

	<p style="text-align: center;">The Order of St James (UK) Newsletter</p> <p style="text-align: center;">May 2021</p> <p style="text-align: center;">www.orderofstjames.info</p>	
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4th Sunday after Easter: [May 2, 2021]

Fr. Ed Elsey OSJ (Wales)

1 Pet 2, 19-25, Jn 10 1-10

"It is commendable if a man bears up under the pain of unjust suffering because he is conscious of God".

Try telling that to those who have suffered a year under Covid restrictions and long for life to take on some kind of normality, even if it is 'a new normal'. Those impoverished, suffering, exploited in countries under siege, under military dictatorships and in the aftermath of war and living on what appears to be a bomb-site, pushing on with their lives under gigantic disadvantage. Indians I encountered in a visit to the sub-continent to meet a missionary friend working in Kodaikanal, who showed me their suffering, but also their joy and enthusiasm for life.

Can we believe that suffering is all part of God's plan for them – to be borne with fortitude. Tell the beach people of Madras and the man who had no arms or legs but pushed his meagre, emaciated and mutilated torso around on a tiny wheeled trolley someone had made for him.

Tell the starving woman for whom family planning and contraception was unknown and who was expected by her absent sperm-donor [probably not a husband even] to bring up her mawking miserable crying infant on nothing. Read them Peter's words from our lesson.

'Slaves', or bonded workers, contracted labourers in the exploitable coffee plantations 'submit to your masters' – not only the good masters but also the harsh ones. FOR IT IS commendable if a man bears up under the pain of unjust suffering because he becomes more conscious of God...'.

Ah now, statistics and reports suggest that during our lockdown and extreme caution not to catch the virus, not being able to say goodbye to dying relatives, minimal funerals and locked care-homes, forbidden to visitors - even closed churches, on higher authority ruling, have engendered a thirst to return to God, the Eucharist, the prayer routine of worship - and, unmasked, to sing again. Conscious of God, or of an apparent absence, maybe, strengthens faith. We shall see. Let's hope our church leaders are prepared for a power-surge, if so it becomes.

So much of the Bible we pick at, don't we?

We read the 'lovely' comfortable words or simper repeatedly over the warm bits, repeating those we love or those which suit us or those which are aimed at other people. We are less pleased to study the less attractive less soothing ones, those which challenge and disturb.

They make us feel uncomfortable – harsh stories from missionaries who tell us 'how it is on the Field', departing back from furlough [a more familiar word for us nowadays, we note] and leaving us 'undisturbed' again to bicker over annual Church meetings and petty squabbles of diocese and parish!

I have known such situations though a long while ago. My church supports so many workers in God's harvest-fields worldwide. The stories are wonderful and deserving of fulsome support.

People who search only for 'the comfortable words of Our Lord' have been described as 'horoscope bible-readers'. You know when people read the punditry printed in national newspapers in case it applies on this occasion to their own birth date. If it does, it seems to soothe: if it doesn't they dismiss the whole thing as rubbish anyway and try to pretend they didn't really want to read it but felt they should!

Do YOU wrestle with your Bible or do you play with it?

Do you read it regularly at all?

Do you use helpful notes like those from SU or IBRF, SPCK and Bible Society?

Do you find help and comfort from it or does it disturb you as it was intended to do? God's Word is intended for all situations of life.

Or do you fall back again and again on the 'comfy slipper', 'comfort food' bits again and again? Nothing wrong with that of course.

Search a bit more - widen your Biblical horizon.

So Peter challenges his readers to tackle this irony, this dilemma. Those who have most to be forgiven, said Our Lord, have the most to forgive. If you have come back from the depths of disgrace and despair you'll know what this Peter is saying in this passage.

This Peter is not the impulsive brusque and brash fisherman. This is the 'What have I done to betray my Lord' Peter, the Feed my Sheep and Lambs' Peter. This is 'the Rock of the Church' Peter, the 'Build my Church' Peter.

He has been disciplined by years of suffering and trial, guilt and regret, personal challenge and re-building. He has been strengthened by the Baptism of the Holy Spirit and by a personal knowledge of Healing.

He is in Rome [nick-named Babylon because of the similarity to its infamous predecessor – its demise into traditional wickedness and debauchery. He writes to the 'called' Christians scattered through Asia Minor – Jews AND Gentiles – to the Churches founded by Paul and encouraged by the other apostles' letters [which incidentally will encourage and inspire you if you take time to read them]. These are words for us.

In this First Letter he follows Christ's two basic commands: to encourage and strengthen; to feed the flock. The word SUFFER occurs [in origin or in intended translation] 20 times. But it is VICTORY over Suffering.

A colleague of mine said that if, as Chaplain, I didn't stop mentioning suffering and death in School Chapel services she would cease to attend. She ceased to attend. I couldn't help it. Youngsters - and staff - I taught, counselled and listened to were quite naturally concerned over their personal family instances of these things [I served as Chaplain during the Gulf War and Falklands campaign and the Kobe earthquake, with pupils' relatives involved in each and all] and they wanted to know that there was 'light at the end of their tunnel', healing, hope, love and Heavenly ideals. And that, I believed, as I hoped they would come to believe – and so many I am delighted to say did – that Christ is the answer to every personal human need and that his human example raises us to Heavenly expectation and fulfilment. It takes time, perseverance, patience, prayer and faith! School chapel work is a trickle effect spread over the time of a pupil's growing years.

The propagandist story was told of Churchill Mussolini and Stalin discussing who would win the war. They sat around a large goldfish bowl. Stalin boasted they would win. To demonstrate his point he emptied the clip of his revolver into the water. Of course the bullets were deflected and the fish swam away, faster and more shocked, but still alive. Il Duce then decided to demonstrate his supremacy, stripped to his shorts and dived into the pool. Despite his frantic efforts he failed to catch one of the fish. Churchill was looking on, quietly sipping his cup of afternoon tea. Taking his teaspoon, but otherwise not moving a muscle, he scooped up a teaspoonful of water and tipped it onto the floor, repeating the laborious process over five minutes of the others' astonished silence.

But that way will take ages, they declared. Yes, Churchill, replied, it will, but we shall win the war!

We know that the world 2000 years ago seems little different in all the major cruelties from its counterpart today. Man's inhumanity to man seems to know no new bounds. Increased communication in our day suggests 2021 is in some ways even worse. And yet, chipping gently but firmly away at the horror and the hatred, the poverty and the power abuse, the despair and the degradation come the quietly peaceful words of John 3,16

'God so loved the world that He gave his only begotten son, Jesus Christ, that all who believe in Him should not perish but have everlasting life.'

The love of God through Christ and His followers – those, that is, who didn't get it wrong through bigoted crusades and campaigns of bullying conversion or proselytism – gradually disposed of small quantities of hatred, greed, bigotry, selfishness, arrogance, pride, stubbornness and replaced them with compassion, care, vision, commitment and HOPE!

We wrestle not, says Paul, against flesh and blood, but against principalities and powers, corruption in high places. Substitute for that the Virtues, which many school teachers have in all sorts of ways been trying to substitute in our society but often get little credit for: Honesty, Integrity, Honour, Openness, Accountability, Justice and Truth.

The Fruits of the Spirit are described in Galatians chapter 5 as:

Love, Joy, Peace, Long-suffering [there it is again – it means tolerance],
gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance [which means moderation].

It's a tall order – the toughest of challenges.

I do not believe – and I read widely as you know – any other way out of such behaviour than the Christian way of life – and even that can fail as we have seen where Christians too have so fallen from grace as to give bad models. God's Word is pretty clear.

Hinduism, Buddhism, Islam and Eastern faith disciplines go some of the way – but never all the way to The Cross. Now I am being very careful with my language as I associate with all world religion as teacher and explorer of themes.

So, because the Galilean teacher, crucified and raised from the dead did not revile those who ill-used him, we are supposed to do the same and be walked over, humiliated, victimised and abused? Well actually, probably, Yes!

'We who are strong [Romans 15,1] ought to bear with the inadequacies of the weak.'

Christ showed us that it is when we come to terms with the suffering of mankind, repetition of our own woes, feelings of hurt, social wounding - what a friend of mine calls 'the organ recital' - [ooh my feet, ooh my hip, ooh my arthritis] when we come to terms with them, it is ONLY through Christ's love, compassion,

teaching, life, ministry, death and resurrection. By man came death, quoted Handel in his Messiah, but by Man [with the capital M] came also the resurrection from the dead. Glorious salvation, living hope, rejoicing in trial, inexpressible love and joy.

Self-control, obedience, unworldliness, holiness, godly reverence – all these gifts of the Spirit, bring joy and fulfilment.

Christ is the answer to change your inner life as the carers in the society seek to try to ease your physical life – often a slower process.

But those feeling deprived and disadvantaged don't want to hear our words. They want to experience our deeds. Paul's letter to the Ephesians says all this beautifully. Read it for your homework! Ephesians 3. Suffice it to use just verses 17-19:

Out of his glorious riches he will strengthen you with power through His Spirit in your inner being, So that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith. I pray that you, being rooted and established in love, may have power, together with the saints, to grasp how wide and long and high and deep is the love of Christ, and to know this love that surpasses knowledge – that you may be filled to the measure of all the fulness of God.

Let us speak out for God's right and truth, freedom and love, in our own sphere of life in this coming week? May it be so, for His Name's sake. AMEN.

Expressing Our Love

+David, OSJ (Wales)

How Do We Express Our Love For God

When we are in love, it is natural to continually think about, talk about and long to be with that person. We express our love by foregoing things for ourselves so we can buy gifts for them. Service on their behalf is a pleasure and an outward sign of our inner devotion.

Sacrificial love, sacrificial giving and sacrificial service all sound quite painful. Though these Christian terms shouldn't be taken out of context, we should question if our spiritual life and service has become a chore instead of an act of love. Often, we talk about sacrificing this and that for Christ; but when we are truly in love with someone, giving gifts and spending time in their company should not be forced but a natural result of devotion.

If our Christian service is motivated by peer pressure, guilt or because we want something in return, our work will soon be a burden. Moreover, God is not honoured by this and He will not honour our 'forced' gifts.

If we have lost that 'loving feeling' for God, maybe it's because we are taking Him for granted and are devoted to something else. Take a few deep breaths and think about the miracle of our existence and the many blessings we have (Philippians 4:19).

Recall how God humbled Himself by becoming a man to die for us on the cross (Philippians 2:8). These precious gifts are results of our Heavenly Father's devotion to us. When we truly realise how much God loves us, it is easy to respond in kind. We will naturally want to be in His company (times of study and devotion); to trust and talk to Him (claiming His promises and prayer); to give Him gifts in return (Christian giving and service).

So let each one give as he purposes in his heart, not grudgingly or of necessity;
for God loves a cheerful giver. 2 Corinthians 9:7

Prayerfully Yours,

+ David

Notes from the diary:

+Ian, OSJ (UK)

The old saying that every 'cloud', every bad or difficult situation we face, has a 'silver lining', often seems to be true, but sometimes you have to look very hard for that elusive 'silver lining' which doesn't reveal itself easily. It can take years.

Lockdown has been difficult, but I have enjoyed the space it has provided. Ministry has continued, sometimes in a different form, but at a much more measured pace. It has had its light and dark moments too.

I've shared the disappointment of many couples who have had to cancel or reschedule their wedding (some five or six times). For some, lockdown has brought them closer together, but for others it has driven them apart. For the latter group, I am at least pleased they didn't have the huge financial burden of an expensive wedding to add to their inevitably costly parting of the ways.

Not only weddings have been affected but baptisms too. Like weddings, they are the outward sign of an internal process that may take a lifetime to come to both understand and fulfil.

I know how important baptism can be for new mums and dads, but for me who sees baptism as something that also has a good deal of superstition attached to it, lockdown has given couples time to think about why they are having their child baptised and what it really means in spiritual terms.

Like marriage, it is an expression of hope and intent, a promise and covenant based on a love that is often unprepared and sometimes fails when it is put under significant stress and pressure. It is where 'reality' and 'romance' face one another and try to find the uneasy and oft changing point of balance where some dreams, hopes and expectations have to be abandoned so that others may survive and grow.

They may seem like bad times but actually, given some distance of time, they turn out to have been the very best of times.

It is here I think of Peter, when his love and strength failed before the cock crowed after Peter's third denial of Christ. It could have been the end of Peter's world but love is greater than failure and even betrayal, and he was in time able to turn to Christ and accept the outstretched arms of forgiveness.

There is always hope, even if it doesn't seem like it. Hope is something that can take time to break through the seemingly never-ending and overwhelming darkneses of despair, failure, disappointment, self-realization and humiliation.

My sadness for Judas was that he could not find hope or accept it, and there in lay his great loss. Sometimes our belief we are beyond redemption is too great.

We all need to discover that losing a battle does not mean the war is forever lost.

Funerals have continued. Weddings and baptisms could be postponed but not so funerals.

They were very difficult. Limited to just 20 minutes or so to cover the basics, it presented great challenges. Pre-service visits were limited to what was allowable under lockdown rules. Deciding who could come and who couldn't as numbers became limited by legislation and also by venue managers as to what was best thought to be Covid safe, placed massive additional strain on grieving families.

The position we found ourselves in simply excluded far too many people from the grieving process. They could not share in the giving of thanks for a precious life. They were not offered a specially shared moment in time to 'let go', nor personally offer or receive much-needed compassionate support and sympathy.

Social distancing meant that even a simple hug was out of the question.

There is certainly going to be a lot of pastoral catching up and healing to do.

It was interesting the way that 'the simple funerals' groups took advantage of the situation. Offering low cost on the media and simple disposal of the deceased, no frills, no funeral service, it as seems a good low hassle option. Let someone else sort it all out whilst those that survive get on with life.

Except it doesn't sort out the grieving process in the way that traditional funerals do.....

Traditional funerals may seem pretty archaic and something that has to be endured rather than enjoyed, but they do provide a process that allows for structured grieving and provide that most necessary component, a carefully prepared point in time of 'letting go' as a supportive community.

At least they did until we were faced with Covid-19.

You may not know but the grieving process can on average take two years. It is rarely a matter of months. For some, they never get through it successfully.

The 'simple funerals' approach, whilst it deals with greatly reducing the financial costs, leaves a massive gap regarding people's real needs following bereavement and how they are supported. The 'out of sight, out of mind' approach doesn't resolve the problems of dealing with grief and loss. Sad to say it just buries them.

Personally, I would like to see some changes in the ways funerals are presented but more on that in the future perhaps.

By way of changing the subject to something a little lighter, we received two kittens in August 2020 after having been cat-less for a number of years and they have been a great joy to us although we have been reminded that they need other kinds of maintenance that go beyond food, water, a place to lay their heads safely and a great deal of affection.

Fleas and dead mice seem to be the main two items at the moment with neutering being an upcoming issue.

There are times our cats are seemingly difficult and uncooperative but we would miss out on so much genuine affection and love if we didn't have them. They have certainly helped make the place feel a lot less empty now the children have grown up and made homes for themselves elsewhere.

In spite of the bad press, cats are actually very loving and their relationship with us is very much based on trust, and they are free spirits who are quite capable of finding another home if that trust is abused. They are not stupid either although they occasionally do get themselves into difficulty because they are so inquisitive.

I remember the first time I had to get a ladder to rescue both kittens from high up in one of our trees. Learning to climb up a tree does not necessarily guarantee the reverse process is an automatically learned process.

Necessity is a good motivator to learn new skills.

I recalled previous experiences with kittens and was aware I should not step in too early. Exploration and getting things wrong was all part of the process of developing and learning. They need those experiences in order to grow up.

But there is so much more about cats than I could ever have imagined. They are the kind of creature that you just begin to get the measure of and then they do something that is unpredictable and occasionally inexplicable. It's as if they really, really don't want us to know.

Do I understand cats? As much as I love cats the answer is 'no'.

In order for me to fully understand what it is like to be a cat, the only way I can do that is to physically, emotionally, intellectually spiritually become a cat. My assumptions about what it is to be a cat are just that, assumptions, but those assumptions may be completely wrong, misjudged and misunderstood, because I can only see things in human terms.

Put simply, I cannot know until I become one.

Is that why God gave up being God to become 'man', not just to see what it was like to experience life in man's eyes, but to show what would happen if they released that potential and could become if they had the will and desire to live their lives in the way He intended?

You may be able now to understand why my thoughts about keeping cats sometimes turn empathetically to the ins and outs of our relationship with God.

If I can feel and experience all these things because of my beloved cats, then what does God feel about us as we travel our life's journey with all of its pitfalls and snares?

When does God as Father leave us to learn from experience?

What does He see or discerns that prompts Him to step in and rescue us?

Does He need our consent?

Can we choose not to be rescued?

How often will He rescue us before He decides enough is enough?

Is it inevitable that every new generation will encounter the same problems and make the same mistakes as the previous generation?

Why doesn't God stop us making mistakes in the first place?

Why aren't we born with pre-existing wisdom?

What does God see that we cannot see for ourselves?

And this is only the tip of the questions iceberg....

But aren't these the very same things that keep coming up time and time again in the stories and events contained in the bible?

What the bible does reveal is that God loves us greatly but He can't live our lives for us. The only love that matters is a love that is freely given. Anything less isn't love.

Love involves making hard choices regarding the greater good of others and shouldering the nagging pain of uncertainty of outcome. There is a lot of trust and much heartbreak. Love truly suffers and it cannot fail to show the deep scars of rejection however hard one tries to hide them.

God has done everything He can for us and now it is up to us – we can go His way, or we can go our way. The choice is ours because He has given us free will, but the responsibility remains ours and may have eternal consequences.

It reminds me of the first time I let both kittens go through the door to face the outside world. The feeling of letting them go out on their own for the first time and wondering if they would return was pretty horrific.

I have no idea how God feels about us when we step outside into the big wild world. I see it as something that is disproportionately unimaginable.

With no disrespect intended, it comes as no surprise to me that God is often represented in imagery as being white haired, wrinkly, very old and looking exhausted, and I find it shows unexpected and great understanding rather than childish naivety – it is simply the result of great love and the stress and pain it generates. It would age anyone.

Other interpretations are of course available.

On yet another subject, thanks to lockdown, my garage is tidy, my tools are sorted and clipped onto new clip boards on the wall. This is not a natural state of affairs for me as I love to work within several levels of apparent 'chaos'.

My office is a true representation of my character with heaps of documents and books in cluttered piles mixed amongst sets of altar candlesticks, monstrances and other altar furniture, computers, printers, camera lenses and musical instruments. When that is all tidied up and stays that way, you will know I am near death.

However, I did decide to get into the garage and sort things out to see what resources I did actually have at my disposal.

To say I was surprised was an understatement. It would have done the centre aisle at Aldi proud with some items duplicated several times. In my defence I will state you can never have enough cable ties. I suppose it goes to prove that our memories are not as reliable as we think they are and we are not actually aware of what we have or don't have until we look.

A number of things I thought I was desperately short of turned out to be another urban myth – I had several complete sets of metal, masonry and wood drill sets plus, when I collected and sorted them all out, enough spares to last a lifetime.

I found boxes of nails, screws, wall plugs amongst the chisels, jewellery files, hammers, screwdrivers, pliers, hexagonal keys, spanners, electrical tools and cutters I had forgotten about, all because they were 'out of sight, out of mind'. I also finished up with a small pile of things I'd been intending to mend or restore for the last 25 years. They are now completed. 'Repair Shop,' eat your heart out!

After spending £150 on knock down shelving units, not only can I see what I have but I can also see the garage floor. Even my wife was impressed. Money and time well invested she said.

The lesson is I guess that in order to know what resources we have, they need to be seen so we know what we have and where they are, be readily available, be handily placed and be able to be used effectively. We need to be organised and ready for action.

What is the point of having resources if we can't find them when we need them?

Equally, what is the point of having resources if they are never used?

Do we really need them all for a 'just in case' moment?

Are there more important things than need that space?

So yes, it's worth spending time on organising things and knowing where they are, making them accessible and then actually using them.

Added bonus, I now also have space to work in the garage. I can now physically get to the band saw, pillar drill, circular saws and grinders without having to move other stuff or fall over it first. Resources can be obstacles to getting jobs done too.

It feels good but that actually isn't the point - I know there is an important life application in all of this and it relates to our work and ministry.

In community based ministry the same principles come into play: we need to be organised, know what resources we have, where they are, and we need space to function.

We need to be able to use what we have already and have it 'at hand' ready for use.

We also need to know what we don't have and also where to draw the line as to our capabilities.

But we mustn't let the organization become an end in itself or become a self-fulfilling goal. What is the point of being fully equipped with everything in its place if it isn't used, or can't be used because you either 'don't have permission' or any idea how to use it?

It's just a question of finding the balance.

It's the difference between having a dumping ground where things get lost, a useable workshop where things get done, or having display area where things are for show and are really not actually intended to be used.

You might want to think about that with Jesus being a carpenter.....

Now there is a worthwhile bible study, but keep it focussed and within the realms of reality.

If it leads you to start carrying nails and a hammer around with you 'because Jesus did' then you may have missed the point entirely and also quite likely to get arrested for carrying an offensive weapon if stopped and searched by the police.

I am sure there are more worthwhile things you could get arrested for as a Christian, things like saying that 'marriage is between a man and woman'.

At the moment, there are certain groups who want to make this fundamental statement of belief fall within the remit of hate crime because it is offensive their beliefs and practices. If you don't believe me visit C4M or the Christian Institute websites!

Getting back to 'organisations and work/ministry,' for those of you who love lists, here are seven 'keeping things balanced' principles, the very same principles OSI (UK) uses. Please feel free to disregard, use, amend or adapt according to need.

Work/Ministry and Organisation.

Principle 1: 'the organisation' exists only to support work/ministry,

Principle 2: work/ministry is not there to support 'the organisation',

Principle 3: work/ministry will happen with or without 'the organisation's' help or interference,

Principle 4: if there is no work/ministry then 'the organisation' is redundant, surplus to requirement, and has no reason to continue,

Principle 5: time spent in work/ministry should always greatly exceed any time spent in dealing with 'the organisation's' administrative requirements and/or its officers,

Principle 6: it is individual people (with their gifts, talents and skills) who make work/ministry happen, not 'the organisation',

Principle 7: and those very same individual people need to be recognised, properly placed, used well and looked after.

Until next time then, stay safe, be very blessed.

OSJ (UK) Monthly Service: *

Alleluia, alleluia, give thanks to the Risen Lord!

Let us meditate this month in the power and presence of God.

Father, Son + and Holy Spirit, we rejoice in gifts the Holy Spirit brings to each of us.

Mighty God, in whom we know the power of redemption, you stand among us in the shadows of our time.

As we move through every sorrow and trial of this life, uphold us with knowledge of the final morning when, in the glorious presence of your risen Son, we will share in his resurrection, redeemed and restored to the fullness of life and forever freed to be your people.

Amen.

Hymn: (this may be said or sung)

Come down, O love divine, seek thou this soul of mine,
and visit it with thine own ardor glowing;
O Comforter, draw near, within my heart appear,
and kindle it, Thy holy flame bestowing.

O let it freely burn, 'til earthly passions turn
to dust and ashes in its heat consuming;
And let thy glorious light shine ever on my sight,
and clothe me round, the while my path illuming.

Let holy charity mine outward vesture be,
and lowliness become mine inner clothing;
True lowliness of heart, which takes the humbler part,
and o'er its own shortcomings weeps with loathing.

And so the yearning strong, with which the soul will long,
shall far out-pass the power of human telling;
For none can guess its grace, till they become the place
wherein the Holy Spirit finds a dwelling.

The Collect

Lord you have taught us that all our doings without love are nothing worth: Send your Holy Spirit and pour into our hearts that most excellent gift of love, the true bond of peace and of all virtues, without which whosoever is counted dead before you. Grant this for your Son Jesus Christ's sake, who is alive and reigns with you, in the unity of the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. Amen

'In the Garden' +David

On reflection back to Easter Sunday, I noted the following words, I confess of not hearing them before! Yet they seemed to resonate with me, a warmth, and a sense of belonging.

The chorus is so simple, yet impactful, I stopped what I was doing at the time to meditate on the meaning of the words. Realising the words could only have come from a Hymn or song. I searched for its source. I was so pleased it was a Hymn.

The chorus simple and easy to remember. Though of few words, they have a very profound effect if one ponders upon them. I learned this song has been recorded by some very famous singers and personalities. You may look the song up on Utube to hear the music and words!

“And He walks with me, and He talks with me, and He tells me I am His own, and the joy we share as we tarry there none other has ever known.”

A Mr C. Austin Miles wrote the song in the Spring of 1912, it is said after reading Chapter 20 in the Gospel of John. Note the words of Alyson Kieda , “That song brought joy to me. As I read it that day, I seemed to be part of the scene. I became a silent witness to that dramatic moment in Mary’s life when she knelt before her Lord and cried, “Rabboni” (Teacher).

In John 20, we find Mary Magdalene weeping near Jesus' empty tomb. There she met a man who asked why she was crying. Thinking it was the gardener, she spoke but it was the Risen Saviour - Jesus!

Her sorrow turned to joy, and she ran to tell the disciples, "I have seen the Lord!" (v.18).

We too have the assurance that Jesus has risen! He's now in heaven with the Father. But he has not left us on our own. Believers in Christ have His Spirit inside us, and through Him we have the assurance and joy of knowing He's with us, and we are "His Own." Amen .

Hymn: (this may be said or sung)

I come to the garden alone,
While the dew is still on the roses;
And the voice I hear, falling on my ear,
The Son of God discloses.

Refrain:

*And He walks with me, and He talks with me,
And He tells me I am His own,
And the joy we share as we tarry there,
None other has ever known.*

He speaks, and the sound of His voice
Is so sweet the birds hush their singing;
And the melody that He gave to me
Within my heart is ringing.

I'd stay in the garden with Him
Tho' the night around me be falling;
But He bids me go; thro' the voice of woe,
His voice to me is calling.

“Thank you Lord for the inspiration you give me daily to write and perform my duties and to comfort all whom I meet daily in my travels.” +David.

NEW TESTAMENT READING

1 John 3 verses 16 - end

We know love by this, that He laid down His life for us - and we ought to lay down our lives for one another. How does God's love abide in anyone who has the world's goods and sees a brother or a sister in need, and yet refuses to help.

Little children, let us love, not in word or speech, but in truth and action. And by this we will know that we are from the truth and will reassure our hearts before Him whenever our hearts condemn us; for God is greater than our hearts and He knows everything.

Beloved, if our hearts do not condemn us, we have boldness before God; and we receive from Him whatever we ask; because we obey His commandments and do what pleases Him.

And this is His commandment that we should believe in the name of His Son Jesus Christ and love one another, just as He has commanded us. All who obey His commandments abide in Him and He abides in them. And by this we know that He abides in us, by the Spirit that He has given us.

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

THE HOLY GOSPEL

John chapter 10 verses 11 - 18

Glory to You O Lord †

I am the good Shepherd. The good Shepherd lays down His life for the sheep. The hired hand, who is not the shepherd and does not own the sheep, sees the wolf coming and leaves the sheep and runs away - and the wolf snatches them, and scatters them. The hired hand runs away because a hired hand does not care for the sheep. I am the good Shepherd. I know my own and my own know me; just as the Father knows me and I know the Father, and I lay down my life for the sheep.

I have other sheep that do not belong to this fold. I must bring them also and they will listen to my voice. So there will be one flock, one shepherd. For this reason the Father loves me; because I lay down my life in order to take it up again. No one takes it from me but I lay it down of my own accord. I have power to lay it down and I have power to take it up again. I have received this command.

This is the Gospel of the Lord.

Praise to You O Christ

In the Name of God, Father, Son † and Holy Spirit, Amen

We might be tempted to try to imagine and understand what happened on that first Easter morning. Could we have witnessed for ourselves Jesus' resurrection. Could we have watched Him as He rose from the dead?

The writer of Hebrews (12 v. 29) sounds a warning, "indeed our God is a consuming fire". The fire of God's love is far greater than we are able to experience on earth. We are not ready to know the fullness of it.

Love that raised Jesus from the dead, that rolled away the boulder from the grave, that returned His life to those He loved, was the Father's Love in the fire of unimaginable power. It is a love that is beyond us.

Yet Jesus promises that same all-consuming power abides with us. The word abiding is linked to the word abode. God bids us to make our home with Him as He makes His home with us.

And yet when we look back over the last year, how do we explain the suffering that has fallen on so many. It is a fact that Jesus nowhere explains the origins of suffering.

He heals, he consoles, he weeps, He loves. But He does not explain why bad things happen to good people.

What Jesus does do, however, is live out our most familiar psalm. He is the good Shepherd. He is with us in the valley of the shadow of life and death. He does not abandon us in our pain or desolation.

He walks with us. He hears us when we cry out. No matter how alone we feel, we are neither abandoned nor forgotten. So we can hold onto faith, in the power of the resurrection. Easter Joy is Jesus' absolute triumph over death itself and all sin. We are the sheep who know His voice, as we follow Him He is ours for now and on into eternity. Amen

PRAYERS

God of Love, may we abide in your presence that we may freely share with others all that you have given to us.

Lord hear us,

Lord graciously hear us.

We pray for the Body of Christ throughout the world. In the name of the Sacred Trinity, we who have found a home in the Church welcome strangers and friends to come amongst us here.

With the Father's love, we open wide our doors. In the name of the Son we invite all to enter. Empowered by the Holy Spirit we extend our friendship.

May we welcome you as Christ Himself and through God's good grace, may you see Christ in us.

Lord hear us,

Lord graciously hear us.

Crown us Lord, but with humility and robe us with compassion, that, as you call us into the kingdom of your Son, we may strive to overcome all evil by the power of your perfect love in us and so walk gently on the earth with you, our God, for ever.

Lord God, how happy we are when we obey your will and follow your way!
Help us to do this in our worship today.

Help us not to be tossed about like straw in the wind, by the pressures of events or by other people, or by our moods.

Deliver us, defend and strengthen us, in this coming month.

Help us to be firm in our faith, balanced and stable in our feelings, thinking and behaviour.

Like trees planted by water, may we be refreshed and strengthened in this service of worship, for the living of our days.

Lord, guide and protect us, we pray .

Lord we seek and accept that true happiness that you bestow upon us.

Lord our God, we worship you. Help us find our true happiness that we may be a source to inspire all others in lifting their spirits, and seeking your wisdom and strength for daily living.

Enable us to recognise bad advice and ungodly behaviour. Help us always to do right, in company with your people.

We seek to read, to hear and to receive God's word to us.

Help us to know and obey your Law; help us to experience your grace.

We reach out to God as a tree in need of water sends out its roots to a stream.
Lord, we need you. Help us to prove in our daily living that we receive from you
wisdom and strength.

In Jesus' name.

Merciful Father, accept these prayers for the sake of your Son our Saviour Jesus
Christ.

The Lord's Prayer

The Blessing

May the peace of God abide with all clergy, and all people throughout the world.
The Blessing of God, Father, Son † and Holy Spirit stay with you now and always.
Amen.

A Sermon this month relevant for Todays difficulties in theWorld.

"Follow Me" Matthew 9:9

When James Renwick died. On the scaffold, the cause of freedom seemed at its
darkest. He was the flower of the Scottish martyrs. By stern men, in an un-tender
time, he was regarded with peculiar love and reverence. His short life had been so
bright and so blameless, and his devotion had been so complete, that his fate
brought tears into eyes little used to weeping. Before the end, he mastered all his
fears, even the fear of torture, of which he had always had a great dread.

He said, "The terror of it is so remote that I would rather be cast into a cauldron of boiling oil than do anything to wrong truth".

When he appeared before the council for the last time, he was questioned regarding the lawfulness of paying the tax for the bearing of the Gospel. He replied, "For the present Cess enacted for the present usurper, I hold it unlawful to put it, both because it is oppressive to the subjects for the maintenance of tyranny, and because it is imposed for suppressing the Gospel. Would it have been thought lawful for the Jews, in the days of Nebuchadnezzar, to have brought everyone a coal to augment the flame of the furnace to devour the three children if so they had been required by that tyrant?"

The sentence was given that he should be executed in the Grass Market, and on 17th February, 1688, he died triumphantly with the words "As to the remnant I leave, I have committed them to God. Tell them from me not too weary nor to be discouraged in maintaining the testimony. Let them not quit nor forego one of these despised truths. Keep your ground, and the Lord will provide you teachers and ministers, and when He comes He will make these despised truths glorious upon the earth."

Who could have dreamed that the hour was so near? But for Renwick's death and the suffering of his friends, the revolution of 1688 might never have been effected. But William saw the banners afar off in Scotland, and was encouraged to make the attempt which finally issued in the restoration of liberty.

At the revolution the Parliament of Scotland rescinded all the measures passed against the martyrs, and pronounced them “void and null from the beginning”. The Scottish Convention declared in words as strong as were ever used by Renwick that King James, by his abuse of power, had forfeited all title to the Crown, while the English Parliament was in full accord, testifying that “King James II, having devoured to subvert the Constitution by breaking the original contract between King and the people, did abdicate the throne”.

John Brown died on the gallows in 1859, saying, “God sees I am of more use to hang for any other purpose”. As the old man walked quietly to his death, he kissed a black child amidst the execrations of the frowning soldiers. He was the first abolitionist who died fighting the slave power. It seemed then to be indeed the hour and power of darkness. Slavery was apparently triumphant and secure beyond all attack. The abolitionists were few, and some of them were faint. Slavery was fortified by the love of the South and by the general sympathy of the North, while probably five sixths of the civilised world were upon its side. The utmost that could be looked for by the most sanguine was that in the end the progress of civilisation and religion might dissolve it away.

In our own country those who sought to abolish it were denounced as pestilent fanatics by practically the unanimous educated opinion of the land. But when John Brown went gladly to his sacrifice, slavery died. The death was wrought out in a horror of tears and blood, but it came to pass. The South said, These abolitionists are not cowards, they are madmen. When they recognised that, the far sighted amongst them knew that they could only maintain slavery by seceding.

John Brown left abolitionists behind him, and they knew their mind, and had counted the cost. Soon came the war, and though at first the North represented slavery as a secondary issue, if an issue at all, though the great Lincoln himself was not convinced, though the Northern army was at first in a considerable degree favourable to slavery, and though the people of the North were very little stirred, yet before a few years were over, John Brown's soul had behind it a million of armed men fulfilling almost in spite of themselves the purpose for which he died. On 19th December, 1865, the Secretary of State announced that the Constitutional amendment abolishing slavery and enabling Congress to make that abolition effectual had been signed by twenty seven States, and had become part of the Federal Constitution. This was less than six years after the day when John Brown kissed that young black child. This an act of true Christian Love and compassion freely given to an innocent child with no rewards expected.

One of the most thoughtful commentators on the American war pointed out that the victory came at a time when faith in the power of ideas seemed to be dying. The Sadducees reigned. Men had ceased to believe that truth is stronger than armies.

In this country enthusiasm was hated and mocked as a waste of life. Men were asking themselves whether after all freedom was better than tyranny. They were saying that it was not worthwhile to fight for a great idea, and see it advance a little hair's breadth, and then recede. Even those who believed in freedom doubted whether it was worthwhile to suffer for it, and they said, Peace is good, and comfort is good, and tendency must take its way. What had to happen?

Men like John Brown had to happen, men who willing to suffer and to surrender all. To the money makers ideas were a stumbling block, and to the cultured Greeks they were foolishness, and worse.

Can truth be trusted to triumph by gradually percolating the souls of millions? Some said so, and excused themselves from battle, and though they saw the right as clearly as the fighters, would have nothing to do with them because they so stained and so marred in their enterprise.

But those who had faith in God knew that God would work if they would but yield themselves as His instruments. That was the necessary condition.

The idea had to find a body to realise itself in fact, and the only body in which it could be clothed was the body of humiliation and pain. Faith by itself is powerful as fire or electricity or any other physical force. But faith must manifest itself in concrete and visible deed. Until it is armed and clothed in sacrifice, it cannot reach its end. When it is, the Jews and Greeks fall back before it. Often at the hour when it is most satirised, and denounced, and condemned, and derided, the truth leaps up armed, and the battle is over. Amen.

+David (OSJ (Wales).

** OSJ (UK) is trialling a short run of printed monthly services in response to a number of requests. Please let us know whether these are appropriate, how we are doing, and whether things can be improved further.*

Emergency Measures, OSJ (UK):

It has been decided that given the situation we find ourselves in currently that two new temporary measures have been implemented for **all** members of OSJ (UK), whether in the Ministry Team or the Ministry Support Team.

Any member of OSJ (UK) may self-administer communion using the form suggested, and that includes to their families and all who are in need if they cannot receive communion from a priest or Eucharistic Minister through unavailability.

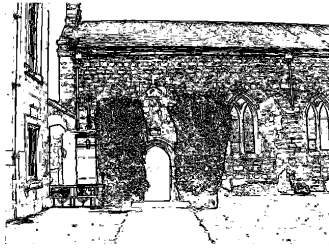
The same applies to the giving of last rites (viaticum).

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

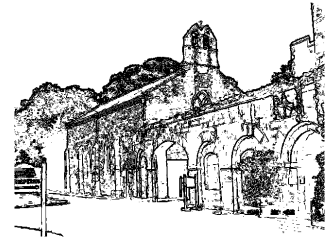
1. [Self-administered Communion](#)
2. [Last Rites \(Emergency Measures\)](#)

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 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.