



The Order of St James (UK) Newsletter

September 2021

www.orderofstjames.info



Something different from me, Father Ed, this month. I was asked, in an emergency, if I could conduct a service for a small but faithful Methodist congregation high in the Welsh hillsides above Usk. But it coincided, or collided, with the Festival of the Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary, which is hardly a Methodist observance and to some is anathema to even discuss. However, what a chance to try and help them to understand what many Catholics and Anglo Catholics observe on this feast day, much observed, with extravagance on the continent as 'Maria Himmelfahrt' [the journey into Heaven] and in Catholic devotion. You will see how I tried to use it as a sermon of Christian unity, to understand each other more as Christians seek to work more together. I hope my thoughts and presentation may be helpful to others in their knowledge and thinking. Fr. Ed

GWEHELOG 15 AUGUST 2021

I realise that today I may be skating on thin ice as a fellow Christian with you all but one who is nowadays from a different worship discipline. Today the Church recognizes [in German: Himmelfahrt - Heaven journey] - the Festival of the Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary to Heaven.

For many years running I have been in Switzerland on this day, a day of dressing up, national costume, confirmations, singing and chanting, and of course, special to me as to all Anglo-Catholics, what we please to call 'bells and smells'.

But it was only in 1950 [I was just eight] that Pope Pius XII declared the Assumption an official dogma of the Roman Catholic church. Our late lamented and much treasured local members of this Chapel, [named and known to me from previous conduct of worship in this place] might have had a quiet chuckle at the way I am handling the theme, those who kept this Chapel going over the years, as congregations fell [*there were just seven at my service*] bless them all. Rest in peace and risen Glory.

The Catholic Church teaches that the Virgin Mary 'having completed the course of her earthly life, was assumed body and soul into heavenly glory.' But it was way back in 553 that the 'perpetual virginity of Mary was declared and at the Lateran Council of 649 Pope Martin I emphasized her threefold character.

The United Methodist Church has no official stance or teaching on the Virgin Mary other than what is in Scripture and in the ecumenical creeds: the Apostles' and the Nicene. We affirm her role in God's gift of Christ to the world -- being the mother of Jesus, her care and nurture of him and her being a disciple.

The Virgin Mary is honoured as the Mother of God in the United Methodist Church.

Methodist churches teach the doctrine of the virgin birth, although they, along with Orthodox Christians and other Protestant Christians, reject the doctrine of the Immaculate Conception.

The principles of Methodism do not include specific honour of Mary, but as we seek to hold our faith together, it is believed by many, or most, that now is the time to look for common ground between the denominations in order to declare One Lord, One Faith, One Church...

You know better than I, though I was a Methodist Church organist in Leyton Tabernacle, London, at the age of 14, what you as Methodists believe: but let's run through them quickly again:

Our Triune God: God is one God in three persons: Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

The Bible - the inspired word of God. ...

Sin. ...the idea of Original Sin, or being born in sin, is a key part to our belief structure in the Methodist church. We believe that we are all inclined to sin, no matter how good we think we are.

It is only through God's grace and the love of Jesus Christ that people will find salvation.

All of which leads us to....

Salvation through Jesus Christ. ...

Sanctification through His blood...

The Sacraments. ...

Free will. ...

and last, but not least,

Social Justice.

We don't, as Protestants, customarily use the Catholic 'Hail Mary' prayer because, for some, it conflicts with doctrines of Jesus Christ and prayer. The mantra 'Salvation by grace alone, through faith alone in Christ alone,' has always been a distinguishing mark of Methodism and other Protestant traditions.

I well remember sitting with my sister in the bay window of our Greater London home, watching my angry father, black bible in hand, standing inside our front garden gate, railing against the Marian procession as it went past, yelling Protestant references against such processions and veneration. I felt, even at that early age, though always thrilled to see my father angry and activated, and later as I secretly had a friendship with a Catholic boy at school, not daring to tell my Dad, that surely we as Christians should be more tolerant than those extremist days - still showing with vengeance and judgment in parts of Northern Ireland, to, in my view, their disgrace as worshipping Christians together. It is beginning to break down but has a long way to go. Look up the Corymela community's efforts to bring young Christians together in understanding and progress.

My Christian path has taken me into most main 'departments' of faith in my path and search, and exploration to get where I now feel most content and most well-used in ministry today. The monastic Order of St James.

I truly believe:

"In Christ there is no East or West: in Him no north or south.

But one great fellowship of love throughout the whole wide earth".

Prayer has always been important in Methodism, of course. John Wesley (1703-1791), the founder of the Methodist movement [though nicknamed such by his taunters], once said that 'God will do nothing but in answer to prayer.'

Yet not all Christians pray in the same way. Some people use prayer beads or rosary beads to help guide their prayers and maintain concentration, avoiding distraction. Methodists don't generally use 'rosary beads' in prayer, but a small number do use 'prayer beads'. There is evidence that John Wesley used them, especially when trotting on horseback between preachments to help him concentrate.

My late beloved lady travel companion on my path of life, Betty, and I, traced the footprint of John Wesley in Savannah and Macon in Georgia USA and our guide was fascinated to meet 'geen-uine' British Pro-test-ants!

Many Christians, even those who desire to foster a rich and deep prayer life, struggle at times to concentrate while praying. Centre-ing prayer assists us in focussing on a simple spiritual thought to the exclusion of distraction.

Quiet, separated space and a routine of a specifically chosen time of the day is recommended to keep your prayer active, alert, relevant; and listening to God speaking to you is an essential part of that daily quiet time with The Lord. Don't lose it and don't under-rate it. It is our strength. Devout Moslems know this and observe it.

Which brings us to think about the nature of prayer to us each as individuals before God.

What is the nature of prayer? Some 'bead prayers' are prescribed (e.g. the first five beads on a string are to reflect on five of God's attributes), but others are customized (e.g. a person with three children may use the last three beads on a string to make petition for them). In general, Methodist prayers using beads are less prescribed than Catholic traditions. Our observance of the role and significance of Saints also differs from the 'veneration' of the traditional Universal Church. Methodists certainly acknowledge the saints and their example and influence on our society and our faith. Much of what we all do is just that, tradition. As in the Jewish origins of our faith.

"The LORD said to Moses, 'Speak to the people of Israel, and tell them to make tassels on the corners of their garments throughout their generations, and to put a cord of blue on the tassel of each corner...and it shall be a tassel for you to look at and remember all the commandments of the LORD, to do them, not to follow after your own heart and your own eyes.

So you shall remember and do all my commandments, and be holy to your God. I am the LORD your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt to be your God: I am the LORD your God.'" (ESV)

Christ is the believer's sole mediator and ultimate intercessor and making petitions to Mary or any other saint may not fit in to this truth for you. But recognise its value for others in their faith and be tolerant. Methodism traditionally cites biblical teaching like:

*Christ is the only mediator between God and people: 1 Timothy 2:5, "For there is one God, and there is one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus." (ESV)

*Christ is the only intercessor between God and people: Romans 8:34, "Who is to condemn?"

*Christ Jesus is the one who died—more than that, who was raised—who is at the right hand of God, who indeed is interceding for us." (ESV)

Methodists believe that Christians should pray to God directly without any saint, even Mary, assisting them in their petitions.

Like other Protestants, that the Bible teaches that Christians should pray to God alone through Christ, That believers have direct access to God through Christ: Ephesians 3:12, "In whom we have boldness and access with confidence through our faith in him." (ESV)

Now come on, fellow Christians - there's not an awful lot of difference between us, is there, in truth: only in practice; and we need to stand together against persecution which we are promised will come to us - in many parts of the world it is already happening.

Pray for all fellow Christians struggling in parts of the world where they are minority, without the privileges of free worship we enjoy.

Strength in numbers.

Stand together in the faith.

So let us remind ourselves what we know about Mary - The first miracle of the wedding at Cana - they ran out of wine. 'Whatever he tells you to do, do it,' says Mary.

Going home from busy and bustling Jerusalem and not with the 'caravan' of Nazareth pilgrims, she and Joseph return to try and trace their lost son, only to find him sitting with the scholars and priestly elite, discussing the Scriptures - a portent of the conflict of interpretation that would lead to his arrest, mock trial and death.

.....a sword would pierce her heart and ultimately she saw her son crucified - the most brutal and publicly 'disgraceful' death imaginable.

What parent has not watched, pondered, waited and expected the lifestyle and fortune of their child, looking on, guiding, steering, often being hurt by blurted rejection as children go their own way, in their own way. See the thrill of parents watching, on TV, last month, their offspring competing in the Olympics. What joy, what pride, what fulfilment. Oh to have been there in person, limited this time by Covid.

Jn 2:1–12 is the only text in the canonical gospels in which the adult Jesus has a conversation with Mary. He does not address her as "Mother" but as "Woman". In Koine Greek (the language that the Gospel of John was composed in), calling one's mother "Woman" was not disrespectful, and could even be tender.

The gospels of Matthew and Luke in the New Testament and the Quran describe Mary as a virgin, betrothed to Joseph, according to Matthew and Luke.

According to Christian theology, Mary conceived Jesus through the Holy Spirit while still a virgin, and accompanied Joseph to Bethlehem, where Jesus was born.

According to the apocryphal Gospel of James, her parents were called Anne and Joachim.

According to Catholic and Eastern Christian teachings, at the end of her earthly life, God raised Mary's body directly into heaven; this is known in the Christian West as the Assumption of Mary. Today's festival.

Mary has been honoured, if not venerated, since early Christianity, and is considered by millions to be the holiest and greatest saint because of her extraordinary virtues as seen at the Annunciation by the archangel Gabriel.

She is said to have miraculously appeared to believers many times over the centuries. Shrines celebrating such appearances are well known to us all. I have visited six of them myself. But that is for another sermon.

The Eastern and Oriental Orthodox, Catholic, Anglican, and Lutheran churches believe that Mary, as mother of Jesus, is the Theotokos [Mother of God] Θεοτόκος.

The church had a dilemma. She bore the Son of God in his earthly birth, so should she not be venerated, honoured, respected and remembered. Assumed into Heaven [this day we celebrate] - should she not be requested to intervene before the Throne of Grace for us, being sinners, and having prayer requests we shouldn't bother the Almighty with. 'Hail Mary, full of Grace, the Lord is with thee..."

The image from the book of Revelation shows Mary with a crown of 12 stars. She represents the early church with the 12 tribes of Israel represented by the stars. Stella Maris, Queen of Heaven. The famous prayer acknowledges: 'Blessed art thou amongst women, and blessed is the fruit of thy womb, Jesus'. We surely wouldn't argue with that!

John Wesley, as Anglican, moved into 'methodism' and promoted and engendered your denomination with power and force and influence, worldwide. Still an Anglican but with a different path to follow and a different style of open air, inclusive, non-elite, perspective, that social justice being an integral feature.

So however you and other fellow Christians choose to remember the Mother of our Lord, it is up to you. But above all, let her not be a divisive figure in our faith but uniting us with The Father himself and our Triune God and Lord. And through the Holy Spirit our strength and our conviction, our drive and our witness, may our faith be strengthened and a heavenly light to the world around us, wherever we live, however we preach Him and whatever our influence may be.

Take every opportunity the Lord gives you this coming week to 'show Him forth to others'.

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

**'Encyclical on decisions being made by government and industry leaders
around the world.'**

The world is travelling along a dangerous path, guided by many troubling decisions and policies by government and industry leaders around the world, fuelled by popular determination.

Those decisions and policies are not led by God, but instead are induced by widespread public panic and other considerations that do not take into account the totality of public good. Indeed that very panic and fear was partly grown by government and other entities at the beginning of the pandemic, and partly was fuelled by them like pouring petrol on a bonfire.

Earlier examples of leadership in both government and industry in previous pandemics did not stoke fear and impose such draconian restrictions on individual liberty, fuelling a divided population and hatred very rarely seen – and with arguably no worse results in outcome. The degree of restrictions imposed, as well as already-underway mandates for essentially forced vaccination are, We are bound to say, short-sighted.

Such policies fail to take into account the potential long-term consequences of such actions, which can be very broad and diverse in scope. It appears the goal is to limit institutional liability and placate the panicked portion of the population (for indeed the entirety of the world population is not content to live in fear).

However, we must caution against such actions, ***for they place the focus too narrowly and fail to take into account the totality of cost, both short-term and long-term, to both institutions and individuals.***

It saddens me, though, for this is to be expected. Throughout the pandemic, government and many institutions around the world have consistently disregarded the true public good and the rights and benefits of individuals.

The totality of health must not be pushed to the side to focus on one disease.

The totality of public good likewise must not be trampled underfoot or put out of mind.

True public good is that which is defined by God, not by man. In democratic societies, such as those found across Europe and the USA, good inevitably is defined for purposes of policy by popular vote – that is, it is defined by the people. Yet Christian people know better than this.

Christian people know that what is good and what is bad cannot be determined by popular vote.

If the leaders of a democratic nation, elected by majority vote, chooses a path that is wrong, the fact that they are supported by a majority does not, in the eyes of God, render that wrong decision to be right.

Likewise, if the leaders of a nation or an institution are petitioned by vocal members of their constituents to take certain actions and travel down a particular path, the legitimacy of those actions are not determined by their popularity.

Yet it is the clamouring voice of the majority that typically determines what elected leaders will do in a democratic society. Even if it is a determined minority that is pushing a certain action, it is in fact the will of the majority if the majority remains silent and does not oppose.

Silence is a vote. Then, what is determined to be right in the eyes of the people is forced upon everyone, even quite often if it goes against their conscience, and even if it is truly wrong in the eyes of God. True freedom can never exist in a society that believes what is good and what is right may be determined by popular vote.

Today's society believes itself so superior to previous societies, which it often considers oppressive and authoritarian.

Yet, we see no true difference. It matters not the title of an office in government, but rather it matters what they do. Oppression and tyranny can easily happen, no matter the form of government. Oppression of the people by a tyrannical king is no different than oppression of the people by an elected official or by an angry mob.

It is our duty to express this, our sincerely-held religious belief that the world is travelling down an extremely dangerous path.

This journey is led by government and industry leaders, but it is also the responsibility of popular determination.

God controls life, not man, and humanity would do well to remember that rather than behaving with such hubris as it does now. Where this will end, we as mere humans cannot know. Let us all pray, though, that peace and freedom in Christ will prevail.

This path is dangerous for the world, but so too it seems that speaking out in the love of Christ against the world going down this path is dangerous, for love of one's fellow man is likewise a victim of the pandemic.

May all Christians, then, receive Our Apostolic blessing to speak the truth of the Christian faith and proclaim the love of God in all things. Amen.

With all Love and Blessings,

+ David OSJ (Wales)

Breaking the chains that hold us back.

Sometimes I want to pray, I need to pray, and I find I can't. The words just won't come out, my mind wanders, I just don't feel right. I am held back from doing the thing I most want to. I know it is not God that is holding me back, it is just me.

What is the problem?

It is not God for we know that He is waiting for us to talk to Him and that He welcomes us and wants to answer our prayers, whoever we are. His love for us is unquestionable and the only thing that separates us from God is ourselves.

Is it that we feel insecure about talking to Him, about coming into His presence?

We all do things that we are ashamed of and if we let them, they can become a self imposed barrier. An example might be that we have said something critical

about a colleague and when we next see them we find looking them straight in the eyes difficult, in fact we may even try to avoid looking at them. We have distanced ourselves from that colleague and, if we do not put things right quickly, this could turn into a major problem. The point about this is that we caused the separation and we continue it by leaving it unresolved.

God is very understanding of our nature and failings and we have no need to fear Him because His love for us is absolute, constant and big enough to handle anything we can do. When we do something that holds us back from God we should be honest and admit it in prayer. God cannot wait to forgive us and wants us to have a complete and unbroken relationship with Him. It may be difficult to admit that we have made a mistake but we can have absolute confidence that God will not turn us away or reject us when we come before Him in prayer.

If you do feel that you have separated yourself from God in this way then have confidence because He will not turn you away. A contrite heart(heart that seeks forgiveness and reconciliation) is loved by God greatly and is always accompanied by a gentle, compassionate and complete forgiveness. You need have no worries on that particular score.

What may be a problem is that we can sometimes be unwilling to forgive ourselves. We know God will forgive us, but

That 'but' is a really hard one to deal with. All I can ask is that you try to see that this is a problem you can overcome with prayer although it may take a little time. It is important that you do pray and you need not worry that your prayers will not be heard.

God is wonderfully patient and loving and is always by your side. You may not appreciate it but He feels everything you feel.

If you can, tell God what it is you are unable to forgive yourself for and then ask Him to work His healing in your life. If God can forgive you (and He will) then you can learn to forgive yourself in time.

If you cannot find the words then ask Him to help you find the words but don't rush yourself. Be patient and the words will come in their own time in their own way. If that is too hard ask God to accept your feelings as a gift and ask for Him to touch you, to bless you, to heal the hurt.

It is as simple as that, believe me. Trust God and when or if you feel it all coming back to haunt you then you can remind yourself it has been dealt with by a loving, considerate, tender, gentle and forgiving Father who loves you so very much and would have nothing separate you from His presence. When something is forgiven by God, it is forgiven permanently

I realise from my own experiences that it is not always easy to be confident as a Christian and that we sometimes rely on our feelings when we should rely on God. These points may help you if you can remember them when you feel low and vulnerable:-

~God loves you so very much more than the things you may have done,

~all things can be forgiven and will be forgiven if you can only ask,

~there is nothing that can distance you from God's presence except yourself,

~He always listens to and answers all your prayers, even the prayers that cannot be put into words,

~you can be confident and know that His love is always there for you, whatever, where ever, whenever, and that He will never, ever turn you away, but always welcome you with open arms,

His love for you is immeasurable, constant and cannot be lessened in any way. You are His most important creation however you feel about yourself.

I hope this has encouraged you and that you now feel able to approach God with real confidence if you have found prayer difficult lately. We all need encouragement and we all find prayer difficult at times.

When love seemingly grows cold.

When we are 'in love' we spend a huge amount of time talking and just being with our partner. We can't find out enough about this person. We love being in their presence and love finding out all there is to know about them. We love discovering new things about them. Our partner seems to be our only focus in life. It seems as if we are almost in love with being 'in love'.

Then, gradually, we become more confident and relaxed. We find we talk less and are just content to be with the person we love.

We do not love less. We love more when this happens. We do not rely on our love of being in love. This new love may not be as exciting but it is a greater love. It is more consistent and less reliant on feelings.

We may regret the passing of this first phase of being 'in love'. It was certainly more consuming and exciting than the phase we have moved into, but against it is the fact that as love goes it may have been wonderfully intense but had a lot of insecurity. It was based mostly on feelings.

As our love develops it goes through different phases, each seemingly less exciting than the one before it. What matters is that our love is growing, maturing, becoming more securely founded on experience and faith in the person we love.

Our prayer life has the same sort of elements as this.

For some of us the conversion experience or 'being born again' was an intensely emotional time. Our prayers had that same intensity. As we grew in maturity we moved from feelings into faith, our unbounded enthusiasm became tempered by true spiritual wisdom and growing discernment.

For those of us who 'just quietly grew into Christ' we learned the same lessons but in different ways.

What mattered was that our prayer lives became transformed.

We may want to go back to that time of being 'in love' because of its intensity of emotion but we have to move on to grow. Love is not 'being in love' but is something more substantial and lasting.

The question 'do I still love God?' has to be viewed with all this in mind. The answer is 'Yes, you have just grown up'. You don't have to rely on your feelings any more, you rely on your faith and experience, you don't seek God every

minute to check if He is still there because you know He is still there. I could go on but I won't. You know what I am saying. Yes, you not only still love God but you love Him even more and it is a much more secure love.

You are where you are in your Christian faith because you are growing. Nothing stays the same without stagnating.

You must grow to survive and that will mean that things change.

Where there is change then you may feel a little insecure but it is all part of growing up as a Christian.

Have faith in God.

He Loves you so much.

He will not let you fall away.

Within you your heart calls out to Him and constantly draws you to Him.

Do not let yourself be deceived, you still love God and that love is no less.

It is just a different kind of love and it needs recognising as such.

It is more firmly founded in Him rather than in your feelings.

Home Service

+David OSJ (Wales)

Originally given 12th Sunday after Trinity 2021 but worthy for re-use this coming month.

Intent: Self Dedication.

THE COLLECT

ALMIGHTY and everlasting God, grant that we may ever increase in faith, hope and charity; and, that we may quickly attain that for which thou hast destined us, may we love the path which thou hast ordained, through Christ our Lord. **Amen**

HYMN:

To be read or sung

Jesus Lover of my Soul

Jesus, lover of my soul, let me to thy bosom fly,
while the nearer waters roll, while the tempest still is high.
Hide me, O my Saviour, hide, till the storm of life is past;
safe into the haven guide; O receive my soul at last.

2. Other refuge have I none, hangs my helpless soul on thee;
leave, ah! leave me not alone, still support and comfort me.
All my trust on thee is stayed, all my help from thee I bring;
cover my defenceless head with the shadow of thy wing.

3.Thou, O Christ, art all I want, more than all in thee I find;
raise the fallen, cheer the faint, heal the sick, and lead the blind.
Just and holy is thy name, I am all unrighteousness;
false and full of sin I am; thou art full of truth and grace.

4.Plenteous grace with thee is found, grace to cover all my sin;
let the healing streams abound, make and keep me pure within.
Thou of life the fountain art, freely let me take of thee;
spring thou up within my heart; rise to all eternity.

Words: Charles Wesley. Composer: Joseph Parry 1879. Tune: (Aberystwyth)

NEW TESTAMENT

Romans 15:1-7 We then that are strong ought to bear the infirmities of the weak, and not to please ourselves. Let every one of us please his neighbour for his good to edification. For even Christ pleased not himself; but, as it is written, The reproaches of them that reproached thee fell on me. For whatsoever things were written aforetime were written for our learning, that we through patience and comfort of the scriptures might have hope. Now the God of patience and consolation grant you to be likeminded one toward another according to Christ Jesus: That ye may with one mind and one mouth glorify God, even the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. Wherefore receive ye one another, as Christ also received us to the glory of God.

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

HOLY GOSPEL

Glory to You, O Lord.

Matthew 5:17-25.

Think not that I am come to destroy the law, or the prophets: I am not come to destroy, but to fulfil. For verily I say unto you, Till heaven and earth pass, one jot or one tittle shall in no wise pass from the law, till all be fulfilled.

Whosoever therefore shall break one of these least commandments, and shall teach men so, he shall be called the least in the kingdom of heaven: but whosoever shall do and teach them, the same shall be called great in the kingdom of heaven.

For I say unto you, That except your righteousness shall exceed the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees, ye shall in no case enter into the kingdom of heaven.

Ye have heard that it was said of them of old time, Thou shalt not kill; and whosoever shall kill shall be in danger of the judgment: But I say unto you, That whosoever is angry with his brother without a cause shall be in danger of the judgment: and whosoever shall say to his brother Raca, shall be in danger of the council: but whosoever shall say, Thou fool, shall be in danger of hell fire.

Therefore if thou bring thy gift to the altar, and there rememberest that thy brother hath ought against thee; Leave their thy gift before the altar, and go thy way; first be reconciled to thy brother, and then come and offer thy gift. **Amen**

This is the Gospel of the Lord. Praise be to thee, O Christ.

ADDRESS Empty Heads and Hearts!

“He hath filled the hungry with good things.” Luke 1:53.

One day a young girl called Louise, just five years old! reported to her mother she had a little pain ‘here and here’! She laid her hands on her stomach as she spoke and there was a question in her words. Her mother, who was sweet and wise, said to her: “Yes, dear, it’s because your stomach is empty. When you have something in it you will feel better. You have not had lunch yet.”

So lunch was quickly served and Louise did feel better. In late afternoon the local Priest called. They talked about many things; school and Sunday school, books, pictures and dolls, and as he was leaving he happened to say that he had a very severe headache all day.

Before her mother could speak Louise said, “That’s because it’s empty. When you have something in it you will feel better.”

There was much laughing at what she said but on his way home the priest began to think. “Yes,” he said to himself, “when you have something in it you will feel better. That is true.” And it is true.

Louise had an empty stomach and it bothered her. She felt better when she had something in it. There are many, many small children in the world with empty stomachs, and lunch is not ready for them. There are children not far away that are hungry and there are little children on the other side of the world ill fed and undernourished who never get enough to eat.

In many countries there is famine which means that there is no bread, no food.

Jesus said that every time we feed a little child who is hungry, we feed Him.

An empty head is also bad. Empty heads do not always ache, but they never the less give pain. They give teachers and parents pain and there is no cure except to get something into empty heads.

There is no excuse for any of us to have an empty head for there are schools, churches, teachers and books and papers, and parents to answer our questions.

Certainly Louise was all against having an empty head, for one day after asking her mother a dozen or more questions about God and heaven and the angels she said, "Well, mother, there are a lot of things you don't know and I want to know. And some day I am going to find out and when I find out I am going to tell you." She wanted to know and knew she would feel better when she did know.

The worst thing however, is not an empty head but an empty heart.

An empty heart aches more than an empty head or empty stomach. A house is empty when there is no person living in it. It is vacant, unoccupied, deserted. A heart is empty when no one is in it. It is unoccupied. There is no person "at home."

In a letter of a very unhappy woman the sentence was found, "Sometimes my head aches and sometimes my heart aches."

There is no excuse for an empty head and there is no excuse for an empty heart. At the door of every heart friends are knocking, love is knocking. Things that are interesting are knocking, music is knocking, books and pictures are knocking, flowers and beauty are knocking, and saying, "if you will open the door I will come in." No one needs to be lonely and no one needs to live with an empty heart.

Above all Jesus, the best friend in the world, knocks and as He stands knocking He says to you and to me: "Behold, I stand at the door and knock; if any man hear my voice and open the door, I will come in to him." **Amen**

PRAYERS

Almighty and everlasting God, from whom cometh every good and perfect gift, send down upon all bishops and clergy and upon the congregations committed to their charge, the healthful spirit of thy grace; and, that they may truly please thee, pour upon them the continual dew of thy blessing; through Christ our Lord. **Amen**

Lord in your mercy, hear our prayer

Lord Christ, who dost dwell in the hearts of all men and hast commanded us to love one another, grant unto us grace seriously to lay to heart the unhappy divisions of those who confess their faith in you. Help us to lay aside all narrowness and prejudice, all pride and hardness of heart, all that may hinder us from the understanding of our brethren, that we may live in the spirit of unity and concord and through the diversity of our several gifts may glorify your holy name. **Amen.**

Lord in your mercy, hear our prayer

O God, who art the strength of all them that put their trust in you, without whom nothing is strong, nothing is holy, we commend to your fatherly goodness all who are in sickness and suffering that so far as may be expedient for them, they may be restored to bodily health and serve you in virtue of the same; through Christ our Lord. **Amen.**

Lord in your mercy, hear our prayer

O Lord we love, we pledge to you our faithfulness, knowing that only love can redeem the world. We invoke your blessing upon all who strive to serve you. We invoke your blessing upon all who in these days of unrest have to endure suffering, that they may joyfully discover their enfoldment in your love even in the midst of their afflictions.

We invoke your blessing upon all who wilfully inflict suffering that they may be moved to return to you and serve you; through Christ our Lord. **Amen.**

Lord in your mercy, hear our prayer

Lord of all grace and truth, who came to live and work among people in your own town of Nazareth, we pray that you will give us grace to live in our own communities as salt to purify them, and as light to reveal your truth. May we not be ashamed to acknowledge you as our Saviour; and may we learn so to serve and honour all people, that peace and good will may prevail among us; for your name's sake. **Amen**

Lord in your mercy, hear our prayer

We remember, O Lord, our land and our nation before you. In shame and in humility we confess that we are a hopelessly divided people, ruthlessly selfish, arrogant and conceited..... We are prone to despise rather than to love..... We are suffocating goodness, beauty and truth and are rushing down the precipice of ruin and destruction. Lord have mercy on us, forgive our sins, renew and reclothe us with goodness, beauty and truth... In Christ's name we pray. **Amen**

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

THE LORD'S PRAYER is said here.

THE BLESSING.

The peace of God, which passeth all understanding, keep your hearts and minds in the knowledge and love of God and of his Son, Christ our Lord; and the blessing of God Almighty The Father † the Son and the Holy Spirit, be amongst you and remain with you and all those whom you love always. **Amen.**

God Bless, +David OSJ (Wales)

Sparring Partners

+David OSJ (Wales)

Unpleasant people are often in our lives so we can practice our spiritual skills.

Good coaches don't let their prize fighters compete in major bouts without a lot of preparation. They will warm up their fighters on punching bags. But as punching bags don't punch back, coaches will arrange sparring partners so their prize fighter can practice and improve their skills before the big tournaments.

As Christians, we are God's prize fighters. Inevitably, we will all face 'Goliath-challenges'. It may be handling a difficult circumstance or person. It may be dealing with a serious illness. It may be our day in court or a big debate. Or maybe, we will have to grapple with a circumstance that most people can't handle – great prosperity.

I will not touch upon the events in Kabul Afghanistan this past week. Let us hope and pray this does not ignite another sparring match between Afghanistan's Taliban fighters and our own and the USA Military.

Our Political leaders assure us there will not be boots on the ground there again.... my own suspicions are I sadly do not believe a word of what they say anymore.

God, like any good coach, will do all in His power to prepare us for our big events; however, our success hangs on how we deal with the training. Learning and applying God's Word (Biblical truths) is our 'punching bag' stage of training. As we progress in life, God will bring sparring partners so we can put into practice the spiritual skills we have learnt.

At times God allows unpleasant people and circumstances to enter our life for the purpose of spiritual sparring. God is not the author of these nasty people and circumstances; they are a product of a corrupt and fallen world; however, God will use them for good, (Genesis 50:20).

Everything and every person that enters our life has been allowed by God – an opportunity sent from Heaven to practice grace, to strengthen our spiritual skills and prepare for future challenges that will bring glory to God.

If we cannot overcome our present sparring partners, we will surely be knocked-out when we stand face to face with the many powerful people and circumstances of this world.

Before David was ready to face Goliath, he dealt with bears and lions. To each of us, God has sent unpleasant people and circumstances to improve our spiritual skills.

As with David facing Goliath, we will not defeat our giants in our power and cleverness. We need to rely on God's power and this takes practice. - ***for the battle is the Lords.*** (1 Samuel 17:47).

We must remember, God has allowed our present circumstances to enter our lives for a very special purpose – spiritual growth and His eternal Glory.

Keep in mind: the problem before us is never as great as the Power behind us.

Moreover David said, "The Lord, who delivered me from the paw of the lion and the paw of the bear, He will deliver me from the hand of this Philistine." (1 Samuel 17:37)

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Visiting Clergy:

St Leonard's welcomes visiting clergy from other churches but the courtesy and kindness we extend to them is not always reciprocated. If as visiting clergy you have cause to move something then please replace it where you found it when your service is completed. This is especially important with the items found on the altars as they are all consecrated. It's simply a matter of care, consideration, respect and good manners, and also of professionalism. **+Ian**

OSJ (UK): Website Visitor Information:

Total **page hits** from 1st January 2021 to 23rd August 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 (to 23 rd)	39,857	average - 1,733 per day
August projected	53,720	

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

Counter 1: 4,300,852 visitors Counter 2: 5,046,121 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.

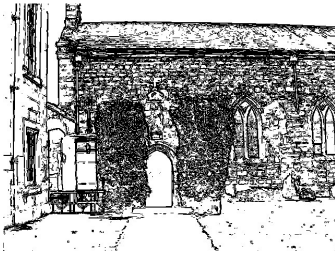
The same applies to the giving of last rites (viaticum).

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

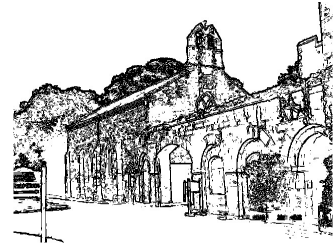
1. [Self-administered Communion](#)
2. [Last Rites \(Emergency Measures\)](#)

Also to be noted, 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.