the decision to NOT have our lives disrupted by discipleship, by obedience; by becoming like Francis and Theresa, like Schweitzer and Ghandi, like Bonhoeffer and King.

What frightens us is the thought of all that will be required of us if we dare to be faithful.

You know how it works, the "I won't go to the meeting so they can't ask me to do anything" mentality.

We have been given so much. God has given each of us riches beyond measure. Even to the least of us, he has given more than enough.

We are beautiful, we are gifted, we are in communion with the power that made the universe. We have the message and we have the ability that we need to do all that is asked of us. What goes wrong is attitude – fear – and it leads to evil.

Because we believe in a God of justice, a God who judges rightly, it leads to a bad end for the cautious, the fearful servant, the servant who did not dare to act.

You might ask, what would have happened if there had been a fourth servant in this parable, one who had received one, or five, or ten talents and gone out and invested it – and lost it?

What would the master have said then?

What judgement would he make upon his careless servant?

I suggest the master would have commended him for trying, that he would have forgiven him for making a mistake, that he would have smiled upon him for his sincere attempt to do what was right and good with what he had been entrusted.

But there is no need for a fourth servant in this parable for us to understand it; because if we use what God has given us, it can do nothing else but multiply. It is only when we do not use what God has given us, but keep it hidden away inside our hearts where no-one can see it – where no-one can benefit from it – that there is a problem.

I would like to conclude with another scripture reading – also from Matthew's gospel – in the 28th chapter, verses 18 to 20: the last words that Jesus spoke to his disciples before ascending into heaven or, in the words of today's parable of the three servants, before going away on a long journey. Jesus came to his disciples and said:

"All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Go to the people of every nation and make them my disciples. Baptize them in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, and teach them to do everything I have commanded you. And lo, I will be with you always, even until the end of the world."

We have been entrusted with all that we need to accomplish God's will. We have been given great riches – resources greater than we can possibly need – so that we can produce fruit pleasing to God. God will not judge us for trying and failing to produce that fruit, he will only judge us if we do not try. Amen

✝David .

## **Know the kingdom of God is at hand Luke 21:25-36**

Grace and peace in our Lord and Saviour, Jesus Christ.

We must understand the Advent season as a parallel to Lent. Which means, a season of reflection, prayer and repentance before the great victory of the Lord. For this reason, some churches use purple paraments (an interesting word) on the altar, because purple symbolises the royalty of our Lord and His dignity in His humiliation, which even the Roman soldiers recognised when they threw a scarlet cloak on him.

As the Lord was humiliated in Holy Week, his state of humiliation began with his birth in the manger in Bethlehem.

But, although in Holy Week we focus on the passion of the Lord and His victory on the cross, in this season our view is broader. We do not only contemplate His humiliation and His resurrection on the third day, also the prophecy of the final judgment. That final day for us will be the fulfilment of the promise of eternal life. So as in most churches, like others, we use the shade of blue of the sky minutes before sunrise as the colour of hope.

Therefore, in all the readings for today, we again touch on the subject of the Lord's second coming in glory. The psalm (Psalm 50: 1-15) shows how the greatness and solemnity of divine judgment should instruct men in true worship and encourage them to true godliness. External worship is an expression of the faith of the heart. All Christians will avoid and abhor hypocrisy in all its forms and will continually watch over their hearts, so that all their worship of God will be the outpouring of a heart grateful for his favour and love in Jesus Christ.

The prophet Malachi lived in the days of Nehemiah. The book of Nehemiah is a historical narrative, while Malachi contains prophecies of redemption and judgment.

In the first two chapters of his book, Malachi rebukes the people of Israel for their indifference and unfaithfulness towards God and his covenant with them.

The last two chapters warn that God's day of judgment will come, but before the end times begin, God will send someone like the prophet Elijah to call the people back to God.

This is a prophecy of John the Baptist, as well as the coming of the Messiah, Jesus

(Malachi 4: 1-6).

Now, the text of our Gospel for today: "Then there will be signs in the sun, in the moon and in the stars; and on earth, anguish of nations in confusion; roaring the sea and waves; men fainting because of the fear and expectation of things to come upon the earth; for the powers of heaven will be shaken. And then they will see the Son of Man coming in a cloud with power and great glory. "

True, the anguish of nations in confusion describes our world today. However, amid the fear of non-believers, the attitude of the faithful is like this:

"And when these things begin to happen, stand up and lift your heads, because your redemption is near."

And he told them a parable: "Look at the fig tree and all the trees: when they sprout, seeing it, you know for yourselves that summer is near."

And the Lord gives us this promise, "Heaven and earth will pass away, but my words will not pass away," an echo of Psalm 46.

But, mind you, our Lord also says, "Truly I say to you, this generation will not pass away until all this happens." The Word of God will last forever, but the unbelief of the masses to the end of the world. Because the phrase translated "this generation" does not mean a group living at the same time, but men very similar to each other in character. Then, until the second coming of the Lord in glory, the majority of the human series will not believe and will be frightened by the signs that for us indicate that our salvation is near. According to the Lord's prophecy in Luke, the end times began with the destruction of the Temple in Jerusalem, but it will not end until His second coming.

In his epistle (Romans 15: 4-13), St. Paul says that the events recorded in Scripture are designed for our instruction and therefore can easily be applied in their fulfilment.

For all things written beforehand, in ancient times, were written for our instruction, so that through patience and the comfort of the Scriptures we may have hope.

The books that were known under the collective title "The Scriptures" were not composed by their authors to serve only their own contemporaries, but the Holy Spirit had in mind the conditions of all time until the end of time. The Bible, therefore, is the teacher, the instructor of the Church after Christ as well as before Christ. So such an application of Scripture, as the apostle did here, is completely in accord with the purpose of the holy Book; it should serve to strengthen Christians in their faith.

Through the patience and comfort that Scripture produces and works in us, let us have and firmly hold the hope of future glory.

If we use the Scriptures regularly and properly, we draw from them day by day more strength, comfort, courage and confidence, and thus we always keep before our eyes the end of our faith, the salvation of our souls.

May the hope and peace that pass all understanding be with you.

Amen.

+David OSJ (Wales)

-oOo-

### A Benedictine Prayer.

Grant O lord

That none may love thee less this day because of me;

That never a word or act of mine

May turn one soul from thee;

And ever daring, yet one more grace I thee implore

That many souls this day

Because of me, may love thee more.

## **Advent Prayers.**

Fr. David Startup, OSJ (UK)

Dear Lord,

We thank you so much for the hope with which you have filled our lives. We give thanks that in the coming of Jesus you have given us assurance of your sovereign control of all things. On this Advent Sunday we remember the coming of Jesus to be Saviour of the world.

Thank you for the promise of his coming again as Lord of All.

While we are patiently waiting we have many times of doubt and despair - but your message renews our faith - and hope.

We know Lord that we, as your disciples, can live each day in the knowledge that you hold all things, including ourselves, in your love and care for us.

### ***Lord in your mercy – Hear our prayer***

Lord we thank you that we live in a land of freedom, unlike some. We live in a land of plenty, unlike many others.

We do not have to risk our lives to be free and safe - or starve for days on end.



Help us Lord in understanding how to deal with those coming into this country by dangerous means to gain safety, freedom and a better life. Please help us to practice your righteousness with them.

***Lord in your mercy – Hear our prayer***

Lord, the Bible tells us that perfect love casts out all fear, and our own fears and worries tell us that your love is not yet perfected within us.

We continue to be fearful of the damage and death to humankind caused by Covid 19 and implore you to eradicate this virus and continue to help specialists reduce its power.

We thank you for all those battling against it -and helping those suffering from it and many other diseases that challenge mankind.

Help us to discard our own selfish needs and to continue practising the personal safeguards we have been taught.

Help us not let our own fears divide us from those in need, nor deny your love.

Help us examine ourselves and look to you so that we may improve our own righteousness.

Set us free to serve you faithfully and willingly, and to offer others that saving love, that you have given us so freely.

***Lord in your mercy – Hear our prayer***

Lord we pray for our Queen Elizabeth and her family, that you may keep her strong, give her peace and joy – and relief and a rest from family politics.

Let her family learn from her own example we pray.

Father we pray for Governments and Leaders all around the world who could make such a difference to global unity if they were more Jesus - like.

We pray for nations whose people are filled with hatred and aggression towards each other, for communities split by distrust and injustice. Bring to them Lord a deeper desire for true reconciliation.

We pray particularly at this time for the peoples of Afghanistan.

***Lord, in your mercy, hear our Prayer***

We bring to your attention Lord those who are ill and ask you to heal them in you own way and in your own time.

Especially (add the names of those you know of).

Strengthen those who care for them.

We also remember those who have died recently and ask you to comfort those bereaved.

We remember especially at this time....

We love you Lord and we commit ourselves to keep our eyes focussed on Jesus, our ears open to your word, our lives open to your spirit and our hearts open to your love.

Amen.

### **OSJ (UK): Website Visitor Information:**

Total page hits from 1st January 2021 to 30th October 2021 are as follows:

January	17,267	average - 557 per day
February	17,314	average - 558 per day
March	30,217	average - 975 per day
April	45,111	average - 1,455 per day
May	56,415	average - 1,820 per day
June	44,393	average - 1,478 per day
July	47,566	average - 1,534 per day
August	54,160	average - 1,747 per day
September	66,984	average - 2,166 per day
October	78,366	average - 2,611 per day
November	66,780	average - 2,226 per day

Total visitor hits since 03/09/2013 from 242 countries recorded worldwide

Counter 1: 4,454,893 visitors    Counter 2: 5,147,710 visitors

(We run two counters for comparison purposes as they record hits differently.

We publish the lower figures as a matter of course on a regular basis but show the higher figures on this occasion to show that there are statistical discrepancies.)

### **Emergency Measures, OSJ (UK):**

It has been decided that given the protracted 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).

Suggested forms of approved service are available (with instructions) to download from our website downloads page:

1. Self-administered Communion

2. Last Rites (Emergency Measures)

Also to be noted, regular 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 (UK) 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: St Leonard's will remain closed until restrictions are fully lifted.

3rd January, 2021	17th January, 2021
7th February, 2021	21st February, 2021
7th March, 2021	21st March, 2021
4th April, 2021	18th April, 2021
2nd May, 2021	16th May, 2021
6th June, 2021	20th June, 2021
4th July, 2021	18th July, 2021
1st August, 2021	15th August, 2021
5th September, 2021	19th September, 2021
3rd October, 2021	17th October, 2021
7th November, 2021	21st November, 2021
5th December, 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.