

Radio Maria – Ministering to a Digital Community

‘Faith comes from hearing’ (Romans 10:17)

The recent pandemic has meant that many of us have had to take a crash course in digital communication. Perhaps you are a recent graduate?

My arrival at Radio Maria Ireland three years ago was just that; a crash course and a very steep learning curve. But, this digital outreach has brought me far beyond my former parish boundaries and has been an overwhelmingly positive faith experience – praise the Lord – not only in communicating the Gospel, but in enabling others to enter into and stake a baptismal claim in the digital world at a time when it surely could not be more necessary to do so.

‘Radio Maria is a miracle that has amazed even the Holy See,’ according to its co-founder, Fr Livio Fanzaga (a priest of the Institute of Poor Regular Clerics of the Mother of God). Never did he envisage that a small Catholic radio station, ‘unique and different from other Catholic Radio Stations’, with humble beginnings in a parish in Arcellasco d’Erba in the province of Como, Italy, would be accessible as it is today, through over eighty stations in seventy one countries, spread over five continents, and that it would all happen through prayer, providence and the heroic work of an army of volunteers – and all of this on the sole financial basis of listener donations.

Following the inspiration of a pilgrimage to Medjugorje in 1987, Emanuele Ferrario (recently deceased – July 2020) a highly successful and driven business man, together with Fr Livio, took to the airways in a small shed at the bottom of the local church’s bell tower. Under their charismatic leadership, it took off and quickly rose in popularity to become one of the most listened-to Radio stations in Italy.

Fast forward to 1999, and Gabriella Scarano, a volunteer and listener in Italy, arrived in Ireland animated by a vocational calling to establish a Radio Maria station here. A group of interested enthusiasts came forward to join her. They prayed, believed and hoped that their quest for a licence would be



Fr Eamonn McCarthy, praying the Divine Office, part of our three fold mission – Prayer, Catechesis, Human Formation

granted. Over the following decade, they lost out to other applicants, but their spirits remained undampened. It would take a full sixteen years before broadcasting would begin here, facilitated by recent rapid growth in digital technology.

It was in 2011, that I was first approached by Gabriella to see if I might take on the role of Priest Director of the, as yet, non-existent Radio station. Each station strives to have a full-time priest present in a role akin to that of parish priest to staff, volunteers and listeners. Unable to accept the invitation at the time, the task fell to the late Fr Michael Ross, SDB, who, sadly, died in October 2016, not much more than a year after the radio launch.

The three-fold mission of prayer, catechesis and human formation is what animates the 24/7 programme schedule. The absence of political and commercial advertising content clears a path for a gentle, friendly and supportive ministry to a world-weary radio audience. In the service of the Church, Radio Maria seeks to be an extension of parish life and a real support and encouragement to clergy, religious and laity alike. The maternal presence of Our Blessed Lady is strongly evidenced in the work, as stories of healing and peace among our listeners flow with regularity. The presence of Radio Maria in Ireland during lockdown has been extraordinarily providential and has brought tremendous solace to a great number of people and a real alternative to what can often be a more strident and secular media presence.

Coupled with our strong social media presence, our free to download App, the availability of Radio Maria on Saorview TV, Channel 210 (Freeview in the North), has added greatly to our growing listener access.

Most popular among our daily programmes is that of prayer – the Holy Mass, Liturgy of the Hours and Rosary. There is of course a lively mix of chat and music with our many guests each day, a plethora of interesting testimonies and stories of apostolates, movements and local Church activity.

As one positive outcome of the corona virus lockdown, Radio Maria Ireland now has tens of thousands of listeners, both nationally and globally, and continues to blossom. The studio phones ring every day with many souls expressing their deep gratitude for what they experience as a local Catholic radio community and family friend in their homes.

We are learning together how important the digital realm is in the work of evangelisation in the 21st century. The feedback we receive inspires us to continue our work that is kind-heartedly, but powerfully, bringing people to Jesus all thanks to our Blessed Mother, to whom we continue to entrust our mission.

May I take this opportunity to thank you for your listenership and support and extend the service of Radio Maria to all Intercom readers.

Do please tell your friends about this great faith resource - ‘Sanctifying the airwaves’ at the click of a button.

How to listen?

1. Saorview - Digital TV, Channel 210.
2. Mobile App – download the FREE Radio Maria Ireland App.
3. Internet Streaming – on www.radiomaria.ie
4. Listen Live on Radio Maria – Ireland Facebook page.
5. Radio Feed via telephone – listen by calling +353 1 437 3277.

How to get involved?

Call 01-4123456

Follow, Like, Share & Subscribe to Radio Maria Ireland on Twitter, Facebook, Youtube, Instagram.

Fr Eamonn McCarthy, Priest Director
(Diocese of Cloyne)

Lectio Divina (1 Thessalonians 1:2-3 and 5:8)

Hope in Time of Coronavirus

Lectio: What the Word says in itself

The first letter to the Thessalonians is the earliest surviving Christian document, being some eighteen years older than the first Gospel. Although early, the letter offers a mature spirituality, composed when Paul had already under his belt forty years as a committed Pharisee and fifteen or so as a Christian missionary. The epistle itself was written from Corinth, around ad 51/52. It is likely that Paul was in Thessalonica in ad 49 or thereabouts.

Paul's mission among the Thessalonians bore fruit and the apostle had stayed long enough to establish some embryonic structures (1 Thess 5:12-13). After the departure of Paul and his co-workers, the 'assembly of God in Thessalonica' experienced harassment bordering on persecution. They wrote to Paul for help and, instead of going back to them himself, he dispatched Timothy. When Timothy reported back to Paul, it was unmistakable that the Thessalonians were upset and disappointed, even disillusioned, that the great man had not come in person. They also had questions: how can we live faithfully in our culture and what about those who had already died before the Lord returns?

Paul had to mend relationships and so he started the letter by rekindling their affection with the story of his coming among them as an evangelist (2:1-3:13 – *faith*). Paul went on to the questions: on being a Christian in the Roman Empire (4:1-12 – *love*) and about the destiny of those who had already died (4:13-5:11 – *hope*). The reader will notice a familiar Pauline triad, in a significantly different order: faith (why they came to believe *in the past*), love (how they might live *in the present*) and hope (what they could anticipate *in the future*). The logical sequence of past, present and future lends not only direction but dynamism to the persuasion. For this reflection on 1Thess 1:2-3 and 5:8, we will follow the same pattern.

Meditatio: What the Word says to me/us

On faith. I call to mind my own spiritual journey: can I name significant people and moments? When did I make the faith my own? Were there crises disturbing my



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faith? More recently, Covid-19 has caused a huge disruption to us all, affecting our lives as believers and as members of the Church. Can I name what happened for me – and is still happening – on a faith level? Did my faith weaken or intensify? What are the changes I will take into the future from this adverse experience?

Oratio. What the Word leads me/us to say

On love. Love is at the centre of *life* ('the greatest thing you'll ever learn is to love and be loved in return') and, not coincidentally, of *faith* ('the greatest of these is love'). Start by giving thanks for the foundational love experienced in family, marriage and friendships. Did the Covid-19 crisis lead to new ways of staying in touch and caring? Did anything move for me personally, shaping my future loves and relationships? How do I now experience the love of God for me?

Contemplatio. Being transformed by the Word

On hope. To be hopeful is good for our overall well-being. Still, Christian hope is grounded not in a healthy optimism but in the 'great events that give us new life in Christ.' Our Christian hope is an invitation to raise our sights and not to be satisfied with less, with the mediocre, with mere distraction and denial. Our

vision is unbounded: 'Things that no eye has seen, or ear heard, or mind imagined, are the things God has prepared for those who love him.' (1 Cor 2:9), As St Paul says, 'no one hopes for what she can already see' (Rm 8:24), and yet 'hope does not disappoint, because the love of God has been poured out in our hearts through the Holy Spirit' (Rm 5:5).

The Covid-19 crisis has disturbed our present and unsettled our future. Has my own sense of hope been questioned or reshaped? What do I hope for now? What is my deep longing as we face a changed future?

Actio: Putting the Word into Practice

Gradually, we will all have to take up our normal lives as best we can. If this time of threat and dislocation has brought a deeper experience of faith, love and hope, what do I need to put in place to sustain my changed outlook into the future?

Kieran J. O'Mahony is an Augustinian scripture scholar, working for the diocese of Dublin as co-ordinator of biblical studies. His website is: www.tarsus.ie. The next volume in the *Hearers of the Word* series for Advent and Christmas Year B is now on sale.



Apologetics: It's OK to Be Catholic

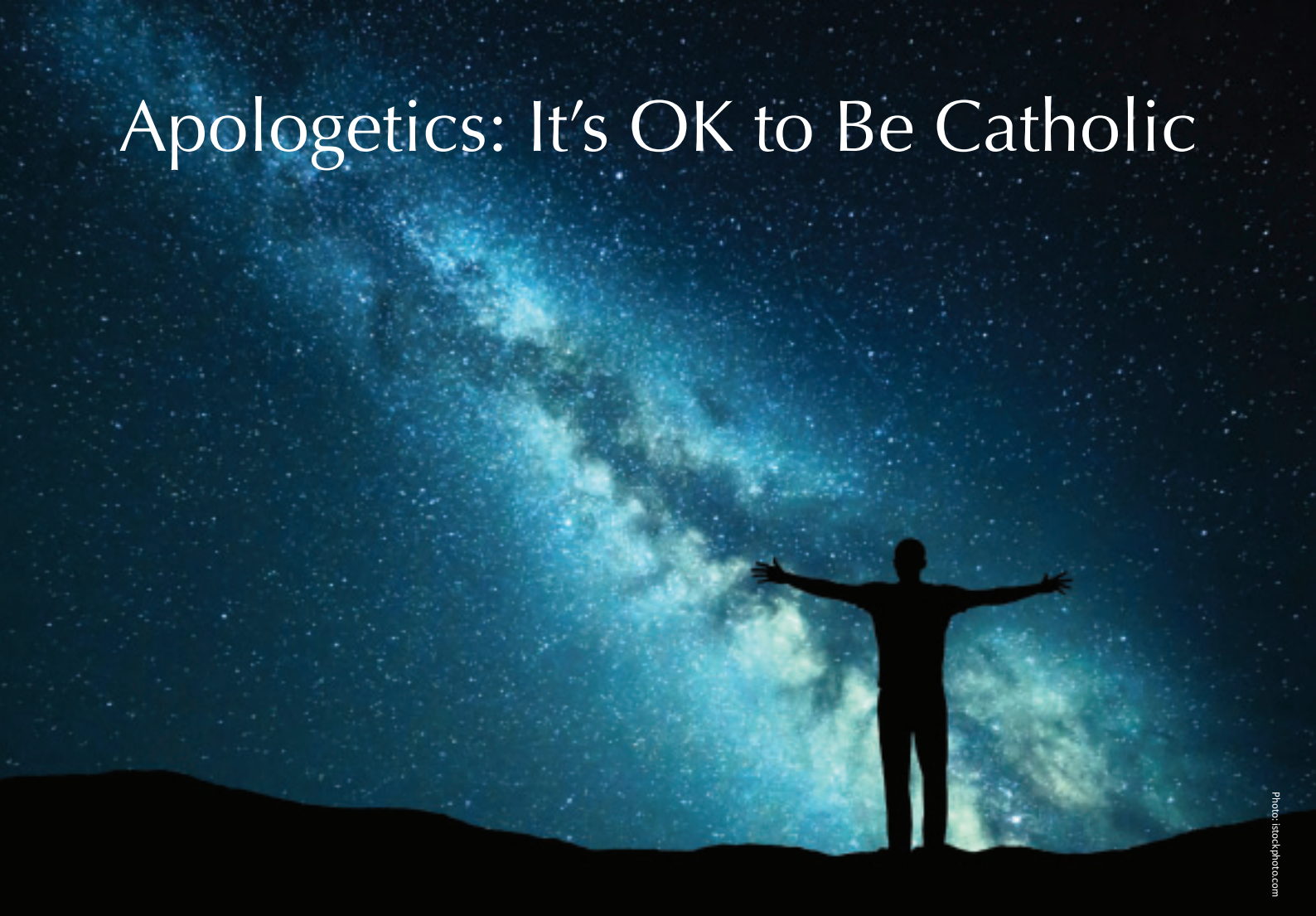


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In our highly mobile and connected world, individuals increasingly encounter different religions, cultural practices and alternative philosophies. It is no real surprise that people choose to explore truths that may not appear at first glance to sit easily within the beliefs, practices and principles of the religion they already know. It can seem useful to describe oneself as 'spiritual' – hence the phrase 'spiritual but not religious.' The phrase 'perennial philosophy' refers to the idea that there is a core of shared wisdom in all religions, independent of national culture. It was coined in the 16th Century by Renaissance humanist and Catholic bishop Agostino Stenico, and later made famous by English writer Aldous Huxley.

Aldous Huxley was the grandson of the naturalist Thomas Henry Huxley, otherwise known as 'Darwin's Bulldog.' He earned this nickname because of his ferocious championing of Charles Darwin's theory of evolution and science education in general, while also combatting what he saw as extreme forms of religious tradition. It was Thomas Henry Huxley who, in 1889, coined the term 'agnosticism' to differentiate between claims that were

empirically knowable and those that were not.

In 1932, Aldous published his novel, *Brave New World*, which described a dystopian future where all supernatural religion was replaced by a utilitarian science, focused on the ideals of community, identity and stability. Sadly, in this brave new world, science has lost its spirit of genuine discovery. The traditional ills have been conquered: war, disease and suffering. But the cost is great: a society where people enjoy shallow pleasures but do not read, write, think, love or govern themselves.

Many commentators view *Brave New World* as prophetic. Just like the people of an imagined dystopian future, it could be argued that we have already lost the ability to see the ways in which we have been diminished by modern culture. Curiously, Aldous Huxley grew much less intolerant concerning religion when he realised the awful implications of living in a materialist world. As a result of this erosion of his scepticism, he became passionately interested in mysticism, and published *The Perennial Philosophy* in 1945.

In many ways, *The Perennial Philosophy* is a remarkable work of synthesis that helped to foster a global

spirituality amongst mainstream Western culture. Yet, despite Huxley's claims that perennial philosophy is universal, it is quite definitely the product of a specific era and mindset. It is likely that Huxley's pacifism and abhorrence of the second world war influenced his work. So too did his view that modern Western societies worshipped progress, technology and the nation-state above any consideration for the wisdom common to all religions. Regardless of the limitations of Huxley's proposed solution, his prescient fears regarding human progress were solidly based.

Huxley advocated for a culture of contemplation, to counteract the rise of a technocratic progressiveness, and to overcome its constant noise. Strangely and sadly, his desire for mysticism relied on psychedelic drugs. Popular culture embraced Huxley's views on mysticism, which became widespread in the 1960s, when yoga, mindfulness, meditation and drug-induced mystical experiences flourished in the new freedom-loving spiritual age of the Western world.

Many religious thinkers and practitioners are sceptical of Huxley's perennialism, for the simple fact that mystical traditions are deeply grounded

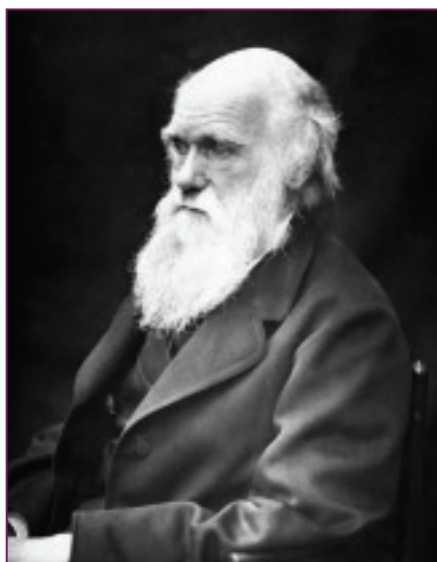
in diverse cultures that cannot be unified in any coherent way. Another problem is that mysticism is of dubious value or purpose when it is divorced from the truth claims that support it. Furthermore, as perennialism strives for a liberal uniformity, it can become intolerant of those who practice traditional forms of religion.

Perhaps the greatest challenge to perennialism is the pure I-Thou mysticism of the Abrahamic faiths. For instance, Christian mystics report on prayerful encounters with the eternal God, encounters that are entirely devotional rather than self-centred. Also, the Western liberal bias of perennialism easily falls into the confused stew that is relativism, the view that there is no such thing as truth, so we may as well all go our own way without any need for hierarchy, authority or orthodoxy to unite us around a core wisdom. In my view, such thinking denies the role of community life in our individual lives, while also rejecting the reality of God's love for us, revealed through history.

Perennialism and its attempt at a universal spirituality does not offer a coherent view of reality that includes our unique place in the natural world. For Christians, the order and natural laws that operate in the universe are expressions of God and point to a rational creator and lawgiver. The regular behaviour of natural phenomena discovered by science harmonises well with the biblical view of God's providential sustenance. It is this comprehensive view of reality that grounds the Christian mystical experience. Without the rational infrastructure of the Catholic faith, mystical experiences could simply be the result of a state of mind under the influence of illusory effects.

The appeal of perennialism may lie in its liberal scientific focus. In a world often hostile to traditional faith, one can avoid conflict by labelling oneself as 'spiritual but not religious.' This is understandable, but it sadly reduces our chance of coming to grips with the transformative wisdom and spirit of freedom offered by Catholicism. By choosing to go our own way, we prevent ourselves from fully grasping the reality of God's eternal love.

The Catholic faith is not an exclusive club that denies the truth of other religions. On the contrary, the Catholic faith offers a powerfully coherent and robustly consistent approach to understanding reality. Militant atheists



Charles Darwin

often paint religious believers as unquestioning innocents, incapable of attaining the levels of rational thought preferred by scientific liberalists. While this accusation is wildly inaccurate, I would still prefer to be labelled a stupid Christian than a bright atheist. Amazingly, there is a movement within atheism that subscribes to a worldview of philosophical naturalism, where individual followers self-label as 'brights.'

That said, my own love for the Church is not uncritical. I am wary of clericalism and intolerant of the impenetrable bureaucracy and seemingly insular culture that played a role in various scandals. Yet it is beyond question that the Catholic church offers an incredibly diverse range of intellectual and spiritual treasures. For me, its respect for scientific discoveries and its ability to integrate truths found in intellectual disciplines and other forms of human wisdom is deeply compelling. So too is its approach to inter-religious dialogue, its concern for the natural environment, its charitable work, its educational drive, its healthcare philosophy and its deeply engrained care for the poor.

Within Catholicism, there is no such thing as a 'purist.' There is no one way of being Catholic. There are about ten thousand saints, thousands of prayers, hymns and songs, a great diversity of religious orders as well as the highly esteemed saints known as Doctors of the Church. This list includes both contemplative mystics and intellectual giants. With this breadth and depth of religious tradition, no two Catholics can be the same. While we centre our faith in Christ on the pillars of Scripture and Tradition, we all bring our unique gifts and interests to our faith.



Aldous Huxley

Catholic educators taught me that life is about the head, the hands and the heart. This is a path to wisdom that now guides my intellectual and spiritual explorations as well as my daily life. I have always had a keen interest in science and nature, so it's probably no surprise that I profoundly respect the nature beliefs, relational spiritualities and wisdom of the world's religions. Indeed, I am often deeply struck by the beauty of prayer language from different cultural traditions.

As Catholics, we are free to respect, admire, befriend, share knowledge with and love people of all religions and none. We all walk the path of life and it's good to help each other along the way. We can each aspire to be good Samaritans. Yet, amidst the complexity of life, my thoughts sometimes turn to the fears expressed by Aldous Huxley, his novel 'Brave New World' and his later work on a perennial philosophy. Over time, I have grown wary of a vague universalist spirituality that is simply not robust enough to counter the worst excesses of humankind. I have the suspicion that, for me at least, it's not just OK to be Catholic, it's downright necessary. My own salvation and the redemption of the world really does depend upon it.

Dr Sean O'Leary has worked extensively in teacher education. In addition to his scholarly writing, his popular writings may be found on his website, www.thesacredcape.com and on www.thehookoffaith.com.





Many of our homes have a cross or a crucifix hanging somewhere, or, if you carry a rosary beads, there'll be a crucifix in your pocket or bag. Imagine having a replica of an electric chair, or a hangman's noose, or a hypodermic needle, or a garrote on your wall or in your pocket. That would seem a rather odd thing. If someone spotted you fishing a tiny replica electric chair out of your pocket when you were fumbling for change, that would probably strike them as rather weird!

But the cross is an instrument of execution. It's right up there with those other instruments, except that it's the most brutal of them all. When people were crucified they didn't die quickly. None of the vital organs was pierced, so they didn't bleed to death in a short time. What happened was that they gradually weakened – over many hours – until they began to sag; and when they sagged, their arms tightened, and this put pressure on their diaphragm, which in turn put pressure on their breathing, until they finally asphyxiated.

In the Roman empire, the principal means of execution were drowning, beheading, burning and crucifixion. Crucifixion was considered the most brutal. Roman historians rarely provide any detail, other than mentioning that it happened. It was considered too dreadful to dwell on in polite company. Crucifixion was reserved for the most vicious criminals, and for political agitators who were considered a threat to the stability of the empire. In addition to putting criminals to death, it was a way of putting them on display for all to see. It was a powerful statement, that said: 'Look, all you who are gathered, all you who are passing by: look at what happens to the enemies of the state.'

Moreover, crucifixion was a very public matter. People were not crucified in woods or hidden, out-of-the-way places. They were crucified on raised ground, or at the side of major roadways, so that the maximum number of people would see them.

Extreme pain, fear, suffocation, shame – these were the intention and the outcome of crucifixion. These were the meaning and the purpose of the Cross.



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These things *were* the meaning and purpose of the Cross, but for us as Christians, that meaning and purpose have been changed entirely. If we recall the original significance of the Cross, what it meant to the Roman authorities at the time of Christ, that's only so that we can see how completely the meaning of the Cross has changed.

This sign of brutality has become a sign of hope; this sign of degradation has become a sign of mildness and gentleness. And this transformation has happened because of the Cross of Jesus Christ, the way in which he bore it and the fact that his experience of its brutality was not an ending but a beginning.

What does all of this mean for us as Christians? It means that in Christ, *transformation* is possible. We have all known, all along, that the Cross was an

instrument of capital punishment, yet that knowledge has not prevented us from seeing it in an entirely different light. Even the most partial or tentative believer does not look at the Cross in the way that he or she might look at an electric chair. Our perception of it is altered.

And the hope held out to us is that, in the Cross of Christ, our perception of the sufferings of this world – the brutality, the degradation, the crime, the illness, the worry, the anxiety, the terror – our perception of these things can be transformed just as the Cross was transformed by Christ. At the heart of this transformation is *hope*: we need not lose hope, because in Christ, there is nothing that cannot be transformed. Nothing in our lives or in the lives of our loved ones; nothing in the world.

the liturgy page



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Liturgy Page @ 200

The Liturgy Page this month is the 200th! It began in September 1999 and in the early years it missed out a few months and on a couple of occasions it was well less than a page and on those months was a Liturgy Corner.

Check next year's dates

With so many events cancelled and postponed over the last several months, it is important to check the revised dates. This will prevent, for example, a wedding being planned for Friday 2 April, which is Good Friday.

While many of us missed Easter this year because of Covid-19, next year's Easter is more than a week earlier but well away from our experience is recent years of a very early Easter, 23 March 2008 and a very late Easter, 24 April 2011. Both dates were within a day of being the earliest and latest possible. Easter next year is Sunday, 4 April 2021. This determines the date of Ash Wednesday, 17 February, the Easter Triduum of Holy Thursday (1 April), Good Friday (2 April), Holy Saturday (3 April) and Easter Sunday. Holy Week begins with Palm Sunday, 28 March.

Check the dates of feasts and Sundays throughout the year. Note the season of Lent, beginning with Ash Wednesday. Also a date like All Souls Day, Tuesday, 2 November.

Liturgical Calendar for 2021

The Liturgical Calendar for Ireland 2021 is published this month. The cover image might be the 'picture of the year 2020,' the solitary figure of Pope Francis in an empty St Peter's Square, watched by 11 million people throughout the world, presiding at a prayer service with a special *Urbi et Orbi* blessing on Friday, 27 March 2020.

The Liturgical Calendar began in 1830, published by James Duffy and Co. until 1984 when Veritas took over. Also called the Ordo, Latin for Order, it was published in Latin until 1971 getting its present title a year later.

Sine dominico non possumus

The Emperor Diocletian ordered the burning of sacred books and texts, including the Scriptures, the pulling down of churches and the prohibition of assembly for worship. But the Christian community of Abitene, in modern day Tunis, disobeyed and gathered for the weekly celebration of Sunday Mass. On the occasion of a gathering in the house of Ottavio Felice, they were arrested and taken to Carthage to the proconsul Anulinus for questioning. Asked why the assembly, Emeritus, a reader, said, '*Sine dominico non possumus*,' We cannot live without Sunday. *Dominicum* means the Lord's Day and what is celebrated on that day, the Eucharist. The defence evidence, as recorded in the *Acts of the Martyrs*, continues, 'Don't you know that the Eucharist makes the Christian and the Christian makes the Sunday Eucharist. ... When you say 'Eucharist,' know that a Christian is there. When you say 'Christian,' know that there is an assembly that celebrates the Lord.'

The 49 martyrs of Abitene, all named in the *Roman Martyrology*, died in the year 303.

Amazing Grace and Buncrana

The story of John Newton, composer of *Amazing Grace* is also the story of the hymn. Newton (1725-1807) was born in Wapping in east London. He went to sea, like his father, in the Royal Navy and then as a merchant seaman, very much involved in the Atlantic slave trade. He experienced both sides of slavery, as a trader and also for some time as a slave himself in Sierra Leone. He was a man of no religious conviction and was of a crude disposition in temperament and language. On board the ship *Greyhound*, he was caught in an Atlantic storm in 1748, surviving to find shelter in Lough Swilly. Though he had been reading a summary of *The Imitation of Christ* by Thomas à Kempis, it was at Buncrana, that he realised that he was the 'wretch once lost now [was] found.' There in Co. Donegal, Amazing Grace Country, at what is now provided as a viewing platform overlooking the sea, his conversion began and though for some years he continued in the slave trade, eventually to renounce it. He became an ally of William Wilberforce, the leader of the campaign to abolish slavery. He was ordained priest in the Church of England in 1764.

As vicar of Olney, Buckinghamshire, he composed *Amazing Grace* to illustrate his sermon for New Year's Day 1773, highlighting grace through struggle. It may at first been a simple poem but with many musical settings, the tune 'New Britain' by William Walker, an American Baptist composer, published in 1845 has proved to be the most popular.

The story of the most popular and most recorded hymn began in Buncrana.



23 September 1909

The Liturgy Page has noted this date on several occasions as it is often regarded as the beginning of the Modern Liturgical Movement, which would eventually bring us to the Constitution on the Liturgy of Vatican II (4 December 1963).

Lambert Beauduin, born 1873 and ordained a priest of the diocese of Liège, Belgium became a Benedictine monk at the abbey of Mont César, Louvain (now in Flemish: Abdij Keizersberg, Leuven). In a paper on this day in September 1909 at the National Congress of Catholic Workers in Malines, Belgium, he spoke of the liturgy as the piety of the Church and called for the active participation of all the people in that liturgy. He called for a democratisation of the liturgy, as we might put it but words understood by Beauduin, a former chaplain to workers. He was a promoter of the developing liturgical movement in Belgium and later a professor at Sant' Anselmo in Rome. Involved in the ecumenical movement with Eastern Christians and especially with Anglicans, he founded the bi-ritual monastery of Amay-sur-Meuse (diocese of Liège) in 1925, relocated to Chevetogne (diocese of Namur) in 1939. The monks celebrate, and still do, the liturgy according to the Roman and Byzantine rites. Censured and exiled in 1931 to Paris, where he remained for twenty years, he became a friend of the nuncio Angelo Roncalli. When he heard of Roncalli's election as Pope John XXIII, he predicted the calling of an ecumenical council. Beauduin died at Chevetogne on 11 January 1960.

Twenty-Third Sunday in Ordinary Time

6 September 2020

Readings

First Reading: Ezekiel gives a warning. It is not a threat. It is encouragement. Return to God's promise of forgiving love.

Second Reading: St Paul reminds us that 'love is the one thing that cannot hurt your neighbour and is the answer to all the commandments.'

Gospel: The word 'listen' is used four times in the Gospel. As we gather in God's name to pray, we are invited to listen to God's voice today.

General Intercessions

Introduction

Today's gospel reminds us that the Lord is present wherever two or three are gathered in prayer. Relying on this assuring promise we now offer our prayers:

Intercessions

1. We pray for Pope Francis
who serves and leads our Church
with constant call to LISTEN to Gods' voice today and every day.
Lord, hear us. Lord, graciously hear us.
2. We pray on this first Sunday of September
for all who have new beginnings:
those starting in school, those beginning a new job.
May we look to the future with hope rather than dwell on past failures.
Lord, hear us. Lord, graciously hear us.
3. We pray for those who feel excluded from the family of the Church.
May we reach out to them in genuine welcome,
understanding and compassion.
Lord, hear us. Lord, graciously hear us.
4. We pray in thanks for the gift of God's merciful love.
Help us to share this gift with one another
through the forgiveness of the gospel.
Lord, hear us. Lord, graciously hear us.
5. We pray for all those who have asked our prayers:
the sick, those away from home, people with financial and debt worries,
prisoners and for our families, neighbours and friends.
Lord, hear us. Lord, graciously hear us.
6. We pray for all our dead:
may they share in the promised glory of the resurrection
and the communion of saints:
Lord, hear us. Lord, graciously hear us.

We pause in silence to pray for our own intentions: We ask Mary, the Mother of Jesus to 'turn her eyes of mercy towards us' as we pray ... Hail Mary ...

Conclusion

Heavenly Father, send your Spirit into our hearts that we may listen to your voice today and always. We make our prayer through Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns forever. Amen.

Liturgical Music

Eucharistic Prayer Acclamations

Holy, Holy/Memorial Acclamation/Great Amen from *Sing The Mass, Anthology of Music for the Irish Church, 2011.*

Responsorial Psalm

Psalm 94: O that today you would listen to his voice! Harden not your hearts –
Responsorial Psalms for Sundays and Major Feast Days/Cantate/Laudate/Liturgical Hymns Old & New/Celebration Hymnal

Gospel Acclamation

Sing **Alleluia** together with **verse** of the 23rd Sunday Ordinary Time.

Songs

Though We Are Many – *Sing The Mass/ICMA 2011/www.liturgy-ireland.ie*
O That Today You Would Listen –
Gather/Laudate/Liturgical Hymns Old & New/Celebration Hymnal
Servant Song – *Hosanna/Gather/Laudate/Liturgical Hymns Old & New/Celebration Hymnal*
Lord, Make Me A Means of Your Peace –
Laudate/Liturgical Hymns Old & New
The Cry of the Poor – *Glory & Praise/Gather/Laudate/Liturgical Hymns Old & New/Celebration Hymnal*
Tell Out My Soul – *Laudate/Liturgical Hymns Old & New/Celebration Hymnal*

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Editor

Twenty-Third Sunday in Ordinary Time

6 September 2020

Homily Notes • Gospel: Matthew 18:15-20

There's a lot of talk of commandments, rules and thou-shalt-nots in the readings today, particularly in the first two readings (The Gospel we've just heard is more about correcting those who have strayed). Many people imagine that commandments and rules fence us in and tie us down. Have they a point?

Philosophers and theologians have a word for the notion that we can be more free if we're not saddled with rules and fixed points for our behaviour: they call that relativism. Relativism, true to its name, says 'It's all relative. What's good and bad depends on our situation. We shouldn't be tied down by fixed notions of right or wrong, moral or immoral; but we should see what feels okay, and what works in a given situation.' Relativism removes handrails and takes down fences. It leaves us free, but we discover, sooner or later, that the freedom it gives is only a freedom to fall and to stray.

We're blessed that our Church keeps teaching the moral truths of our faith, even if it's often misrepresented as banging the same old drums, or 'going on and on' about morality. We would do well, as believers, to be critical of what we hear and read, to use our intelligence to cut through clichés and caricatures, and to know what commandments and morality are actually about. Parents love their toddlers, and sometimes that love quite literally takes the form of a harness, which deprives the little people of their freedom to run out under a car.

Those of us who are older are free to choose – we can choose wisely or foolishly. But let's at least be clear that God's commandments are a charter of freedom; when we reject them, we are heading for captivity.

Finally, we are all sinners; we have all broken commandments. We should never despair, regardless of where our weakness may have led us. We need never despair, because God's mercy is infinitely stronger than the gravity that might pull us into the abyss.

Fr Chris Hayden

The Deep End • Our common home

Today we mark the first Sunday of the Season of Creation 2020, which runs from 1 September to 4 October. This special season in the church calendar celebrates the joy of creation, while encouraging awareness of initiatives to protect the natural environment.

We are reminded during this time of our duty to care for what Pope Francis calls 'our common home'. When we hear the word 'home', we tend to think of the immediate place where we live and the people we share it with – our house or living space and our immediate family, neighbours and community. Each of us lives within a particular web of relationships that we call home. But we must be conscious too that we live in a wider relationship with the earth and with all of creation. We all live in a common home, and we all must care for it, and for each other.

Our gospel today sees Jesus offer some advice about living in community.

He first acknowledges that communities are far from perfect. We all struggle with our relationships and duties. But he makes one thing clear: in a community, we all have a responsibility to each other and to work to build harmony.

This responsibility extends beyond our immediate environment to our world. In this Season of Creation, we remember in particular those across the world who are suffering as a result of environmental damage. The way we live on this earth has consequences for the world and its people, and indeed for future generations. Over the next few weeks, let us consider how we might make some changes that reflect our care for others and for our common home.

'We need to strengthen the conviction that we are one single human family.'
(Pope Francis, *Laudato Si'*)

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For Your Newsletter:

Seeing your Life through the Lens of the Gospel

Matthew 18:15-20

1. At the time Matthew was writing his gospel local church communities would have numbered no more than fifty people. They would be known to one another. Matthew presents the instructions of Jesus for dealing with people whose behaviour disrupted and harmed the community. Note the steps suggested. Simple directions but many of us do otherwise. We avoid difficult confrontations. We talk about the faults of others to everyone but themselves. We go over the head of someone who displeases us and make complaints. In your experience, which approach is life-giving for you and for others?
2. While Jesus is referring to a group situation, the advice can be applied also to personal difficulties and problems with others. What lessons has life taught you about constructive ways of dealing with conflict?
3. As individuals and communities we have the power to bind and to loose, to exclude people from relationship, or to open up and include others in relationship. When have you found it important to acknowledge this power in your own life?
4. Jesus also promises to be with his followers when they gather together. What does that mean to you? How have you experienced the presence of Jesus in his followers gathered together? During the recent lockdown due to the coronavirus, how did you experience the presence of Jesus in your faith community?

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Twenty-Fourth Sunday in Ordinary Time

13 September 2020

Readings

First Reading: There is great advice offered here: Pray and your sins will be forgiven. Stop hating. Remember the commandments. Remember the covenant.

Second Reading: We belong to the Lord. It is our core identity both in life and in death.

Gospel: There is no end to forgiveness. It is built into the prayer that Jesus has taught us. In the Creed, we proclaim together: 'I believe in the forgiveness of sins.' Well, do we believe?

General Intercessions

Introduction

Today's gospel celebrates the gift of God's forgiveness. May we reflect God's love and compassion to one another and to the stranger.

Intercessions

1. We pray for Pope Francis
who accompanies our Church in a revolution of tenderness.
May we be close one another in all the difficult circumstances
and complex situations that life unfolds.
Lord, hear us. Lord, graciously hear us.
2. We pray for all those whose lives are corroded by resentment and anger.
We pray forgiveness for the times that we showed ill-will to anyone
in thought, word or deed.
Lord, do not treat us according to our sins.
Lord, hear us. Lord, graciously hear us.
3. We pray for all those who have influenced our lives for good
by their gentle words and kind example
in a thousand ways of faithful witness.
Help us to appreciate that the life and death of each of us
has its influence on others.
Lord, hear us. Lord, graciously hear us.
4. We pray that our lives may reflect the trusting surrender of the Lord
on the cross, as we mark the feast of the Holy Cross tomorrow.
May we reach to embrace you Lord in all those
who journey their own station of the cross.
Lord, hear us. Lord, graciously hear us.
5. We pray for that we may learn the gospel way of forgiveness
as Jesus taught his disciples and as he prayed it from the Cross.
May this forgiveness be the hallmark of our Church.
Lord, hear us. Lord, graciously hear us.
6. We pray for our own intentions and for all who have asked our prayers:
We pray for all who have died:
Lord, you redeem their lives from the grave.
Lord, hear us. Lord, graciously hear us.

As we mark the feast of Our Lady of Sorrows this week, may we accompany all who are afflicted and alienated as we pray together. ... Hail Mary ...

Conclusion

Heavenly Father, you heal all our ills, May we bless and give thanks for your love. We make our prayer through Christ our Lord. Amen.

Liturgical Music

Eucharistic Prayer Acclamations

Holy, Holy/Memorial Acclamation/Great Amen from *Sing The Mass, Anthology of Music for the Irish Church, 2011.*

Responsorial Psalm

Psalm 102: The Lord is compassion and love, slow to anger and rich in mercy –
Responsorial Psalms for Sundays and Major Feast Days/Cantate/Laudate/Liturgical Hymns Old & New/Celebration Hymnal

Gospel Acclamation

Sing **Alleluia** together with **verse** of the 24th Sunday Ordinary Time.

Songs

Servant Song – *Hosanna/Gather/Laudate/Liturgical Hymns Old & New/Celebration Hymnal*
Though We Are Many – *Sing The Mass/ICMA 2011/2012/www.liturgy-ireland.ie*
Bless The Lord, My Soul – *Taizé/Glory & Praise/Gather/Laudate/Liturgical Hymns Old & New/Celebration Hymnal*
Christ Be Beside Me – *Hosanna/Laudate/Seinn Alleluia/In Caelo/Liturgical Hymns Old & New/Celebration Hymnal*
Tell Out My Soul – *Laudate/Liturgical Hymns Old & New/Celebration Hymnal*

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Twenty-Fourth Sunday in Ordinary Time

13 September 2020

Homily Notes • Gospel: Matthew 18:21-35

The need to be people of forgiveness is not just a matter of Christian faith: it's also a matter of common sense. Many of us have met the kind of person who seems to lack the ability to let go of even rather small offences; the person who, on the one hand, has a memory like an elephant, but on the other hand, has a very poor memory, because they seem to have forgotten so much of the good they've experienced. It's as if so much of their memory's capacity is taken up with hurt there's no space left for blessings.

A person in that sad situation is, ironically, a very good advertisement for forgiveness, for rising above life's hurts. They can remind us of the common sense that tells us not to burden ourselves.

But what common sense asks of us is not easy, and the other place from which we get the logic of forgiveness and the ability to forgive is our faith. Here's a good general rule that we might bear in mind whenever we hear or read the Gospel: when Jesus teaches us something persistently, we can be sure of two things: it's possible, and it's difficult. In the Gospel we've just heard, Jesus very strongly teaches the need for forgiveness, and it's to him that we as Christians need to look, to find the ability to forgive.

Pope St John Paul once wrote: 'What does it mean to forgive, if not to appeal to a good that is greater than any evil?' He was referring to the forgiveness of appalling crimes and hurts, but even for lesser hurts, that insight is valid. To forgive is an act of human common sense; but to forgive as a Christian is to trust that God can work out all hurts and offences in his time and in his way.

Fr Chris Hayden

The Deep End • Infinitely loved

The parable of the unforgiving servant highlights the generous love of God and sets a blueprint for our treatment of others. The master who cancels the servant's large debt does so out of compassion, and the servant is grateful – but not so grateful that he is willing to take pity on a fellow servant who owes him just a small amount. It seems he has learnt nothing; he has neither appreciated the gift he has been given, nor is he willing to pass it on to others.

We are each loved infinitely by God. He has provided us with every good thing, and we are expected to live accordingly. Because we have been loved, we must love. In this Season of Creation we focus in particular on our relationship with creation. We have been gifted with this wonderful world, with all its beauty and natural resources. Yet in so many ways, we have failed to appreciate this gift. We depend entirely on the earth's resources, yet instead of respecting them we have plundered

them, causing great harm to the earth and its inhabitants. We have built comfortable and cheap lifestyles at the expense of the world's poorest people. If we carry on this way, there will be no gift to pass on to future generations. We are like the servant in the gospel – taking, but giving nothing in return.

Today, we are called to act as people who are loved infinitely by God. All of creation speaks of God's love for us. We are deeply connected with the earth and all of its people. We must live a life which is not centred exclusively on ourselves, but on the needs of others.

'Creation can only be understood as a gift from the outstretched hand of the Father of all, and as a reality illuminated by the love which calls us together into universal communion.'

(Pope Francis, *Laudato Si'*)

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For Your Newsletter:

Seeing your Life through the Lens of the Gospel

Matthew 18:21-35

1. Jesus surprised Peter by telling him he needed to forgive seventy-seven times. Perhaps you have known the truth of this when something reminds you of a past hurt and you find you need in your heart to forgive again the person who hurt you. What was this like for you? How has a capacity to have a forgiving heart helped you?
2. Sometimes we need to forgive ourselves for things we regret about past behaviour. What happens to you when you cannot do this? How has your ability to forgive yourself for past mistakes influenced your attitude towards yourself now?
3. Pope Francis chose as his motto 'miserando atque eligendo' (*seen with compassion and chosen*) to express his belief that Jesus viewed his past mistakes with compassion, and called him nonetheless. At this moment can you see Jesus calling you, no matter what your past has been like?
4. Are there people whose ability to forgive has inspired you? Recall them and the forgiveness they showed and give thanks for their example.

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Twenty-Fifth Sunday in Ordinary Time

20 September 2020

Readings

First Reading: Isaiah pleads with us to return to the Lord who is rich in forgiving.

Second Reading: St Paul alerts us to 'avoid anything in your everyday lives that would be unworthy of the gospel of Christ.'

Gospel: Christ subverts our inward way of looking at things and people. He highlights the gift of generosity over the envy that we use to compare and contrast. The last will be first and the first, last. This is the gospel way.

General Intercessions

Introduction

Today's first reading reminds us that God's thoughts and ways are above our thoughts and ways: Let us call to him while he still near.

Intercessions

1. We pray for Pope Francis who calls us to a renewed, personal encounter with the Lord.
May we follow his gospel words of radical generosity, where the last will be first and the first last.
Lord, hear us. Lord, graciously hear us.
2. We pray that we may cherish the dignity of all work and use our time in a spirit of service to our families and communities.
Lord, hear us. Lord, graciously hear us.
3. We pray for those who are out of work at this time.
Guide all those who are responsible for the establishment and maintenance of fair industrial conditions that embody true justice in our labour laws.
Lord, hear us. Lord, graciously hear us.
4. We pray that our everyday, Christian lives will avoid anything that would be unworthy of the gospel of Christ.
Be close Lord to all who call on you from their hearts.
Lord, hear us. Lord, graciously hear us.
5. We pray in thanks to God for the wonders of creation.
Bless us to become honest stewards of the vineyard of the earth which you 'gift' to us – as our common home.
Lord, hear us. Lord, graciously hear us.
6. We pray for all the intentions of our family and community:
We remember the sick, volunteers, contemplatives, mystics and prophets.
Lord, hear us. Lord, graciously hear us.

We pray to Mary, who treasured God's ways and words in the silence of her loving heart ... as we say together ... Hail Mary ...

Conclusion

Heavenly Father, give us compassionate hearts and willing hands as we try to bless you day after day and praise your name forever. We make our prayer through Christ our Lord. Amen.

Liturgical Music

Eucharistic Prayer Acclamations

Holy, Holy/Memorial Acclamation/Great Amen from *Sing The Mass, Anthology of Music for the Irish Church, 2011.*

Responsorial Psalm

Psalm 144: The Lord is close to all who call him – *Responsorial Psalms for Sundays and Major Feast Days/Cantate/Laudate/Liturgical Hymns Old & New/Celebration Hymnal*

Gospel Acclamation Sing Alleluia

together with **verse** of the 25th Sunday Ordinary Time.

Songs

Praise To The Holiest – *Hosanna/Laudate/Liturgical Hymns Old & New/Celebration Hymnal*
Tell Out My Soul – *Laudate/Liturgical Hymns Old & New/Celebration Hymnal*
Praise/Gather/Laudate/Liturgical Hymns Old & New/Celebration Hymnal
Blest Be The Lord – *Glory & Praise/Gather/Laudate/Liturgical Hymns Old & New/Celebration Hymnal*
Draw Near and take the Body of the Lord – *ICMA 2014/www.liturgy-ireland.ie*
Lauda Jersusalem, Dominum – *ICMA 2017/www.liturgy-ireland.ie*

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Twenty-Fifth Sunday in Ordinary Time

20 September 2020

Homily Notes • Gospel: Matthew 20:1-16

What all the workers in Jesus' story have in common, irrespective of the time of day they were taken on by the landowner, is that they've been hired, they've been given something to do. Before the landowner approached them, they were standing idle; then each and every one of them was given a task. That's where they are all equal; not in the amount of work they've put in, but in the fact that if they hadn't been approached by the landowner, they would all still be idle.

In a way, those who did most work benefitted most: they were given a task, a purpose, a sense of worth, earlier in the day. The others were idle, purposeless, for longer. But when pay-time came along, the sense of gratitude for being called to work was outweighed by mathematics.

Jesus' story, of course, is not about mathematics or rates of pay. It's about the fact that God calls us – all of us. It is by God's grace and blessing that we find a sense of purpose and meaning in our lives. It is as disciples of Jesus that we are invited to live through each day, and when the end of the day comes, the right attitude is not: 'Have I been properly compensated for my efforts to live as a Christian this day?' No – the right attitude is: 'Thank you, Lord, for having brought me to this day, for bringing me through it, for helping me to do whatever good I've done, for bearing with me in my shortcomings.' That's the end-of-day attitude for disciples.

When a car's wheels are spinning in mud, sand or snow, the best thing to do is increase the load on those wheels. If the load is lightened, the wheels will never find traction. When that landlord went out to hire idle people to work for him, he was giving them a burden, a meaningful task. Let us be grateful to God for every good burden, every meaningful task that comes our way.

Fr Chris Hayden

The Deep End • Unequal opportunities

Jesus does not see things as we do. Time and time again in his parables, he turns our expectations upside down and helps us to see things in a different light.

Today, he tells the story of the landowner who pays the same wages to all his workers – those who were hired at the crack of dawn and those who only joined late in the day. Naturally, the 'early birds' are put out by this – they feel it is unjust, even though they received the wage they were promised.

Maybe we sympathise with the complainers. In our individualistic society, we can fall into the trap of thinking that only certain people deserve good things. Those who work hard, who are law-abiding, who make the most of opportunities – they deserve a decent standard of living. Think of how often we hear people complaining about those who are struggling, saying they do not deserve assistance or 'handouts'? Such criticisms fail to take into account that not everyone has the same opportunities or privileges in life.

But in this parable of Jesus, the landowner treats everyone the same,

regardless of their productivity. He recognises that not all of them had the same opportunity – some were just luckier than others, in the right place at the right time. God is just and generous, and he expects us to have the same respect for everyone, regardless of their position in life.

Sadly we do not live in an equal world where everyone's dignity is respected and everyone has equal opportunities. In this Season of Creation, we are mindful in particular of the world's poor who suffer most as a result of environmental destruction – damage that is often caused by the comfortable lifestyles of others.

*'Enlighten those who possess power and money
that they may avoid the sin of indifference,
that they may love the common good,
advance the weak,
and care for this world in which we live.
The poor and the earth are crying out.'*
(Pope Francis, *Laudato Si'*)

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For Your Newsletter:

Seeing your Life through the Lens of the Gospel

Matthew 20:1-16

1. 'I was there first'. Envy easily comes to the surface when faced with the good fortune of others, especially when compared to what seems less favourable treatment of ourselves. Can you recall that feeling in yourself and what it did to you? Can you also recall times when you were content with your lot, even though it seemed others had greater gifts, better opportunities, etc.
2. A parent or teacher who gives a lot of time to a difficult child does not love the others less, but if we are one of those other children we may not see that. Recall a 'Jesus person' in your life who helped you to overcome feelings of envy and helped you appreciate that the apparently more favourable treatment of another did not mean a lessening of love for you.
3. This leads us to the core message of this parable, namely, that God's love is a free gift, and not earned. Recall moments when you were particularly conscious of the gifts that God has given you by counting all the blessings that you have, no matter how small.
4. 'It is too late now' are words sometimes uttered to justify doing nothing about a situation. This parable tells us that where love is involved, it is never too late. Can you recall times when you got a positive response after taking action when you thought it was 'too late'?

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Twenty-Sixth Sunday in Ordinary Time

27 September 2020

Readings

First Reading: Ezekiel offers us words and ways that will restore our relationship with God.

Second Reading: St Paul charts a way for us so that we always consider the other person to be better than ourselves.

Gospel: The gospel asks our opinion about God's will and our own way of response. Jesus makes a startling statement about the sort of people who will make their way into the kingdom of heaven. We are in for major surprises and shocks....when....if we get there!!!

General Intercessions

Introduction

Today's readings celebrate that God is just in all his ways. We pray for the courage to be mirrors of God's justice and love.

Intercessions

1. We pray for Pope Francis who leads the Church to discern the unpredictability of God's word in our lives. May we, like true disciples, be open and receptive to take time and listen with a steadfast love.
Lord, hear us. Lord, graciously hear us.
2. We pray that we may show our faith in generous action on behalf of others. Help us to serve one another and especially the poor with words and deeds of compassion.
Lord, hear us. Lord, graciously hear us.
3. We pray for the courage to confront the social conditions that contribute to the plight and poverty of others in our midst. Increase our understanding of their needs.
Lord, hear us. Lord, graciously hear us.
4. We pray for a spirit to be united in our convictions by a tender love, where there is no competition or conceit among us, but where other people's interests and needs are given priority.
Lord, hear us. Lord, graciously hear us.
5. We pray for all the intentions of our family and community: For economic justice in our world for all people; For unity in the Church and among all world religions; For the renewal of hope in people's lives.
Lord, hear us. Lord, graciously hear us.
6. We pray for our dead: may they have a share in the promised hope of your eternal love.
Lord, hear us. Lord, graciously hear us.

We pray to Mary: May we become disciples as we say ... Hail Mary ...

Conclusion

Heavenly Father, help us to reverence the earth as we share and steward wisely the gifts of creation that you have entrusted to us. We make our prayer through Christ our Lord. Amen.

Liturgical Music

Eucharistic Prayer Acclamations

Holy, Holy/Memorial Acclamation/Great Amen from *Sing The Mass, Anthology of Music for the Irish Church, 2011.*

Responsorial Psalm

Psalm 24: Remember your mercy, Lord – *Responsorial Psalms for Sundays and Major Feast Days/Cantate/Laudate/Liturgical Hymns Old & New/Celebration Hymnal*

Gospel Acclamation

Sing **Alleluia** together with **verse** of the 26th Sunday Ordinary Time.

Songs

At The Name Of Jesus – *Laudate/Liturgical Hymns Old & New/Celebration Hymnal*

Remember Your Mercy Lord – *Laudate/Liturgical Hymns Old & New/Celebration Hymnal*

This Day God Gives Me – *Alleluia Amen/Hosanna/Gather/Laudate/Liturgical Hymns Old & New/Celebration Hymnal*
Thanks Be To God – *Laudate/In Caelo/ICMA 1995*

Draw Near and take the Body of the Lord – *ICMA 2014/www.liturgy-ireland.ie*

Lauda Jersusalem, Dominum – *ICMA 2017/www.liturgy-ireland.ie*

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Editor

Twenty-Sixth Sunday in Ordinary Time

27 September 2020

Homily Notes • Gospel: Matthew 21:28-32

Like all of Jesus' parables, this one is just waiting to be turned on us. Or, as Jesus says by way of introduction to his parable: What is your opinion? Like the second son in the parable, our presence here at Mass says 'yes' to the Father:

- We gather together. This is a 'yes' to community, to neighbourliness, to care for others.
- We acknowledge our sinfulness. This is a 'yes' to authentic tolerance, rather than the mere PC impostor. If we stand in need of mercy, we realize that others have the same need.
- We listen to God's word. This is a 'yes' to being challenged by God's way of thinking, and a willingness to leave aside some of our spontaneous reactions and mindsets.
- We share at the Lord's table. This is a 'yes' to 'communion' with others, and all that this means; it is a 'yes' to being strengthened by the Lord so that we might live in his truth and in his love.
- We pray the Lord's prayer together, and in that prayer we say 'yes' to forgiveness, even when it is difficult; we agree not to write anyone off.
- We pray for peace and offer each other a sign of peace. This is a 'yes' to being peacemakers in our homes, our workplaces, our schools, our clubs, our neighbourhoods.

So then, what is your opinion? All those ways in which we say 'yes': will they stack up? Will they find traction? During this coming week, will the 'yes' we speak here leave a visible trace in our lives and in the lives of others? In a work of theology he wrote before becoming Pope Benedict XVI, Joseph Ratzinger coined a lovely phrase: he wrote about the need to be 'constant in the Yes.' The future Pope pointed out that the only way to be constant is to be always willing to change, to be continually converted away from our tendency to say 'no' to the things of God.

Fr Chris Hayden

The Deep End • Good intentions

During the recent 'lockdown' due to the COVID-19 pandemic, many people found themselves turning to nature. There was a surge of interest in gardening. We tended to flower beds, planted seeds, started herb gardens. Lots of people commented that they noticed the birds singing for the first time in years. In the midst of challenging times, we found ourselves tuning in to the wonder of God's creation all around us.

As life begins to return to 'normal', can we retain this sense of wonder and awe? In this Season of Creation, we are invited to discover the presence of God in creation, to give thanks for the gift of the earth, and to change our ways so that we may live in harmony with creation. This requires us to be constantly conscious of how we are living – to not just have good intentions but to follow through in our actions.

In today's gospel, Jesus tells the parable of the two sons who are asked to go and work in their father's vineyard. The first son initially refuses, but then

thinks better of it and gets to work. While the second son has good intentions, he doesn't follow through. When it comes to caring for the earth, good intentions are not enough. Our actions matter. We may have been careless in the past but a change of heart is happening, right across our society. It all starts with our actions, as individuals and communities. As we emerge from a challenging few months, let us use the Season of Creation to reflect on how we can do better – to reconnect with God's beautiful creation and do all we can to love and preserve it.

*'Teach us to discover the worth of each thing,
to be filled with awe and contemplation,
to recognise that we are profoundly united
with every creature
as we journey towards your infinite light.'*
(Pope Francis, *Laudato Si'*)

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For Your Newsletter:

Seeing your Life through the Lens of the Gospel

Matthew 21:28-32

1. It is possible to be a dutiful and observant Christian, and yet feel there is something missing. Does it not make a huge difference when your heart is in what you are doing? It is so much better than just going through the motions. Where do you experience that most in your life?
2. The desire of Jesus for us is that we grow in that kind of committed, enthusiastic involvement in life. What encourages you to grow in this way? Recall times when your relationship with God, or with another person, was something that gave you energy, hope or joy. What lessons do you learn from those memories?
3. The elders probably thought well of themselves in contrast to the tax collectors and sinners. Perhaps you know some unconventional people, ones who appear to ignore the 'right' way of doing things, and yet they have taught you something about true goodness.

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6ú Meán Fómhair: An Tríú Domhnach Fíchead Saor

Réamhrá

Táimid i láthair Dé, ár gCruthaitheoir, ár Sréadaí, ár gCosantóir. Is dual dúinn cluas éisteachta a thabhairt dá Bhriathar, a chothaíonn ionainn spiorad an ghrá agus an mhaithiúnais.

Smaoineamh

Nuair a dúnmharaíodh Christopher Ewart-Biggs, Ambasadóir na Breataine chun na hÉireann, i mí Iúil 1976, ní raibh sé ach coicís sa tír. Fear é a chreid i modhanna síochánta chun aidhmeanna polaitiúla a bhaint amach agus i ndiaidh a bháis ghlac a bhean chéile Jane páirt ghníomhach sa pholaitíocht agus i bhfeachtas na síochána, ag obair go dícheallach ar son athmhuintearais sa tír seo. Ní raibh a h-iníon Kate ach ocht mbliana d'aois ag an am ach bhí cuimhne shoiléir aici gur labhair a máthair fá mhaithiúnas, fá shíocháin agus fá athmhuintearas, díthe féin agus dá teaghlach, d'Éirinn agus don Bhreatain, ag guí gur threise dóchas ná an lámh láidir. Rinne an dúnmharú uafásach seo dlús a chothú idir an dá thír in ionad na scoilte a bheartaigh lucht an fhoréigin. Cé gur ghoill bás a fir céile go domhain ar Jane, d'éirigh léithi a fuinneamh agus a neart a dhíriú ar shlí dhearfa an chirt agus na síochána.

B'é an maithiúnas an chéad choiscéim ar shlí an athmhuintearais. Cé gur uirthi féin agus a teaghlach is mó a ghoill an feall fabhtach seo, thug sí maithiúnas ina croí do dhream an uafáis. B'é seo céim thábhachtach le cur ar chumas na ndrochdhaoine, i bhfocla an chéad léachta, tiompú ó bhealach na h-aimhleasa. Deir Pól sa dara léacht go mbaianeann an aithne 'gráigh do chomharsa mar thú féin' le gach gné dár saol, le gach dearcadh atá againn agus gach gníomh atá déanta againn, 'ná déan marú' san áireamh. Thuig Jane Ewart-Biggs agus a h-iníon Kate cumhacht an mhaithiúnais nuair a ruaig siad as a gcroíthe an searbhach chun bealach úr a réiteach dóibh féin agus do dhream an donais.

Guí an Phobail

Cuirimis ár n-achainí i láthair Dé, ag guí go raibh spiorad an athmhuintearais ina gcroíthe siúd atá i gcoimhlint.

1. Guímis go mbeidh muid umhal agus fial inár gcroíthe nuair atá teannas is trioblóid ann. A Thiarna, éist linn.
2. Guímis do na páistí, don aos óg agus do dhaoine fásta, scoláirí agus baill foirne, atá ag plé le cúrsaí oideachais i scoileanna agus i gcoláistí. Go raibh bláth ar a gcuid oibre d'ainneoin srianta na paidéime. A Thiarna, éist linn.
3. Guímis go raibh sólás acu sin atá faoi bhrón, faoiseamh ag na h-easláin agus ardú meanma acu sin atá uaigneach nó in ísle brí. A Thiarna, éist linn.

A Thiarna Dia, beannaigh sinn agus cuidigh linn bheith foighdeach agus lách linn féin agus lenár gcomharsan, trí Chríost ár dTiarna.

An Phaidir

Le creideamh tréan agus dóchas fíor, guímis le chéile:

Focal Scoir

Nuair a thiocfas deireadh le seo
Gur fearde muid mar dhaoine
Gur fearde a fhreagróidh muid
Ár mianta
Ár ngairm
Ár ndóchas

Gura fada buan a bhéas muid amhlaidh:
níos fearr dá chéile.

*Laura Kelly Fanucci,
ag caint fán pandéime*

13ú Meán Fómhair: An Ceathrú Domhnach Fíchead Saor

Réamhrá

Tá ceacht crua le foghlaim againn ó Bhriathar Dé inniu: muna féidir linn maithiúnas a thabhairt dá chéile, níl maithiúnas Dé inghlactha againn. Ní dhiúltaíonn Dia a mhaithiúnas dúinn ach is é duáilceas ár gcroíthe a cheileann orainn é.

Smaoineamh

Ar an 25ú lá de mhí Bhealtaine 2020, Luan an Chéasta, las bás tubaisteach George Floyd tine na córa sna Stáit Aontaithe agus ar fud an domhain. Theanntaigh póilín bán a ghlúin ar mhuineál fir, dubh ina chraiceann agus ina chultúr, ar feadh 8 mbomaite agus 46 soicindí, á thachtadh agus á chéasadh. Ó shin i leith, i ngach

cearn den domhan agus ar dhóigheanna agus ar ócáidí éagsúla, d'umhlaigh daoine ar a nglúine i gcuimhne George Floyd agus, i nguth in éadan na h-éagóra, dhearbhaigh ómós don chine dhubh agus do fhiúntas a saoil. Ar pháirc na h-imeartha i Sasana, bhí scríofa ar gach geansaí 'black lives matter' agus a mhacasamhail le feiceáil ar fud na cruinne. Tá an ciníochas fite fuaite i meon an phobail agus i ngach gné den tsaol go dtí an lá atá inniu ann. I 1967 nuair a dhiúltaigh an dornálaí is clúití ariamh dhul san arm ar bhonn consiasa, bhagair na h-údarais an príosún air. Dúirt Muhammad Ali mar fhreagra: 'Is cuma liom; táimidinne mar chine sa phríosún le 400 bliain'.

Tá dearmad déanta againn ar mhaitheas Dé dúinn, díreach cosúil leis an tseirbhíseach a raibh an rí comh fial sin leis. Dá mbeadh muid buíoch ó chroí as cineáltas agus maithiúnas Dé, ní bheadh ar ár gcumas masla agus drochíde a thabhairt don chine dhubh, inár meoin nó in aon ghné den tsaol. Tá turas achrannach romhainn le bheith dílis d'aithne Chríost a iarrann orainn grá a thabhairt dár gcomharsan mar a thugann seisean grá dúinne.

Guí an Phobail

Cuirimis ár bpaidreacha i láthair Dé, ag guí ar son spiorad na síochána agus na córa inár measc.

1. Guímis go mbeidh mian na síochána agus tart na córa sa bhaile agus i gcéin, go mbeidh siad siúd atá i gcoimhlint sásta an teannas eatarthu a mhaolú agus dúshraith an athmhuintearais a dhaingniú. A Thiarna, éist linn.
2. Guímis go mbeidh faoiseamh ag na h-easláin, dóchas acu sin atá lagbhríoch agus sólás ag lucht an bhróin. A Thiarna, éist linn.
3. Guímis ar son na ndaoine éagsúla a chuidigh linn agus a thug tarrtháil orainn i rith na géarchéime. A Thiarna, éist linn.

A Dhia an ghrá, treoraigh sinn ar bhealach ár leasa, trí Chríost ár dTiarna. Amen.

An Phaidir

Tá sé de mhisneach againn guí ar son cirt is córa mar a d'iarr Íosa orainn:

Focal Scoir

Is féidir a bheith i d'fháidh ar dhá bhealach.

Is é an chéad bhealach inse dóibh seo atá ina sclábhaithe gur féidir leo bheith saor. Is é sin bealach corrach Mhaoise. Is é an dara bealach inse dóibh seo, a shíleann go bhfuil siad saor, go bhfuil siad, i ndáiríre, ina sclábhaithe. Is é sin bealach Íosa, bealach atá níos corraí arís.

Richard Rohr

20ú Meán Fómhair: An Cúigiú Domhnach Fíchead Saor

Réamhrá

Ní féidir smaointe agus mianta Dé a aimsiú ach tugann Íosa léargas grinn dúinn ar fhlaithiúlacht Dé.

Smaoineamh

Creideann alán daoine go mbrathann a bhfiúntas ar éifeacht a gcuid oibre. Measann siad más mó a saothar gur mó a dtuarastal agus dá mhéid a dtuarastal gurb amhlaidh is fearr é. Sin mana ár linne. Deir Soiscéal an lae inniu nach amhlaidh atá sé. Is fiú tuarastal iomlán gach duine, iadsan a bhí ag obair ó dhubbh go dubh agus iadsan nach ndearna ach uair oibre. Ba chóir go mbeadh caighdeán maireachtála ag gach duine a dhearbhaíonn a n-uaisleacht. Brathann ár bhfiúntas i súile Dé ar ár n-uaisleacht mar dhaoine os rud é gur cruthaíodh muid ar dheilbh Dé. Ach is ait an mac an saol. Tá éagothromaíocht uafásach sa tsaol: an saibhir and an daibhir, saol gur dhá thrían córa cumhacht. Is deacair léargas soiléir a bheith againn ar an uaisleacht agus an áilleacht a bhaineann linn mar dhaoine agus mar chlann Dé. Ba é Gandhi a dúirt:

Ní créatúir dhaonna muid a mhothaíonn agus a bhlaiseann an spioradáltacht; is créatúir spioradálta muid a mhothaíonn agus a bhlaiseann an daonnacht.

Sin an dúshlán is mó a bhaineann lenár n-oilithreach ar an tsaol seo: bheith dílis don spiorad uasal álainn atá ina chónaí inár gcolainn daonna. Múineann an spiorad sin dúinn bheith buíoch ar son ár mbeatha, meas a bheith againn orainn féin agus ar uaisleacht dhaoine eile. Sin na h-aitheanta a thug Críost dúinn. Grá do Dhia. Grá dúinn féin. Grá dár gcomharsa. Trionóid an ghrá. Fiúntas an ghrá.

Guí an Phobail

Cuirimis ár bpaidreacha i láthair Dé, a chluineann ár n-achainí sula bhfuil focal ráite againn.

1. Guímis chun an Tiarna do gach dream atá ag lorg urraime agus cothrom na féinne. Go dtuigimid an leatrom agus

an éagóir atá sa tsaol inniu. A Thiarna, éist linn.

2. Guímis do na daoine uilig a bhí faoi bhrú i rith thréimhse na dianghabhála. Go raibh beannacht Dé ar gach duine, idir corp, meabhair agus anam. A Thiarna, éist linn.
3. Guímis go n-éistoidh daoine fásta le glaoch an aosa óig aire níos fearr a thabhairt don domhan, don fharraige and don spéir. Go raibh a n-áilleacht agus a n-acmhainní mar oidhreacht luachmhar ag na glúnta le theacht. A Thiarna, éist linn.

A Thiarna Dia, tá fhios againn go bhfuil tú i gcónaí inár gcuideachta. Go raibh meas againn ar do chomhlúadar, trí Chríost ár dTiarna.

An Phaidir

Guímis go dtugamid tús áite i gcónaí do thoil Dé agus paidir an Tiarna á rá againn:

Focal Scoir

Níl mé cinnte amach is amach cé leis a mbeidh na flaithis cosúil ach tá ‘fhios agam nuair a thioctas uair ár mbáis agus breithiúnas Dé nach í an cheist a chuirfeas sé:

‘Cé mhéad dea-ghníomh a rinne tú i do shaol?’

ach an cheist

‘Cé mhéad grá a chuir tú isteach ina ndearna tú?’

Naomh Teresa as Calcutta

27ú Meán Fómhair: An Séú Domhnach Fíchead Saor

Réamhrá

D’umhlaigh Críost é féin go bás le beatha úr a thabhairt dúinn. Bhí Dia dílis dá gheallúint. Lean gníomh geallúint. Ní fiú geallúint gan gníomh.

Smaoineamh

Is tábhachtaí gníomh ná geallúint. Níl sé éasca beart a dhéanamh de réir ár mbriathair. Níl muid i gcónaí dílis dár bhfocal. Ach tá Briathar Dé fíor. Níl deighilt ama ná tola idir Bhriathar Dé agus Beart Dé. Is ionann iad. Tig siad beirt ó Chroí Dé. Tá Croí Dé agus Briathar Dé agus Beart Dé comhaontaithe. Níl an tíolacadh céanna againne. Ghoill dream na cinnteachta ar Íosa. Bhí cumhacht acu. Chuir siad ord agus eagar ar an tsaol, ní chun saoirse chlann Dé a cheiliúradh ach chun pobal Dé a smachtú agus a cheansú. Chuir siad ualach trom an dlí ar ghuailne an phobail ach ní raibh bonn lena mbriathra ná brí lena ngníomhartha. Ní

raibh grá Dé ina gcroíthe. Chuir seo samhnas ar Íosa. Thuig sé an chosmhuintir, na daoine a bhí ag streachailt le cora an tsaol, a bhí ag lorg fiúntais is faoisimh ainneoin chruatan a saoil. Dúirt Íosa go raibh siad beannaithe, ní siocair maitheas a saoil ach siocair ionraiceas a dtóraíochta.

Tá aithne mhaith againn uilig ar an dá dhream thuas luaite mar go bhfuil a dtréithe le fáil inár gcroíthe féin. Tá coimhlint an uaibhris agus na h-umhlaíochta ag eascairt ónár gcroíthe de shíor. Níl comhaontacht idir ár smaointe, ár mbriathra agus ár mbearta. Go minic dhéanaimid an rud nach mian linn a dhéanamh agus amanna eile teipeann orainn mianta fiúntacha ár gcroíthe a chur i gcrích. Iarrann Íosa orainn eolas níos grinne a bheith againn ar mhianta ár gcroíthe, ar fhírinne ár mbriathra agus ar fhiúntas ár ngníomhartha. Ní bheidh croí agus briathar agus beart an duine comhaontaithe ar an tsaol seo ach ar a laghad má dhéanann muid ár ndícheall sin a chur i gcrích, táimid beannaithe.

Guí an Phobail

Cuirimis ár n-achainí i láthair Dé atá i gcónaí ag éisteacht linn:

1. Iarraimis ar Dhia léargas a thabhairt dúinn ar mhianta ár gcroíthe agus ar bhearta ár mbeatha. Go raibh muid sásta ligint do ghrásta Dé muid a threorú ar bhealach ár leasa. A Thiarna, éist linn.
2. Go raibh síocháin Chríost acu sin uilig atá tinn in otharlanna, in ionaid cúraime nó sa bhaile agus ag gach duine atá ag tabhairt aire dóibh. A Thiarna, éist linn.
3. Tugaimid buíochas do Dhia as na ndaoine a thug cúram chaoi do na h-easláin i rith na paindéime agus as na ndaoine a rinne timireacht i rith an ama sin. Go maire tuile na maitheasa inár measc. A Thiarna, éist linn.

A Dhia an Ghrá, bí linn agus le do phobal uilig inniu agus go deo, trí Chríost ár dTiarna.

An Phaidir

Faoi anáil Spioraid Dé, guímis an Phaidir a thug Íosa dúinn.

Focal Scoir

Más mian leat daoine eile a bheith sona sásta, cleachtaigh an truachróí. Más mian leat féin a bheith sona sásta, cleachtaigh an truachróí.

Dalai Lama

Due to the ongoing restrictions readers are advised to check with those advertising events on these pages to check if the event is still going ahead or has been rescheduled

DROMANTINE RETREAT AND CONFERENCE CENTRE

Growing in years, peace and contentment; A Spirituality of Ageing
Tuesday, 1–Monday, 7 September 2020
This retreat will outline a spiritual approach to assist us as we grow older. It will offer some guidelines to help us to let go of any regrets and to harvest the fruits of our lives, so that the final stages can be lived in peace, fulfilment, and trust.
Fr Des Corrigan SMA

Praying with the Psalms
Friday, 2–Thursday, 8 October 2020
In this retreat we will revisit a number of the Psalms and experience how they can invigorate our relationship with God, self and others.
Fr Gerard McCarthy SVD

Loss and Recovery
Saturday, 14 November 2020
9.30 am – 5.00 pm
This seminar will explore loss in its many facets and how it is also an invitation to wholeness. 'While the heart grieves for what it has lost, The Spirit dances for that which it has found.'
Fr Jim Cogley

Advent Retreat
Friday, 4–Sunday, 6 December 2020
'Advent: the other purple time in the Church's year'
Through Scripture, images and poetry, we take time to reflect on the God who came, who comes, and who will come again. We prepare for Christmas by dwelling on this mind-blowing event.
Sr Anne Morris DHS

For enquiries or bookings contact:
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Dromantine, Newry,
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Tel 028-30821964 (From Rol 048)
Email
admin@dromantineconference.com
www.dromantineconference.com



ARDS RETREAT CENTRE

Ards re-opened after the Covid-19 pandemic on 10 August for personal and group retreats

6 Day Guided Retreat
Tuesday, 8–Sunday, 13 September 2020
This retreat affords the opportunity to each participant to be increasingly responsible for their own evolution. For this to happen, our awareness, our consciousness, our structures of perception, and our attention, have to be refocused. The work of the retreat includes the practice of silence, prayerful reflection on the Gospel story; meeting once per day with the director; and participation in a daily Eucharist. In everything participants will have the opportunity to practise the art of becoming conscious of what is already there in their life, but which is hidden, or 'sunken in a field' as Jesus puts it.
Facilitators: Fr Philip Baxter & Fr Kieran Shorten

Silent Clergy Retreat
Sunday, 20–Thursday, 24 September 2020
An individually directed silent retreat according to the Ignatian tradition using *Lectio divina* for praying with scripture. Fr Brendan, an experienced Director, will meet with everyone individually each morning for around 30 minutes. He will give instructions on prayer with scripture for the day and suggest how you might structure your day.
Facilitator: Fr Brendan McManus SJ

It is planned to run the Interdiocesan Clergy Retreat in October – dates to be arranged. Please contact the Retreat Centre for more details.

Contact: Ards Friary Retreat Centre,
Creelough, Co Donegal
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Tel 087-2024688.

For sale: Old Church pews for sale. Photo available. *Contact:* 086-8351732.

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Contact: Fr Thomas Doyle
Email thomaswdoyle@hotmail.co.uk
Tel 018999220189



AFTER SUICIDE

There's Hope for Them and for You

Chris Alar MIC, and Jason Lewis MIC

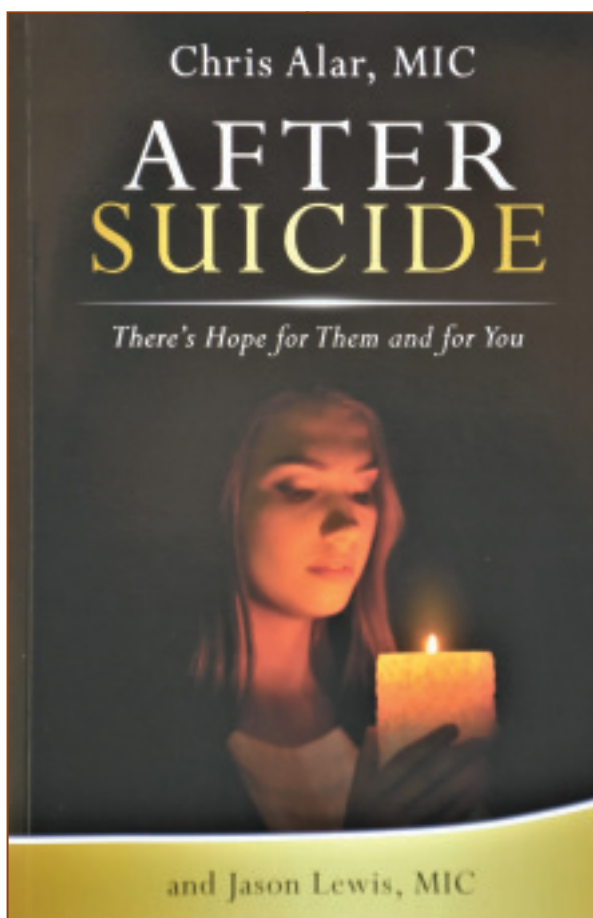
Marian Press, 2019

I believe that there is nothing at all here below which I should not at length get sick of. I believe that, though I had all the means of happiness which this life could give, yet in time I should tire of living, feeling everything trite and dull and unprofitable.

It might surprise some readers to learn that the above quote is from the pen of Saint John Henry Newman, in a meditation where he contemplated an earthly existence without God.

Unintentionally perhaps, he also captured something of the bleak experience of many of those who ultimately decide or feel driven to take their own lives. As a former college chaplain and parish priest I have grown sadly familiar with the pain-filled faces of those who have suffered the experience of losing a loved one to suicide. I recall a poignant scene in the recent past of a young man sitting by his friend's graveside days after the funeral and reading him football results. There is hardly a family or individual who has not been touched by such a traumatic event. Almost every day in Ireland, two people take this tragic pathway, and in the USA in 2018 over 48,000 people ended their own lives, leaving in their wake a devastated circle of family, friends and community. For those who have been bereaved, a long journey begins as they struggle to live with the consequences of a largely unforeseen tragedy.

In *After Suicide*, authors Chris Alar and Jason Lewis deal with this emotive and highly sensitive subject from the perspective of Church teaching and spirituality, a perspective which can sometimes be overlooked in the aftermath of such loss. The authors bravely attempt to tackle some of the questioning, fears and emotions which trouble people of faith, especially in trying to grasp what has happened in the light of God's love and mercy. Fr. Chris Alar brings the harrowing personal experience of the loss of his grandmother to suicide. Together with his fellow member of the Marian Fathers of the Immaculate Conception, Jason Lewis, they offer helpful insights on how to grieve through this pain-filled bereavement caused by suicide and other sudden deaths. Hope is their guiding motif throughout



the book – hope for the future in eternity for the one who has died and hope for the healing of those who have been left behind. A section giving an overview of suicide grief and its effects may be especially helpful to family members and friends, as well as assisting those in pastoral care roles and others with responsibilities for those suffering the psychological and spiritual fallout from suicides.

In the book's two parts, with over ten chapters and 228 pages, the authors, with the help of a rich spiritual tradition as well as pastoral and personal experience, explore and explain with clarity and compassion the ways in which the teaching of the church and authentic spiritual support can help those who are anxious and bewildered by the sudden and often inexplicable trauma that has overtaken them. What makes this

book somewhat different to others on the same subject is that it doesn't shy away from a specifically religious approach to healing. The authors gently offer a life-giving system of support through prayer, sacramental and supernatural resources, including eucharistic devotion and confession. A detailed chapter on spiritual principles which can be applied in order to help healing and provide hope, has a special relevance through its use of traditional prayer forms. A chapter is dedicated to hope contained in the spiritual theology of St. Faustina, with an emphasis on the Mass being the most powerful and perfect form of intercessory prayer for those who have died. Instruction on how to pray the chaplet of Divine Mercy and the Seven Sorrows Rosary, as well as a Conversation of the Merciful God with a Despairing Soul are also given as spiritual aids.

In addition to regular practical advice in dealing with grief and its effect on the physical and mental well-being of those afflicted by a loved one's death, the authors provide a useful set of appendices which lists the warning signs and risk factors of suicide, along with statistics and the effects of suicide on those left behind, and suicide prevention and grief support/postvention resources.

For those whose faith has been tested by the experience of suicide, this is a thoughtful and compassionate guide which assures them they are not alone as they carry this particularly heavy cross in their lives.



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