



The Order of St James (UK) Newsletter

October 2021

www.orderofstjames.info



I was asked to write a lecture for Cambridge on the Skills Shortage. I offer a synopsis [much truncated] for the October Newsletter.

Fr. Ed Elsey, OSJ (Wales)

Having heard the various countries football teams and fans attempting to sing with any sense of accuracy their national anthems and occasional bursts of football chants and songs, I have no hesitation in being reassured that there is a skills shortage. A music teacher for the first 12 years of my teaching career, teaching children the old national songs - remember the tatty school copies of the New National Folk Song book, anybody? - and a choirmaster teaching excellence of church music, sadly not too rare to discover in those days but all too scarce at the moment, I know all about musical skill and the divine gift of the boy treble voice. Adults too, engaging in sight-read music professionally sung and conveying so much joy to other.

Skills have always been 'sought' but never as 'short' as now, it seems. They can be taught or caught, or inherited for the more fortunate. We glory in examples of those who understand excellence and practice skills in so many ways.

Two disaffected and fairly unmotivated boys in an East London school were asked, in a 'sort of casual way', for it was not a studied instruction area in those days in the old curriculum, what they thought they might do with their lives. One was good at music but little else and the other was good with his hands but overweight and much teased. He replied 'become a plumber' to great laughter. The other replied: 'be a teacher' which was what his parents had instilled in him as a virtuous professional path ahead. Again guffaws of laughter. I was not the most motivated student in those London days.

My friend took up plumbing in central London and was an early millionaire. I am here, following faith and writing to inspire others after a lifetime of teaching and work in the Church. Laughter of teachers and fellow pupils can now subside, quickly.

The boldness required by new research and the needs of the world is demonstrated by a hitherto unknown couple Dr. Ugur Sahin the CEO and Dr. Özlem Türeci the chief medical officer of BioNTech, the company that created the vaccine in partnership with Pfizer and who launched out with amazing alacrity, to provide vaccination for a world in crisis.

The Church has always been reticent - or just slow - to approve new and revolutionary science, especially in the realms of genetics and artificial 'tampering' as it views it, with 'the creation God authorized initiated and 'designed'.

Eventually, when it sees it is successful for the furtherance of health of mankind and is safely guided and controlled, it gives its - usually too late in my view - approval. Often Luddite, as in the case of recognition of LGBTQ attitudes and gender re-orientation, as to denominational jealousies and resentments.

One Church, One Faith, One Lord, as a great hymn puts it, is still far away for many church communities.

On July 25, 1978, Louise Joy Brown, the world's first baby to be conceived via in vitro fertilization (IVF) is born at Oldham and District General Hospital in Manchester, England, to parents Lesley and Peter Brown. Voices were raised on 'the tampering'. Letters to The Times, no less. But IVF gave birthless couples the happiness and, appropriately with the baby's middle name, the JOY of family life, they deserved as well as those who found it easier, so many of whom lacked the love which should always attend birth. Good genes are nice: joy is better.

Rowan Williams, former visionary Archbishop of Canterbury and since a writer in great depth on all aspects of inner faith, describes the pilgrim journey not as finding something ahead of us to which we strain, but a journey to where we are, now and the opportunities presenting themselves to us, at this present time and once found, to move forward and use them in God's service. I really tune in to that idea.

Opportunities abound. People abound. Fitting the first to the second is a challenge to be reckoned with.

See the new-fangled 'debut' Olympic sports added this year in Japan, being those we see kids in the streets 'performing' and are now winning golds. Not, as one contestant opined, really sports as no real rules but success, joy and fulfilment. But reflecting the new skills of a new generation. Our British haul of medals reflected that. See the unbridled pleasure on the faces of the athletes, competing in empty stadia but knowing their loved ones watched at home and yelled with delight at their successes...and mourned with their failures. Unhugged.

My misgivings about schools and school-teachers plus educational administrators are raised yet again, especially after last year's fiasco of the examination system and this year's not much better. It was different. Now it has to change. No tears for Williamson. Teaching unions often seem to depict the entire trade as being inept and unwilling to work at anything, let alone helping to solve a crisis. Luddite behavior can hold so much back in an eager and fast moving world.

Entrepreneurs are essential and vitally needed to guide the young into what to do - with the proviso that future trends are not easy to forecast. I well recall in the Bristol area going out with my careers teaching colleagues to seek openings for our more gifted youngsters but also to find satisfying job opportunities for those without much vision or skill, so they, too, could be fulfilled and feel useful in their world - and ours. Praise to all employers who offer openings. Firms advertising their lists of vacancies on public media programmes. Commendable.

We are probably at the most significant and extraordinary junction of human development in the Western world. It has been described as being on the same level as the Industrial Revolution.

The fascinating paradox of Tony Blair's fixation on providing university places for at least 50% of the young generation [and 'on the other shelf', Euan Blair's company being worth £147 million]. Now it is suggested there are too many university placings and robust and real apprenticeships should come to the fore for large numbers of pupils for whom they might be more appropriate.

The essential factor is pay. When we were growing up, plumbers were paid an average wage. Suddenly they became scarce and the spondulicks flooded into their pockets.

Money is underestimated as being the measuring stick of human requirements - for Joe Schmo wants to be prosperous and independent. Challenge him to work out which skills are needed and he will make a good fist of it. Don't bother to ask academic parties for they will quickly become confused and retreat to blather!

Arab son writes to his father:

Honoured Father, London is wonderful, the people are really nice and I do like it here, but Dad, I am a little ashamed arriving at my college in my pure-gold Ferrari 599GTB, when all my teachers, and many fellow students, travel by train. Your son, Nasser

Next day, Nasser gets a reply to his e-mail.

My dear loving son, 20 million US Dollars have just been transferred to your account. Please stop embarrassing us. Go and buy yourself a train too. Love, Your Dad, Ahmed

Benjamin Gunther discusses all this in his succinct paperback: The Cultural Aspects of Mint Recruitment: How to Overcome the Skills Shortage by Understanding Graduates' Needs. Likewise Dychtwald and Erickson in their longer and more tortuous: Workforce Crisis: How to Beat the Coming Shortage of Skills And Talent

In the Middle Ages people were divided into groups based on what skills they had, skills such as are listed in historic annals:

carpenter

cook

doctor

dyer - someone who coloured wool

friar - a religious minister

knight

lawyer

merchant - someone who sold goods such as wine or cloth

miller - made flour from corn

monk

nun

ploughman - ploughed the fields for a living

priest

prioress

reeve - supervised work done by peasants

sailor

soldier

squire - local land owner who would be wealthy

weaver

Today, we often look at society in terms of wealth (rich and poor) or class (upper, middle, working). Medieval writers divided society into 'those who fight', 'those who pray' and 'those who work', which would you put in each category?

Do you know what are the ten most unusual occupations in the world today according to a recent survey?

10) Professional sleeper:

A hotel in Finland hired a member of staff as a 'professional sleeper' to test the comfort of their beds. The individual sleeps in a different one of the hotel beds each night and writes a review about her satisfaction with each one.

9) Drying paint watcher:

No, this isn't a joke. Someone actually earns a living watching paint

dry. A man in the UK currently has the job and he spends his days painting sheets of cardboard to test how long new paint mixes take to dry and watching for changes in color and texture.

8) Full-time Netflix viewer:

Imagine being paid to watch TV all day! Well for one lucky employee this dream has become a reality. Netflix has hired someone to watch all of their content before it is available to the public and their role is to review and assign each program its correct tag, which helps us viewers find exactly what we're after, whether it's a romantic crime movie based on classic literature or witty talking-animal TV show.

7) Train Pusher:

If you think the London Underground is bad, you should see the trains in Japan. 'Oshiyas' are hired to help cram as many people onto a train as possible by pushing them from the outside until the doors will close.

6) Professional Mourner:

It is a tradition in South East Asia that a loud funeral will assist the dead as they travel to the afterlife, so professional mourners are hired to cry and weep loudly throughout the service.

5) Snake Milker:

Not for the light-hearted. The job of a snake milker is to collect the venom of poisonous snakes in jars for use in anti-venoms and other medication. Thank god someone's brave enough!

4) Dog food taster:

The dog food tester's job is to taste new dog food products, including bones, tinned meat, and biscuits. They do this to test for flavor and texture in comparison to rival dog food brands and human food.

Hmm...tasty?

3) Odour Judge:

In order to test the effectiveness of new products, 'odour judges' are hired to smell volunteers' breath, feet, and armpits. They make sure their judgment is accurate, the members of staff have their sense of smell tested monthly. Let's hope those products are doing the trick, for the judges' sake!

2) Marmite Taster:

They say you love it or hate it and in the case of St John Skelton, he really takes his appreciation for it to another level. As part of a team of marmite tasters, he is responsible for checking each batch of Marmite is the correct texture, consistency, and flavor. In the 30 years

he has been working there, he has eaten around 3,000 jars of the stuff!

1) Scuba Diving Pizza Delivery Man:

If the fact that there's an underwater hotel in Florida isn't bizarre enough, to add on to that, they have a scuba diving pizza delivery man who supplies them with pizza by carrying them through the sea in a watertight case. What service!

I would add the magnet fishermen of the Scottish canals and a dozen other hobbies which keep people of both genders out of the tedium of the home routine, get them out into the open air and stimulate interest, collecting, group activity, 'pal-dom' and enthusiasm. For me it is stamps and coin collecting, music and theology - a mixed blessing, in more ways than one.

A recent Radio 4 programme series A SHOW OF HANDS describes the blacksmith's hands and his strike rate and the craftsmanship he produced, day by day. blacksmith Alex Pole, photographer Tim Booth and harpist Catrin Finch reflect on the hands' role in craft and creativity.

We point, punch, tweak and text. We ball our fists, spread our palms, give someone the thumbs up and close our hands in prayer. human hands and the way we use them for manipulation, creativity, gesture, communication and touch.

For large numbers of the population, lockdown has provided rich resource for hobbies and acquisition of new skills. New home occupations, alongside working at home. Without the stress of travelling to and from work, we read that painting, sculpting, construction, writing - it is said there is a novel inside each one of us waiting to be written down - and relaxation with exercise is making a more enriched and fit nation of us. And for many homes these things are being done as a family. Games too and old fashioned fun pursuits.

Music has featured as a hobby and developing into a skill. I loved the story of Pablo Casals telling the talented and very skilled cellist Yo Yo Ma - 'don't forget to play baseball' - meaning 'don't spend all your time on music.' Skill needs refreshment and space and variety. Lockdown relaxation has brought back so much into people's lives so often lost. A friend of mine has brought 'former instrument players' who had consigned their instruments to a cupboard to dust them down, tune them and play them again. He calls it 'The Dusties' Orchestra. There is one in Shrewsbury called, I think, The Terribly Awful Orchestra.

But people unfulfilled suddenly find a slot that fits them - and they the slot.

This brings us to A World of STEM subjects. It seems there are new names and acronyms for everything - keeping us on our toes. STEM stands for Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics.

Existing skills notified to new and modern use for a bustling busy and imaginative new generation of students. There are jobs available nationally, but using newly adjusted skills. Stem and creative themes and subjects. Problem solving, analytical thinking, What do employers really need. Where is wealth creation in the light of goods and services compared with human needs? When we talk about STEM skills, we're talking about the individual skills needed to do science, mathematics, and engineering, and those needed to use technology effectively. For example, in science you learn ways to increase or reduce friction on a surface to make objects moving across that surface move faster or slower. You use technology to simulate experiments that might involve things that are too large or too small to see easily, or that are too dangerous to do in a classroom. Engineering principles are used when you design, build, and test models, like the ones needed to understand how energy is transferred. Finally, you use math skills to analyze and draw conclusions from experiments.

STEM problems require you to quickly work to make sense of problems as they are presented, and work productively to propose real and appropriate solutions. The speed of younger brains, saving the presence of the rest of you I am aware of mine slowing down at an alarming rate as I take the slow lane in the race of life, towards 80. Know what I mean? But if we can no longer put ourselves up for such front line challenges, the next best thing we can all do is encourage those of the next and subsequent generations, to fulfill their potential, not necessarily driving them to the extremes as

my parents eagerly did for me but allowing 'space in between' for all those things I have already described. The wonderful, for me, increase in high positions and influence of women in former male dominated worlds, is part of this acknowledgement of gender equality and opportunity. The Taliban do not realise what resources they are wasting and diminishing, dishonouring and dismissing.

Subtle skills of persuasion, organisation from the back seat, urging on and seeking the highest and the best for one's loved ones may be a position each of us has been aware of. Post war parents wanting their offspring to have better chances and better vision than they had at the similar age, or only became aware of during peacetime.

With apologies to any football fans here this morning, when Elgar wrote probably the first ever football supporter song or chant, rather, he could hardly have imagined the tunelessness of a modern generation, three generations since I taught class music way back, yelling and adding rudeness and booing from the terraces. But the legendary Midlander, famous for Land Of Hope And Glory, was actually the brains behind the first-ever football chant. It was a little ditty he penned for... Wolverhampton Wanderers. Entitled 'He Banged The Leather for Goal', the footy theme was written in honour of Wolves hero Billy Malpass back in 1898.

What we set up and create and visualize for our time, must be left 'in the cloud' for others to use or abuse and we shall be none the wiser.

But to create it is our power and privilege. When we can track an object the size of a football 22,000 miles into space, the sheer accuracy of our technology amazes me and stretches the limits of my imagination, not least any old idea of heaven which is well and truly shattered for many 'believers'.

Arts and drama courses in our Uni are often derided as 'not proper courses' for a degree and for those who worked in greater depth for their 'piece of paper' and the chance to hurl their mortarboards into the area to celebrate, comparisons are made, even if odious. It is a different generation and different standards and lower vaulting horses are available. Their value is calculated on a different scale.

In the encyclical 'Tutti Fratelli', Pope Francis proposed a way of life marked by the flavour of the Gospel. Of the counsels Francis offered, I select that in which he calls for a love that transcends the barriers of geography and distance, and declares blessed all those who love their brother "as much when he is far away from him as when he is with him". In his simple and direct way, Saint Francis expressed the essence of a fraternal openness that allows us to acknowledge, appreciate and love each person, regardless of physical proximity, regardless of where he or she was born or lives. This saint of fraternal love, simplicity and joy, who inspired the Encyclical *Laudato Si'*, prompts Francis once more to devote this new Encyclical to fraternity and social friendship. Francis felt himself a brother to the sun, the sea and the wind, yet he knew that he was even closer to those of his own flesh.

Wherever he went, he sowed seeds of peace and walked alongside the poor, the abandoned, the infirm and the outcast, the least of his brothers and sisters.

There is an episode in the life of Saint Francis that shows his openness of heart, which knew no bounds and transcended differences of origin, nationality, colour or religion. It was his visit to Sultan Malik-el-Kamil, in Egypt, which entailed considerable hardship, given Francis' poverty, his scarce resources, the great distances to be traveled and their differences of language, culture and religion. That journey, undertaken at the time of the Crusades, further demonstrated the breadth and grandeur of his love, which sought to embrace everyone. Francis' fidelity to his Lord was commensurate with his love for his brothers and sisters.

There are of course borders. Some angst has been registered out recently over issues of race, prejudice, inequality and injustice. As the former [and actually the last] Chaplain of Colston's in Bristol [the famous rugby playing boys' school], and defender of the good works Edward Colston provided for the city, though not maybe the way he made his money to do so, I realise what our country needs to do to rectify past wrongs though not necessarily by chucking statues into the harbour or tearing down evidence of benefaction in our Universities.

We need our 'freedom fighters' in all these aspects of the richness of British life as we have known and valued it.

It is an example of the 'new generation' which is taking up the cudgels and causes some of us have been wielding for years. Good luck and success to them, say I. The undoubted plethora of skills which is our entertainment industry and the ever-amazing wealth of the written word is a window of opportunity to anyone who seeks to explore it. Subjects are not skills in themselves. They are steerage points to enable youngsters to find a target for their lives to aim at - and achieve.

Which brings us to **AI**.

The CHAIRMAN of Google says AI is a more important invention than Fire and Electricity. Amol Rajan interviewed Google [Alphabet] CEO Sundar Pichai at his Silicon Valley HQ AI as a facilitator for browsing and storing profiles... Artificial Intelligence is no longer a distant utopia. Many things have happened since John McCarthy coined the term at the 1956 Dartmouth Conference. What was once just a dream is now a reality – smart virtual assistants, chatbots, smart home devices, self-driving cars, drones, and other intelligent systems have become commonplace. Artificial intelligence (AI) refers to the simulation of human intelligence in machines that are programmed to think like humans and mimic their actions. The term is also applied to any machine that exhibits traits associated with a human mind, such as learning and problem-solving.

The ideal characteristic of artificial intelligence is its ability to rationalize and take actions that have the best chance of achieving a

specific goal. A subset of artificial intelligence is machine learning, which refers to the concept that computer programs can automatically learn from and adapt to new data without being assisted by humans. Deep learning techniques enable this automatic learning through the absorption of huge amounts of unstructured data such as text, images, or video. The goals of artificial intelligence include learning, reasoning, and perception. AI is being used across differing industries including finance and healthcare.

Weak AI tends to be simple and single-task oriented, while strong AI carries on tasks that are more complex and human-like. When most people hear the term artificial intelligence, the first thing they think of is robots. That's because big-budget films and novels weave stories about human-like machines that wreak havoc on Earth. But nothing could be further from the truth. Artificial intelligence is based on the principle that human intelligence can be defined in a way that a machine can readily mimic it and execute tasks, from the most simple to those that are even more complex. The goals of artificial intelligence include mimicking human cognitive activity. Researchers and developers in the field are making surprisingly rapid strides in mimicking activities such as learning, reasoning, and perception, to the extent that these can be concretely defined. Some believe that innovators may soon be able to develop systems that exceed the capacity of humans to learn or reason out any subject. Others remain sceptical because all cognitive activity is laced with value judgments that are subject to human experience.

AI technologies are now all around us, shaping every aspect of our lives and changing the world in the process. It's a booming domain that brings us one step closer to the world of tomorrow. It's obvious that AI has had a tremendous impact on all industries in recent years. Manufacturing, healthcare, transportation, finance and e-commerce are just some of the industries taking advantage of AI systems. Either fear it or welcome it, view it with caution and control, or allow its full flexibility to embrace and enrich our lifestyles and operations, taking the stress from human frailty and replacing it with technological accuracy and timelessness.

But there's one field that even though is not normally linked to AI, is taking big leaps towards embracing its applications. We're talking about education. I have to come back to this point every time - I suppose for me it has become an occupational hazard area. Removal of BTech and introduction of T courses - with the echoing draught of a year of closed schools, brings a new set of challenges. Removal of exams as we knew them offers a freedom to calculate, measure and assess in totally different ways, currently being explored in the wake of Covid.

Exciting developments on our world wide stage are being discussed and announced all the time - I am sure you will have noted them in connection with the theme of this conference. Those involving young people excite me specially as 'an oldie'. The ONE YOUNG WORLD Annual Summit in Munich in July was for 'world changers' - youngsters between 3- and 40 mostly, visionary in the world of

business and especially AI.

The new DEEP MIND 'web' is given, as was WORLD WIDE WEB by Tim Berners Lee, for the good of mankind [announced 23 July on the news]. yes of course it can be used for evil exploitation, face recognition without consent and all sorts of sinister applications - but used for good, unlocks a whole plethora of tasks and effective functions which would take ordinary human minds decades to understand, use and develop.

My area of expertise, if there is any, with my funny collar, is to question what are the skills for HUMANITY. Not for the first time in my contributions to this conference I recall St. Paul's exhortation of THE FRUITS OF THE SPIRIT, being desirable, if not essential, in human activity and getting on together. They are described as the ninefold love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control."

Maybe not described specifically as skills, but in recent months and the rigours, despairs, testing and trials of Covid and watching other friends and family, suffering and dying from the pandemic, we have seen a remarkable public display of so many of those 'fruits' and those who had forgotten them, or put them aside in a modern 'we don't need them any more' philosophy, have found the need to rediscover them for personal use and sharing.

Paul goes on to describes love in 1 Corinthians 13:4–8:[9]

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 hope, always perseveres. Love never fails. But where there are prophecies, they will cease; where there are tongues, they will be stilled; where there is knowledge, it will pass away.

During the lockdown we have witnessed so much love, care, compassion, concern, tenderness, touch, alongside anxiety for others, fund-raising, appreciation, phone calls, zooms, sharing, decorations in windows, clapping on the street, banging cans and pots, and a general sense of community and togetherness. That adds at least another five to Paul's original list of nine.

large chunks of quotes I have omitted [the next bit is optional] Ed

The Initiatives of Change, formerly Moral Re-Armament, Annual Report cites this wisdom:

“After a year of inspiring workplace innovations and a shift to more and more compassionate business culture, much of this progress is being set aside in favor of returning to pre-pandemic policies. But why return to ways of working that are outdated, unsustainable and arguably unethical? Imad Karam says in his essay, “we can’t connect the personal to the global in any meaningful way without being principled and ethical. To that point, says the report, we caution those who are eager to return to ‘business as usual’.

The pandemic has proven that ethical leadership and trust are key to a developing resilience and thriving in the workplace. Having a leader or governing body who 'walks the talk' and is compelled by doing what is right - not what is most profitable - naturally result in a better return on investment, a more satisfied work force, a greater vision for a stronger future and a fulfillment which will last. Business as usual is never likely to return, as we know it, as we feel secure in it or as we dreamt it would be when we got to our age in 2021.

By seeing and recognizing - yes and welcoming - change we show the intellect which we have been granted and which is a boost and stimulus to others in another generation - a generation above and a generation below us.

So there it is, my friends. I have tried to take you with me in thinking the current world situation through. I hope it has helped a little to set your 'leettle grey cells' racing and will offer further thought and investigation after this conference ends.

Much recently quotes the poem 'Traveler, There Is No Path' by Antonio Machado [tr Asa Cusack] sums up an important element for me in watching and being excited about the years ahead, for as long as I am spared to enjoy, maybe even benefit from them, goes like this:

Everything passes on and everything remains, But our lot is to pass on,
To go on making paths,
Paths across the sea.

I never sought glory,
Nor to leave my song
In the memory of man;

Traveler, your footprints
Are the path and nothing more;
Traveler, there is no path, The path is made by walking.
By walking the path is made And when you look back
You'll see a road
Never to be trodden again.

Traveler, there is no path, Only trails across the sea...
Some time past in that place
Where today the forests are dressed in barbs
A poet was heard to cry
"Traveler, there is no path,
The path is made by walking."

Fr Ed Elsey
Queens Cambridge
September 2021

SERVICE SIXTEENTH SUNDAY AFTER TRINITY 2021

For those at home. *'We adore you O Christ, in this church and in all the churches of the world and we bless you, because by your Holy Cross you have redeemed the world.'*

HYMN

to be read or sung

When I survey the wondrous cross
on which the Prince of Glory died,
my richest gain I count but loss,
and pour contempt on all my pride.

Forbid it Lord, that I should boast,
save in the death of Christ, my God,
all the vain things that charm me most
I sacrifice them to His blood.

See from His head, His hands, His feet,
sorrow and love flow mingled down,
did e'er such love and sorrow meet,
or thorns compose so rich a crown.

Were the whole realm of nature mine,
that were an offering far too small,
love so amazing, so divine,
demands my soul, my life, my all.

Isaac Watts 1674 - 1748

THE OLD TESTAMENT

Jeremiah 11 verses 18 – 20

It was the Lord who made it (unrighteousness) known to me and I knew; then you showed me their evil deeds. But I was like a gentle lamb led to the slaughter. And I did not know it was against me that they devised schemes, saying, “Let us destroy the tree with its fruit, let us cut him off from the land of the living so that his name will no longer be remembered”. But you, O Lord of hosts, who judge righteously, who try the heart and the mind, let me see your retribution upon them, for to you I have committed my cause.

This is the Word of the Lord, Thanks be to God.

THE HOLY GOSPEL Mark 9 verses 30 - 37

Glory to You O Lord

They went on from there and passed through Galilee. Jesus did not want anyone to know it for He was teaching His disciples, saying to them, "The Son of Man is to be betrayed into human hands, and they will kill Him, and three days after being killed, He will rise again."

But they did not understand what He was saying and were afraid to ask Him.

They then came to Capernaum and when He was in the house He asked them, "What were you arguing about on the way?"

But they were silent, for on the way they had argued with one another about who was the greatest.

He sat them down, called the twelve and said to them, "Whoever wants to be first must be last of all and servant of all."

Then He took a little child and put it among them and taking it in His arms, He said to them, "Whoever welcomes one such child in my name, welcomes me, and whoever welcomes me, welcomes not me but the one who sent me".

This is the Gospel of the Lord Praise to you O Christ.

ADDRESS

On Tuesday of last week, many churches celebrate Holy Cross day. It usually passes with prayer but very little recognition. Many would not want to celebrate such a reminder of the brutality of the cross. In the same way we may want to turn away from the violence in our own time, the cruel divisions in our nation and our world, cities laid waste by bombs and bullets, millions arriving on our shores fleeing poverty and destruction of their homes and neighbourhoods. But in these events we can open our eyes to see what happens when love is denied, when a whisper spreads from one to another that compassion, forgiveness, trust, truth, and heaven itself do not matter as much as our own borders, our own economy, our own way of life. Who can save us from the denial of love, this hell of human making? Thanks be to God through Jesus Christ our Lord (Romans 7 v.25) For, unlike Jeremiah in our reading whose suffering made Him beg God for retribution, revenge on his enemies, Jesus, who is more than a prophet, prays for His enemies on the cross. The image of the gentle lamb led to the slaughter is present in all the language that describes, not just Jeremiah but Jesus as the Lamb of God. For He, like Jeremiah is innocent of all charges, and the victim of schemes and false accusations. But Jesus triumph was His turning death, even at its most humiliating and cruel, into a sign of forgiveness, hope and resurrection. This sign blazes out across the world. In our Gospel, Jesus tries to explain His death to the disciples but without the events that were to unfold, they could not understand and “were afraid to ask Him”. They were more interested in their own status before Him, the rewards of following Him. So Jesus placed in their midst someone with no status at all, a little child who was without even an identity, a nameless person in the world of that time. And in opening His arms to that little child, so He embraced all those who are left out, those nameless rejects who governments forget are

human living people. Jesus said whoever welcomes one such person, welcomes me, and the One who sent me. These are the words of love which usher in forgiveness, hope and resurrection. Jesus died and rose again to show us what matters most.

Amen

PRAYER and INTERCESSION

Heavenly Lord and Father, help us not only to appreciate all that you have given us, but to be gracious and generous to others. May the world's goods be neither hoarded nor squandered but used for the benefit of all your people.

O God by your power show us your peace.

Lord, we pray bring your gift of peace to places of war and unrest, to people in our nation and throughout the world whose lives are diminished by greed and selfishness. We pray for all people who are hurt by the ambitions of others around them.

O God by your power bring in your reign of love and peace

Loving Lord, we pray grant your grace to the village communities to which we belong that there may be generous commitment to one another. We pray for all public leaders and all those whose work involves serving us by delivering our food

and public services. Give your peace, we pray, to our homes, to our work and in all our dealings one with another. Keep us alert to the needs of others.

O God by your power of love, spread your peace through us to all in need.

Lord, we pray comfort all who have been betrayed or deserted, all who have been misunderstood or persecuted. We pray for hostages, for prisoners, for all who are lonely in sickness, we pray for all who are ill and away from home in care or in hospital.

O God by your power spread your forgiveness and love to us and to all in need.

Almighty God, we thank you for the victory of our Lord Jesus Christ, His triumph over death and for the gift of eternal life. Keep us grateful for the peace of those we have loved and lost and give that peace to those who mourn.

Merciful Father Accept these prayers for the sake of your Son our Saviour Jesus Christ

THE LORDS PRAYER THE BLESSING

May we all sow precious seeds of peace in the places where we go this week and bring comfort to God's people, and the Blessing of God the Father, God the Son and God the Holy Spirit be with you and all those you love, **Amen.**

ARTICLES OF INTEREST.

Live Reckoning

“Looking unto Jesus.” Hebrews 12:2

When a ship is out of sight of land, in mid ocean, there are two ways by which the Captain may find out just where he is. One is called “dead reckoning”. It means that the Captain knows what course has been steered, what speed the ship is going at, and putting these things together he can mark out on the chart where the ship ought to be. But that is not enough. Winds may have hindered that calculation, heading and bearing. Currents may have swept the ship out of her course. The engines may not have driven her as fast as expected, and so a surer way must be found. It is this. The Captain takes an instrument called a “sextant” in his hand, and one day just at twelve o’clock noon “he takes an observation” by the sun. The sun will tell him where the ship is, he can see at once if it has kept its course as it was planned. It is something the same with us. We can count our years and know just where we ought to be, in knowledge and in goodness. We hear people say, “Oh! He’s sixteen now; he ought to be fit to be trusted.” Or if one has done wrong, “You are old enough to know better.” That is like the sailor; we are counting off the years on the map of life and seeing where we ought to be. But, like dead reckoning, it is not always right, for there are currents of selfishness and sloth (laziness) which sweep us into a crooked course, and hold us back, gales of passion that blow us far out of our reckoning, temptations and habits that drag

like the seaweeds on the ship's hull. Where we ought to be, and where we are, often are not the same thing by any means. How are we to check our position?

By “looking unto Jesus.”

The sailor takes observation by the sun in the heavens; ***the Christian takes observation by the “Sun of Righteousness,” Jesus Christ.*** To measure our ways by Him will tell us quickly how far we are out of our course, and will show us the way back into it again. Isn't it strange that the way to find out where you are is not by looking down, but by looking up? But so it is; and it is the only way for a ship, or for a soul. **Amen**

Flounders - and - Floundering

“God hath made man upright; but.....” Ecclesiastes 7:2

This is the story of one of the pictures God has set in the Picture Book of Nature to warn us what not to do. It is the life story of the flounder. Everyone knows what a flounder is like: a little flat fish, whose upper side is mottled sand colour and whose under side is white. It has two eyes on the upper side and it swims in a flat position. But its mouth? Surely it is set sideways! And its fins, they don't seem right. As you examine you begin to discover that the flounder isn't half what it pretends to be. It's sides aren't sides at all; they are top and bottom. It's top and bottom aren't what they seem, but are really right and left sides! What does it mean? It means that the flounder has been found out. God made the flounder

upright and the same on both sides; and meant it to swim upright; and set its eyes in their proper places. But the flounder found it was hard work keeping upright and it began to lean to one side, and finally flopped right over and stated so. Then one eye was underneath, which wouldn't do, so it worked that eye round until it had, as it now has, two eyes on one side. Then, having begun to tell lies, it went on as people always do, to tell a few more. It painted one side sandy colour, and the other side white. So that when it saw above it a large hungry fish it lay flat and showed the sandy side, and said by its action, "I'm not a fish, I'm sand." And when it saw beneath it a hungry looking fish, it showed the white side saying, "I'm not a fish, I'm a cloud!" The only thing it couldn't change was its mouth, which remained straight across as God set it. And it gives away the whole pretence, just as St Peter's mouth betrayed him, when he pretended not to be a disciple of Jesus. And so the flounder flops along its little dishonest way; and when people scramble awkwardly through life and blunder away with excuses and falsehoods, we say they "flounder." Now it doesn't matter much if a fish plays these tricks, but it matters a great deal if we do. And there are people like flounders. "God made man upright," but some start straight and find it too difficult. Then they begin to lean to one side, to lean on other people, and on all sorts of shifts, excuses and lies, until they loose the power to go upright, and fall over into flat dishonesty. And they develop two sides to their character, one sandy and one white, and it all depends where they are, which they will show. Among Christian people they pretend to be Christians and show the white side; among wicked people, they show the mottled side, and are like them. They left God's way and chosen their own way because it seemed easier, and all their life they never go straight, they just "flounder." For our children, it is hard to keep upright and to go straight, but

God means for them to go so and He will help you and them, if you try, and every year, every day, will make it easier. Be the same on both sides, and at all times, and don't "flounder." **Amen**

+David OSJ (Wales)

There is nothing 'free' about free will.

Many people believe there is no God and that death is an end of things - this inevitably means that life is reduced to a series of very selfish decisions where love and altruism are meaningless, pointless and wasted opportunities.

It's a pretty bleak existence when this is all there is to go on.

And yes, you have every right to behave in this fashion for God, the being you neither believe in or even acknowledge exists has given you 'free will', the ability to make your own decisions and choices about the way you live your own life and the way it impacts on others.

To me, it is a tragic outcome when so much more could have been achieved, but that is your choice. I respect it even if I don't agree with it. Why should I disagree with God's mandate to let you have 'free will' in the decisions you make and the damage it can cause if misused, for it His Gift to you?

The problem for me is there is no such thing as 'a free lunch'. It ends up costing someone something at some point in time, and it's the same with 'free will'. Even that comes at a price.

Nothing is 'free'.

You may have free will and the ability to make decisions that suit you, but, as I hinted at earlier, it comes at a price. The choices and decisions you make have consequences, and you will be judged on your responses to the circumstances in which you find yourselves.

You may think that ultimately it doesn't matter because death is the end of all responsibility and consequence.....

But what if it isn't?

What if life after death is a reality that can't be avoided or ignored?

What if it is for eternity and there is no right of appeal?

That means our choices actually do matter and have consequences.

And it isn't just the big stuff, but the small stuff.

Every choice we make affects someone and is either for good or for bad. There is no middle or neutral ground. For good or for bad. That's it. End of.

There is supposedly a Greek tradition that says a black or white stone is put in a jar for every day of a person's life, and on death the jar is emptied to see the balance, whether the life lived was a good or bad life based on the number of white stones compared to black stones.

What if a single black stone committed us to an eternal life away from the presence of God and all His Goodness?

It only takes one failure, one sin, one lapse of concentration.

Fortunately, we can ask for forgiveness but it has to be genuine and heart felt. Saying 'I'm sorry' is not enough unless it is really meant and there are the desires to put matters right, make amends and change one's ways and attitudes. That is the true repentant's way.

But just saying 'sorry' to avoid punishment.....? Get real.

Believe me when I say, God cannot be deceived, and if we attempt such foolhardiness, our condemnations will be multiplied against us.

If it is genuinely meant, it will be genuinely accepted. It's a total acceptance of personal guilt and responsibility (not an opportunity to blame someone else in the hope of diverting culpability).

Yes, God really does know what is in our hearts, and He knows our motivations, the ways we love to twist and bend the rules to make them fit our own desires. The story found in the early chapters of Genesis of the fall from grace by Adam and Eve and their eviction from the Garden is testimony to this fact and apparently it has been going on since creation, and even excelled in.

We cannot escape the truth of our condition, and God does not accept excuses when we know what is required of us and we fail to comply. We might be able to convince ourselves that our actions were justifiable and necessary, even believe the lies and half-truths we excuse ourselves by, but God sees straight through us and knows exactly what was in our hearts at each moment in our lives.

Putting it very bluntly, there is no escape. We are what we are and God sees it plainly, and it's not as if there are any excuses we can offer. We can dress up the truth in all kinds of finery but in God's eyes we have nothing to hide behind.

We even end up convicting ourselves simply because we know deep within our hearts what sin is, and we know how, when and why we have sinned and even who we have sinned against - it stands in testimony against us.

However.....

Acknowledging our tendency to sin and excuse our behaviour, to accept our failed responsibilities in the light of what is expected of us is the beginning in the path of salvation, an old fashioned expression that will lead us back into the presence of God and, if we are genuine in our feelings, will lead us to complete forgiveness and restoration. That is, we move from condemnation to being accepted as reconciled and become full members of the Communion of Saints.

All it takes is that real and genuine understanding of the words, 'Father, I have sinned..... forgive me.'

Anything less will not do.

Believe me when I say that God's love for us is extensive and He has no desire to see us separate ourselves from Himself, but He will not over-ride our God given right to make our own choices as to our futures. Put simply the choice is ours. That is the basis of 'free will'. Free will allows us to change our minds about choosing right over wrong, or even wrong over right, how and why we do things.

'Free will' by no means guaranteed success and it is a risk God and we take every time we exercise it. Mistakes are inevitable because we are learning 'on the job'. That isn't necessarily a problem for us providing we are aware of the consequences of our mistakes are prepared to admit our mistakes, accept the blame and put matters right where we can.

It comes as a tough realization that all our actions, our thoughts, our decisions, our words, even whether we think them significant or insignificant, all have consequences.

They are things shape our lives and the lives of others. All matters of 'free will'.

It's a big responsibility but there is some guidance and help if we choose to accept it.

God, not just content with giving us 'free will' and conscience (that small nagging voice that questions us as to whether something is right or wrong), also gave us a small number of rules or guidelines to help to help us avoid some of the pitfalls of life.

We know them as the Ten Commandments and although they are very old they are still very much applicable to the problems and temptations we face today.

They are written in such a way that they make us think - they are principles to be worked through and considered rather than just be 'do's and don't's'. They help understand that sometimes there are no simple answers to problems and we have to make choices that may be very uncomfortable and difficult, but isn't that all part of growing up and becoming mature in our understanding and application of 'love', that very special gift God has entrusted to us for the benefit of others?

I've thrown a couple of thoughts together regarding 'free will' in terms of interpreting the Ten Commandments just as examples, but they are by no means complete – they are just teasers, tasters and possibilities. Please add to them.

Exodus 20 (NIV) – The Ten Commandments in terms of 'free will'

1 And God spoke all these words *(they apply to the state and church as much as the individual)*

<p>² “I am the LORD your God, who brought you out of Egypt, out of the land of slavery.</p>	<p>I am the God who rescued you from slavery and gave you free choice.</p> <p>I want you to love me of your own free will, not because you are afraid of me but because I have your best intentions at heart, because I love you and only want the best for you.</p> <p>But, the choice is ultimately and eternally yours and you must live with the consequences.</p>
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<p>³ “You shall have no other gods before me.</p>	<p>If you truly love me, I will know when you turn to me first rather than Google or your phone. I want to first in all areas of your life and be more important than all those other distractions around you.</p>
<p>⁴ “You shall not make for yourself an image in the form of anything in heaven above or on the earth beneath or in the waters below.</p> <p>⁵ You shall not bow down to them or worship them;</p> <p>for I, the LORD your God, am a jealous God,</p> <p>punishing the children for the sin of the parents to the third and fourth generation of those who hate me,</p> <p>⁶ but showing love to a thousand generations of those who love me and keep my commandments.</p>	<p>Making an image of something may be an attempt to understand or rationalise it, but inevitably it becomes an attempt to subjugate, limit, to dominate and to bring it under human expression and control.</p> <p>It doesn’t matter whether it is a virtual or mental image or a physical thing like a painting or a sculpture.</p> <p>An image is no replacement for the real thing and it remains a limited human interpretation even though it may seek the eternal truth.</p> <p>God is much bigger than anything we can imagine or create</p>

	<p>It cannot convey the reality of the infinite, eternal, all powerful, compassionate ineffability of God, therefore to attempt to make an image of God is to try and fit Him into your own limited understanding.</p> <p>It will serve no good purpose and will ultimately damage the relationship God has with all those who come after you because of what you have done</p>
<p>⁷ “You shall not misuse the name of the LORD your God, for the LORD will not hold anyone guiltless who misuses his name.</p>	<p>Most people think this is about using profane or spiritually disrespectful language but it is much more than that.</p> <p>It all depends on your motivation and what your intention is. Think of it more as ‘You shall not use My Name to claim authority over others but you may speak and use My Name with love and respect.’</p> <p>Conversing with God in prayer is a good thing but wasting His time with endless and pointless prayer to demonstrate your holiness to others is another.</p>

<p>⁸ “Remember the Sabbath day by keeping it holy. ⁹ Six days you shall labour and do all your work, ¹⁰ but the seventh day is a Sabbath to the LORD your God. On it you shall not do any work, neither you, nor your son or daughter, nor your male or female servant, nor your animals, nor any foreigner residing in your towns.</p> <p>¹¹ For in six days the LORD made the heavens and the earth, the sea, and all that is in them, but he rested on the seventh day.</p> <p>Therefore the LORD blessed the Sabbath day and made it holy.</p>	<p>One day in seven shall be held over for rest and fellowship, above all other days.</p> <p>Work may be a necessity but we ‘work to live’, not ‘live to work’.</p> <p>You may do good things on the Sabbath regardless of any man made rules, for the Sabbath was made for man, not man for the Sabbath.</p> <p>You shall respect and honour the needs of others to rest, recuperate and do likewise, but not request or require them to do otherwise for they have the same needs as do you.</p> <p>‘Holiness’ is about ‘wholeness’.</p>
<p>¹² “Honour your father and your mother, so that you may live long in the land the LORD your God is giving you.</p>	<p>Honour them by bringing no shame upon them, by getting married, by providing grandchildren if it is within God’s will, and by being the best parent you can be.</p>

	<p>Not only shall children prove themselves worthy of their parents, but also parents need to demonstrate that they are worthy of their children too.</p>
<p>¹³ “You shall not murder.</p>	<p>You shall not take something that does not belong to you, or destroy something that is in your individual or collective care, even a life.</p> <p>State sanctioned abortion and euthanasia, acts of terrorism and aggression are included in this.</p>
<p>¹⁴ “You shall not commit adultery.</p> <p>See also Matthew 5:28</p> <p>But I tell you that anyone who looks at a woman lustfully has already committed adultery with her in his heart.</p>	<p>You shall not let your hormones and desires become your God.</p> <p>Marriage (one man, one woman, etc.) and family is the basis on which a stable society is built and to undermine that is both a social and spiritual crime even if sanctioned by the state.</p> <p>Adultery is to take what is not yours. It destroys families and has lasting consequences for all involved.</p>

<p>¹⁵ “You shall not steal.</p>	<p>You shall not take, lust after or desire what is not yours to take.</p> <p>Neither shall you create laws or statutes, reasons or excuses to enable you to do this.</p>
<p>¹⁶ “You shall not give false testimony against your neighbour.</p>	<p>You shall not lie, tell partial or half-truths or exaggerate or create ‘facts’ to gain advantage over others.</p> <p>You shall not destroy or damage the good name or reputation of others for your own benefit or enjoyment.</p> <p>This includes ‘gossip’.</p>
<p>¹⁷ “You shall not covet your neighbour’s house.</p> <p>You shall not covet your neighbour’s wife, or his male or female servant, his ox or donkey, or anything that belongs to your neighbour.”</p>	<p>God provides for all our needs but ‘need’ and ‘want’ are very different.</p> <p>We live in a materialistic world and we are encouraged by the media to want and have more and more.</p> <p>It becomes a question of who do we trust or believe, social media or God, and that takes us back to the very first commandment of course.</p>

	<p>It may not seem important but in 'wanting' more, are we taking from those who 'need'? That of course takes us back to the second commandment.</p> <p>Loving our neighbour as ourselves means thinking about their needs rather than our own.</p> <p>A love that puts others first will always be inconvenient and sacrificial.</p>
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Whether there are just 10 commandments or 12 is a moot point for some theologians. You might be interested to read the following:

There are twelve Commandments which have been given by God for His people.

The first Ten Commandments were given to the Prophet Moses on Mount Sinai, and the last two came from Jesus, who said, "Do not think that I have come loosen the law or the prophets, I have not come to loosen, but to fulfil.

For truly I say to you that until the Heaven and the Earth pass away, not one Yod or one stroke will pass from the law." (Matthew 5:17-18)

“Anyone who breaks one of the least of these commandments and teaches others to do the same will be called least in the kingdom of heaven, but whoever practices and teaches these commands will be called great in the kingdom of heaven.” (Matthew 5:19)

And “whoever keeps the whole law and yet stumbles at just one point is guilty of breaking all of it.” (James 2:10)

“Love must be sincere. Hate what is evil; cling to what is good.” (Romans 12:9)

Understanding and following the Twelve (10+2) Commandments of God means more than just following the rules, it means respecting oneself, respecting others, and respecting God; and it is through this respect that we are given the ability, by God’s mercy to empower our lives and relieve our burdens, in order to find love.

It is through them that we can overcome the sons of rebellion who walk the path of death.

Edited Source: [The 12 Commandments – Yeshua Centered Judaism \(netzarimemunah.org\)](http://netzarimemunah.org)

My personal view is you can have too much of a good thing and the Law and the interpretation of it can get to the point where there is just too much for most people to handle.

This is when frustration, despondency and abuse sets in.

Regarding the latter, Jesus recognised this in his own time and he said of those who interpreted the Law (see *Matthew 23 v2*)³ *'Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye pay tithe of mint and anise and cumin, and have omitted the weightier matters of the law, judgment, mercy, and faith: these ought ye to have done, and not to leave the other undone.'*

To make things easier to understand, Jesus summarized all the Law in just two rules, 'the Great Commandments', which in their shortest form are 'love God' and 'love your neighbour'.

As Jesus says, it is out of these two that all the others are born, and regarding 'free will', less is definitely more as it becomes a matter of understanding the spirit of the law rather than just applying the letter of the law.

That is the difference between 'wisdom' and 'knowledge'.

With so much at stake, it all comes down to us as individuals, and we cannot look to others (including our churches and religious leaders) to shoulder the blame for our own failures and mistakes. 'Free will' is 'free will' and the buck stops with us.

Interestingly, something that is rarely discussed is that God has 'free will' too and this is part of the equation. We might do well to consider how God applies 'free will'.

The following edited article is fairly typical of the current theological reasoning behind the relationship between God and 'free will'.

We first need to define what we mean by “free will.” For the purpose of this article, we will define free will as “the capacity of a conscious mind to make decisions and choices without any external constraints or coercion.”

God has a mind and is conscious; He has the capacity to make decisions and choose (He has volition); He does not answer to any authority, is not limited by any external constraints, and cannot be coerced.

Therefore, based on this definition, we can say, yes, God certainly possesses free will in the sense that, in His omnipotence, He is not limited by anything apart from Himself.

God has free will in every aspect.

The natural world operates subsidiarily to His realm. God is unconstrained by all natural laws; He in fact established those laws and is sovereign over them. God could have created the universe in any of a number of ways, and the way it exists is due to His choice. God was not required to create at all: in Revelation 4:11 we read, “You are worthy, our Lord and God, to receive glory and honour and power, for you created all things, and by your will they were created and have their being.”

The point is that even the act of creation itself was the result of God’s free will: His choice to create was not influenced by any necessity or obligation.

God's volition is absolute; His actions are neither deterministically constrained nor controlled by someone else.

There are certain things that God is incapable of doing because His perfect and holy nature disallows it.

Titus 1:2 says that God "cannot lie" (NASB). This doesn't suggest any kind of external control, however; the fact that God's perfection prevents Him from lying identifies an intrinsic property of God's own character.

God cannot be unfaithful to Himself; He cannot break His Word; He cannot be less than perfect.

A lesser being can choose to sin, but God cannot—or He would not be God.

Also, there are certain things that God is incapable of doing because of the very nature of reality.

Can God make a triangular square?

No, not if the words triangular and square have any real meaning. God does not deal in absurdities, fallacies, or farces.

He deals in reality; in fact, God is the source of reality.

He is the I AM WHO I AM (Exodus 3:14). As the Creator and Sustainer of all that is, God has defined what we call reality.

The way things are is the way He chose things to be.

Human beings have some measure of free will, but God's volition is truly free—it is maximal in both quantity and quality. God's inability to lie or sin or be illogical does not diminish His freedom in any way, since it is the result of His own intrinsic nature; external influences have no hold on Him.

Since man is created in the image of God, it is hardly surprising that he has inherited some of the characteristics of 'free will', but not all. As God has 'choice', so do we, but our judgements lack qualities like wisdom, understanding, experience, depth of understanding of creative and spiritual consequence, and we are subject to the almost overpowering forces of selfishness and sin.

We also have a tendency towards disorder and chaos, those things God conformed and remedied in the beginning moments of creation.

In God, 'free will' is perfected but we constantly find ourselves caught between the shadows and the light, and pulled in both directions. In God, 'free will' is a blessing but in us it almost seems to be simultaneously both a blessing and a curse. It either confirms us or condemns us. And it's not something we can ignore because it comes with responsibilities, expectations and consequences.

God in His wisdom, and knowing our frailty, gave us love, a conscience, the Holy Spirit to console and challenge us when we face wrong doing, prayer to seek guidance, Christian fellowship (corporate discernment) and the guidelines found in Holy Scripture, mainly based on the 10 Commandments in the Old Testament, and the two Great Commandments found in the New Testament.

There is also 'the church' too but there is too much denominational politicking and theological biasing to sift through, although it can be helpful. My advice here is to pick one's friends carefully as some 'churches' have abandoned essential truths in the bible and should not be relied upon.

God has done as much as He can without intruding into our 'free will', but in the end how we use our God given 'free will' remains something only we can deal with. Help and guidance is there but it's our choice as to whether we use it.

When we face God at the brink of eternity, the shadows we hide in will be dispelled and the truth will be made plain as to whether we have been good stewards of the gifts of God we have been entrusted with, and that includes 'free will'. We will certainly be made aware of how our use of 'free will' had influenced others whether for good or ill.

Let us hope we hear the words, 'My good and faithful servant.....' If we have concerns we may not then we need to deal with these and be reconciled with God before it is too late.

+Ian, OSJ (UK)

Prayers for the coming month:

Fr. David Startup, OSJ (UK)

Dear Lord we thank you so much for your creation, for the sheer beauty of the earth and everything upon it.

You gave all mankind responsibility for all that you have made entrusting every living creature into our care Mankind has betrayed that trust and neglected it's responsibility.

Your good earth has become polluted by greed, damaged by selfishness and ignorance - and bled dry by materialism.

Father by your Holy Spirit instil in us a renewed urgency and passion to fulfil the task you laid upon us.

Lord we pray for governments around the world which are poor in integrity. For those Leaders, and those under them, whose decisions will affect the whole of your creation and your people, your family. Enrich them with your wisdom.

We ask that you encourage them to accept, respect and behave responsibly and justly, to be loving and faithful stewards of the whole of your creation.

We particularly ask for a swift remedy to the conflict and confusion in Afghanistan so that all peoples may live in peace.

Lord in your mercy...Hear our prayer

We pray for those who are lacking the basic necessities of life with no roof to live under, no clean water to drink and very little food if any to live on. - those whose masters turn a blind eye to their predicament, knowing that they will be all the richer for it.

We pray for those poor in love, wisdom and understanding of the basic needs of others. Those who are poor in their selflessness and passion to help others.

May they become rich in joy, comfort and peace of mind – and be an encouragement to those who need an improvement in their lives.

Lord in your mercy...hear our prayer.

We pray for ourselves and our local community.

Lord we are so blessed in what we have – help us share it with others. We are so blessed in knowing you, what you do and what you would like us to do. Help us share you with others.

We ask that we may feel even more encouraged to be actively involved in doing good things for the life of our neighbours – and if we are unable to - - - help us be more involved, whether alone or together, in heartfelt prayer.

Help us Lord, to bring relief those who are desperate, for any reason and help us bring them to you. Show us the way Lord and encourage us to make opportunities rather than wait for them. We want to be even more faithful and effective servants.

We pray Lord for ourselves in the face of all life's uncertainties we ask that the assurance of Christ presence power and love may continue to give us strength hope and faith.

Lord in you Mercy Hear our prayer

We pray for those who are poor in health. Remembering especially at this time- Comfort and heal – Carers.

We remember those who have died recently especially...

and ask that you comfort the bereaved.

Lord

You taught us to love our neighbour, and to care for those in need, as if we were caring for you. In this time of great anxiety for everyone, give us strength to comfort the fearful, to tend the sick, and to assure the isolated of your love for us all and our love for you.

Amen.

The First will be Last

+David OSJ (Wales)

A war-torn city was in turmoil. There was a great shortage of food and water. A desperate crowd gathered as a Peace-keeping soldier stepped forward and announced through a loud speaker that relief was on the way.

He asked that an orderly line be formed for food distribution.

Suddenly there was a great stampede to the front. The slow, elderly and children were trampled.

Those who stopped to help were left behind or forced to the back of the queue.

Soon a great line was formed with the strongest, fastest and most cunning at the front.

The weak, sick, polite and charitable were left at the back.

The soldier looked at the queue in disgust and then contacted the relief trucks on his radio. When he had finished talking to them, he addressed the queue:

Relief trucks are coming in from the other side. Everyone must now turn around. Those at the end of the queue will now be served first. Anyone who jumps the queue will miss out.'

Are we fighting to get ahead in life?

The world certainly rewards winners.

If we are a successful movie star, sports professional or corporate wiz, we will get all the perks. Interestingly, it's the self-serving occupations that get the highest rewards.

However, God says this will not be so in Eternity.

If we place our needs above the needs of others and take all we can without caring who is trampled, we may come first and achieve our personal desires on earth, but ultimately God will be forced to put us last in the Hereafter.

God has given us advanced warning that He will reverse the queue:

But many who are first will be last, and the last first. Matthew 19:30.

There's nothing Biblical wrong with being successful and to be rewarded in our chosen field, but on our journey we must constantly review our motives.

We can witness amazing examples of successful athletes, movie stars and entrepreneurs that have used their platforms to proclaim Christ, to help others and to glorify God.

When Jesus Christ (the living embodiment of God) lived on earth, He placed himself at the very back of the queue for our sakes. He put his needs last and our needs first.

After Resurrection, He became forever first: the Alpha, the Number One, the Head.
Where will we be in Eternity?

Are we presently living to serve ourselves?

Often our motives can get muddled in the worldly-shuffle for advancement – that's why it's so important to spend time in the Word of God. When we understand how much God is serving us, we will naturally respond with a Christ-like attitude of wanting to serve others.

God sees all actions and motives.

Those Christians who have gone without worldly rewards and accolades to dedicate their lives in the service of others and God will be remembered by our Heavenly Father and put first in His Eternal Kingdom.

And whoever exalts himself will be humbled, and he who humbles himself will be exalted. Matthew 23:12.

+David OSJ (Wales)

Rewards and Losses: by Maurice Dyson

*Every man's work shall be made manifest: for the day shall declare it...
and the fire shall try every man's work of what sort it is.* 1 Cor 3:13

The Judgment Seat of Christ as He has stated,
Will see our Christian lives evaluated.
The stubble, hay and wood,
Produced by human good,
Should not come from a life regenerated.

For none can lay another sure foundation,
Than that already laid for our salvation.
The ransom He has paid,
Can never be remade,
Because it was resolved before creation.

So as we build on what the Lord has planted;
And if our view of Him has not been slanted;
The silver and the gold,
As Scripture has foretold,
Will get the due reward that He has granted.

OSJ (UK): Website Visitor Information:

Total **page hits** from 1st January 2021 to 20th September 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 (to 25th)	54,156	average - 2,166 per day
September (projected)	64,980	

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

Counter 1: 4,337,013 visitors Counter 2: 5,076,143 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.

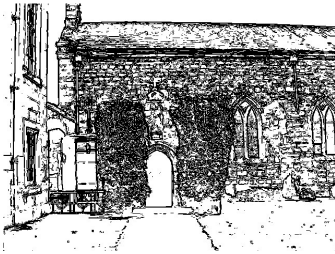
The same applies to the giving of last rites (viaticum).

Suggested forms of approved service are available (with instructions) to download using the two new links below:

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

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.