

Fr. Jimmy's Column - 2018

WE HAVE A NEW PARISH PRIEST IN THE CITY MOTHER CHURCH

I take the opportunity to welcome you all to the new liturgical year of the Church and to wish you all a Happy New Year 2018 I'm sure you had a good time of rest wherever you chose to spend your Christmas and the transition into the year 2018. During this festive time, I received the good news from Bp. William Kenney of the appointment of a new parish priest for St. Osburg. He wrote the following letter to St. Osburgs:

'Dear Sisters and Brothers in Christ,' 'this season of Christmas is characterised among other things by the giving of presents. I am therefore very pleased to be able to announce that you are to receive new Parish Priest to lead the Parish. As you may know, the responsibility for nominating a parish priest where the parish is served by a Religious Congregation rests with the Superior of the Religious Congregation and his advisers. That process has now taken place and the Superior General of the Apostles of Jesus has nominated Fr Pontius Bandua AJ as Parish Priest for the Parish of St Osburg's. Fr Pontius will continue to work closely with Fr Sunday (his curate), and they will rightly be part of the family of the Apostles of Jesus serving three parishes in Coventry, a blessing that we receive now as a missionary country. What will be different now is that Fr Pontius and Fr Sunday will now be the main point of contact for all parish matters at St Osburg's. I would like to take this opportunity to thank Fr Jimmy Lutwama for his mentoring of the two priests of St Osburg's since their arrival here.

Yours devotedly in the Lord,

+ William Kenney

Auxiliary Bishop of Birmingham

I welcome the appointment of Fr. Pontius to lead the parish and I know that all of us will give him the support he needs to be a good pastor. I have known Fr. Pontius for many years in formation and as a confreres. He is a pastoral minded man with all the qualification to lead the parish into holiness.

I wish to thank you all for the good work you have done to support me to run the parish for the last two years since Sept. 2015. In the event of sharing a priest St. Mary's even changed their own Mass time so as to make sure that St. Osburg was covered. In the mean time I will continue to support the Parish of St. Osburg and the two Fathers until that time

when I will officially hand over the tools of a pastor to Fr. Pontius by having him inducted as Parish Priests of the Mother Church of our City. He is as a matter of fact parish priest to us all. Thanks to God for the gift of a priest among us. May He bless him so that through his work we may love God more and more.

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TEACH THESE HABITS TO YOUR CHILDREN

Few weeks ago we had a funeral of one of our good parishioners. I was pleased to see many common faces as we celebrated the funeral Mass. 'Common faces' in terms of faithfully participating in the Catholic life. You see a funeral reflects the kind of life a person lived and the kind of company he associated with. A good practicing Christian will bring together practicing Christians. The celebration of the Mass was a thanksgiving to God for the fidelity of the deceased. The opposite can also be true that a non practicing baptised brings those people who clearly reflect on the lifestyle of the deceased. The church and the very celebration of the Mass is an alien world to them.

It is very important to pass on to the children the values that will reflect in their life the kind of person you were when you are gone. Generosity is not an art learned in the schools but from home. Self respect and respect of others is not in the school curriculum but part of family upbringing. When I was young my parents used to prepare us for Sunday Mass and give **One shilling** to each one of us to put into the Sunday collection. Putting that coin into the collection brought us much joy because our offering became part of the sacrifice of the Mass. This taught us to know that it is our duty as baptised children to support the church. If the child has not been taught by his parents this kind of acting, he/she will not know that it is his/her duty to support good causes. Parents have so much to do with the kind of life that we live as adults. Jesus commenting on this point said: "you will know them by their fruits"

During last year's Christmas vigil Mass for children I selected a 4 year child to carry the baby Jesus during the procession. I noticed that the child kept her fist tight even after I pleaded with her because I thought she might drop the figure of the baby Jesus. The little girl refused. I came to know that inside her tiny tight fist there was a pound coin which her parents had given her for her Christmas collection which she did not want to miss. The four year old knew that the pound was a precious gift she wanted to offer at Mass; she did not want to lose it or to miss being part of the offerings brought at the altar. Her behaviour

your free time for the good of others by listening more attentively or by just being there! You know what, we might find it easier to give up cheese and ice-cream on our strawberries than to give our attention to others. This is where meaningful fasting should be.

Clothing the naked is not calling on us to go and empty our wardrobes of old clothes but to go and restore first and foremost the dignity of others. I'm sure many people are walking naked because we have taken away their dignity by not treating them as part of our life. Go home and return the dignity of others that you have taken from them. Then your integrity will go before you and the glory of God behind you, you will cry to God and he will say **I'M Here.**

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FORGET FOOD CHANGE YOUR BEHAVIOUR:

I was reflecting on the writings of the Prophet Isaiah 58:114 and how he told his people the right way to fast. In ancient Israel, fasting was a sign of repentance and conversion. The end result of fasting was a total transformation of oneself not less than that. When the people begun to fast, they neglected changing some behaviours. God did not respond to their requests, the people were frustrated; the more they fasted, the more their misery increased. What went wrong? Why did God not take notice?

God told Isaiah where the problem was: "Isaiah look here these people seek me day after day, they long to know my ways. Like a nation that wants to act with integrity and not ignore the law of its God. They ask me for laws that are just, they long for God to draw near. Why should we fast if you never see it, why should we do penance if you never take notice? Look you do business on your fast days and you oppress your work men, you quarrel when you fast and strike the poor man with your fist. Fasting like yours today will never make your voice heard on high. Is that the sort of fast that pleases me, a truly penitential day for men? Hanging your head like a reed, lying down on sackcloth and ashes? Is that what you call fasting, a day acceptable to God?

Then God makes proposal of what true fasting is: Go home he said and break unjust fetters and undo the thongs of the yoke. Go and let the oppressed go free, break every yoke. Go and share your bread with the hungry, shelter the homeless poor. Clothe the man you see to be naked and not turn from your own relatives. The consequences of acting like this will be unimaginable: your light will shine like the dawn and

your wound be quickly healed over. Your integrity will go before you and the glory of God behind you. Cry, and God will answer; call and he will say, 'I am here'. If you do away with the yoke, the clenched fist, the wicked word, if you give your bread to the hungry, and relief to the oppressed, your light will rise in the darkness, and your shadows become like noon. God will always guide you. He will give strength to your bones and you shall be like a watered garden, like a spring of water whose waters never run dry. You will rebuild the ancient ruins, build upon the old foundations.

Refrain from trampling the Sabbath (stop going to Sunday Mass late) and doing business on the holy day, if you call the Sabbath (Sunday) 'Delightful', and the day sacred to God 'Honourable', if you honour it by (avoiding being late as if the Mass means nothing in you) abstaining from gossip, then shall you find your happiness. For the mouth of God has spoken.

I'm sure this is exactly what Isaiah would tell us today so as to profit from our Lenten observance. Some of us will read this message and go home to act on it, others will just see it as one of the stories of the parish priest. Forget your food and drink but change your behaviour, become an honest member of the church. Practice your faith.

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THE MIRACLE YOU ARE LOOKING FOR COMES BUT SLOWLY

We understand miracles as those events that happen to us instantaneously without expectation. They are unpredictable in nature you cannot prepare yourself to receive a miracle. These days some people who have started their own churches are so crafty that they can act out 'miracles' or even predict the how, the when and the where the miracle would take place. If you are not well rooted in your Christian faith you might feel like as though you are being left by a fast moving bandwagon of miracle workers. I remember one person who said to me "Father I'm praying for a miracle to win a lottery this year" that was in 1995. He was greatly frustrated as the miracle did not happen. As I looked at the man, I could see a miracle in his life and in his family. He had a large family but no job. The miracle was that without a stable job, he passed through the year with a constant supply of milk and bread on his table; there was always a small tea bag in the house to make a cup of tea whenever a visitor called at his house. His children never went to bed with empty stomachs. The other miracle was that although millions of people fall sick and die every year, his

family enjoyed good health even without medical insurance. Yes the man was praying for a miracle to win a lottery but he forgot the miracles that were surrounding him.

True miracles come to us slowly and God answers our prayers bit by bit like the little drops of a spring of water which goes on to make a great river. As your parish priest, I noticed a miracle recently as we installed a new heating system in the church and in the parish hall. There is no doubt, our church is warm and nice. But how did it come about? God put you into work, you became a tax-payer. He gave you a generous heart such that you decided to give your Sunday donation through Gift Aid. It is the tax which you pay to the government that we as a Registered Charity 234216 claimed back which has enabled us to finance the heating of our church. This is a big miracle for me but as you can see, it is a miracle that has gone through stages and whose implementation has come slowly. Yes the miracle you are asking for will come but it comes slowly.

Today, Sr. Leera Lobo who manages our Gift Aid department will be giving out the envelopes for the new tax year. Please if you pay taxes on your income I encourage you to consider giving your Sunday donation to the Church through Gift Aid. For every pound you give to the Church, the UK Government adds to your donation £0.25 making it £1.25 at no extra cost to you. It is this extra £0.25 that has made us have new heating.

I thank you all for supporting the church. I'm looking for new taxpayers within our community especially the Polish brothers and Sisters who are in work and pay taxes. If Gift Aid was not good either to you or to the Church, it is my duty to warn you against it. But **It works** Let us take advantage of this miracle which we pray for every time and it comes to us slowly. Please take your envelope today.

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AN ENTERTAINING HOMILY? YOU HAVE MISSED THE POINT.

As we move towards Easter, the language that Jesus will use as he speaks to the Pharisees, the Scribes and teachers of the Law will become intense. They will accuse him of breaking the Jewish Law and try to trap him to speak in terms intended to bring him into trouble with the Romans. Some people will get offended not because He had said anything wrong but because they were too proud to listen to anyone except to themselves. You know pride makes people blind.

In his teaching Jesus called people to take their relationship with God seriously, at one time he told them to try to pass through the narrow door (Lk. 13:24), on another occasion he told them to carry their crosses and follow him (Matt 16:24-26), and still on another occasion he told them that he who preferred father or mother to him was not worthy of him (Matt. 10:37). Jesus never entertained lukewarm hearts, he didn't have company with those who made outward show of religion while inwardly they were ravenous wolves. Unless the word of God penetrates us to challenge our self importance it cannot find a home in our hearts. The gospel is not meant to entertain us but to prick our hearts to challenge our attitudes and to bring the best out of our lives.

Jesus was followed by many people for different reasons. While the Twelve Apostles followed him as their teacher, the women from Galilee followed him in order to minister to the daily welfare of the group (Lk. 8:1-3) But there was another group of people who followed Jesus and listened to every word he spoke. It was not because they wanted to believe in him but because they wanted to accuse him of something (Jn. 8:6). This is very common to people who preach the gospel, some people listen to the homilies of the Pope, the bishops or of their priests not to find nourishment for their souls from their preaching but in order to find something upon which they can justify their own reasons for not doing what they are supposed to do.

I remember one priest who preached about the Seventh Commandment "*Thou shall not steal*" honest people understood the message and went away pleased about it but the dishonest people left the church grumbling accusing him of being harsh and of being disrespectful to those in his congregation especially the children who were not thieves. Of course his critics were those who were engaged in stealing.

A good teacher is that one who evokes a response from his pupils and a good homily is that one which people take away with them when they leave the church. In my ministry as a priest, I have met people who reminded me of the homily that I gave, this is not because it was entertaining but it was another way of telling me that the message was received. In these final days of Lent, I invite you to listen carefully to the words of Jesus, they call upon us to repent, to be honest in our faith. Jesus did not preach to people to entertain them but to make them to reform their lives.

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THE TABLE SHOULD NOT SEPARATE US

One of the touching stories we read during Lent inviting us to repent is the story told by Jesus about the Rich Man and Lazarus. The Bible talks about one Lazarus a good friend of Jesus who had two sisters Martha and Mary. They lived in a small village called Bethany. Whenever Jesus came to the city from Galilee it was at this home that he made a stop-over. Here he had a shower, changed his cloths, dusted his sandals and had a hot meal. From here he would enter Jerusalem possibly on the following day, a refreshed man. Appearing smart the city dwellers would not see him as a Galilean carpenter but as a learned man versed with the teaching of the Law. They called him Rabi = Master.

In the story of the rich man and Lazarus Jesus does not give any indication that he was speaking about the man at whose home he used to spend the nights while he was in Jerusalem. Therefore he was either talking about another destitute person, or he simply made up the name to suite the lesson he wanted to give. Lazarus was not a beggar; he used to crawl everyday from his tent and come to sit under the rich man's table with the hope that some scraps would fall from the rich mans table. All he knew was that he was not lucky enough to climb the property ladder. He did not envy whatever was going on above the table

Above the table there was a rich man, dressed in purple with golden chains round his neck. He was a truly blessed man by circumstances. He was a hard working man, he spent much of his time planning, investing and following up every penny. Do you know that if you trace the where-about of every penny, the pennies increase as stinginess kicks in as well? The rich man could not attribute his success to anyone else other than to himself. The big house, the big car, the fat bank account, all these were a result of hard work he thought. He attributed the terrible poverty Lazarus was going through to be due to his laziness. The fact is that he was not.

Wealth can sometimes blind us to the reality of life or even to the presence of other people. A rich man might not see a poor man and those who have power will hardly recognise the weak. In politics some powerful nations form clubs and give themselves titles: we hear of G7, G20, others talk of themselves as being in 'special relationships' and so on. These titles are nothing but a way of telling Lazarus that his presence does not bother them as long as he keeps his place under the table.

The table separated the Rich man and Lazarus. I'm afraid that there are things which separate society

today. Families can also be separated because of some affluent members looking down to the poor folks. Lenten season is meant to take away the table between us otherwise how can we truly understand the plight of someone if we are not bothered to look into their eyes?

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OUR DIOCESAN NEWSPAPER *CATHOLIC TODAY* IS GONE

If you have had the chance today to grab *Catholic Today* our diocesan newspaper from the back of the church, you are lucky because the newspaper has gone out of print. The last issue to be printed is the March 2018 issue No 130. The paper was an initiative of the Archbishop of Birmingham to help Christians, Catholics in particular to communicate with each other, to know what was going on in other parishes and to learn from one another. It was a local news paper which carried local news concerning ourselves as Catholics.

For reasons that many of us priests could not understand, was to notice that many of our parishioners did not take interest in the paper. Could it be because there were no job vacancies advertised, or because the £0.50 pence price being sold for it made it look so cheap? I'm sure that the disappearance of this paper is a blow in our catholic conversations.

There is a lot of rubbish in our so called "unmissable papers" yet some people are uncomfortable until they have read 'their paper'. Some papers are made up of so many pages often with pictures of people whose moral standing in the society leaves a lot to be desired. What surprises me as a priest is to see how people are so devoted to getting hold of those papers and how they read everything including the small print. This does not happen with Christian materials including the Bible. It is indeed scaring that a catholic newspaper can go out of print simply because Catholics were not interested in reading it! How can we communicate with one another as Christians if we do not support the channels by which we communicate?

Our doctors and nurses advise us to be careful with the stuff we put in our bodies, take little salt, reduce sugar intake, mind the amount of fat you consume, stop smoking, alcohol is dangerous for you and so many more advices. It is because they know the dangers of such irresponsible feeding of the body. As Christians, we are also advised to take care of our souls because what we feed them can bring us

write and how to pronounce the names of others properly but this should not spoil your day if you find out that a small apostrophe is missing on your name. Remember that these things are not intended to offend anyone. Someone who can overlook small things can forgive even greater offenses.

At the time when people spoke the same vernacular it was unusual to pronounce each other's name wrongly. Those days are gone as people of different languages live side by side. This new phenomenon challenges us all. I, as a Ugandan should try to learn how to write and how to pronounce Polish names, the Polish should also learn how to write and how to pronounce Ugandan names otherwise it does not do good to either of us to break each other's necks because of the name wrongly spelt or badly pronounced. A language can be a vernacular to some but to others it might have taken them great efforts to speak those few words in your vernacular. If someone can speak your vernacular but you cannot speak his, that person deserves your respect rather than insisting that he speaks your vernacular with all its accents fluently. It is sad that trivial things are exaggerated but important things are hardly recognised.

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WE LEFT WITH GOOD MEMORIES OF YOUR PARISH

Thirty days ago, when my sister Leena and I landed at Birmingham, the weather was bad. In the flight we were told that English weather was awaiting for us, rainy, cold and sometimes windy. But when we reached the presbytery it was different. The weather did not change but Fr Jimmy your Parish Priest and you, the people in the parish made the difference. There was the joy, warmth and acceptance everywhere, more so when we celebrated the Mass the following day. There was the expression of devotion, faith and prayerful atmosphere. I was indeed touched by it and so was my sister Leena; the warmth and affection we received from everyone in the parish.

It is said when God gives something he pours graces in plenty. He is a generous God and his bounties never stop. He is the one who plants those attitudes of love within us. It was indeed a dream fulfilled for us to come to visit our sister (Sr. Leera Lobo) and to experience the simple ministry here in UK. As for someone coming from an educational background, this was something new.

Two things were indeed striking: the dedicated

sacrificing work of the Parish Priest and his team and the simplicity of the people who accepted whole heartedly the good news. The beautifully built and well-maintained church makes it easy to pray and offer the services. The daily Mass which takes place in the Lady's chapel beside the main altar makes it very conducive to pray. I was pleased to see large number of people attending the daily and Sunday Masses and actively participating. The recitation of daily Rosary after Mass holds the community together. Indeed, it is a family spirit that continuously presents itself and I felt privileged to be here and to experience it.

I've great admiration of nature and wonder at the beauty of things around, but I admire the faith of our people and the respect shown to one another. We were touched to see parishioners talking to each other after Mass as if they came from the same home. This kind of behaviour is not very common everywhere. I thank the Parish priest for permitting me to celebrate the Holy Mass here in the church. I greatly appreciate the participation of the people in the great mystery at the altar. Even though some people complain of the waning faith in the west, it nice to see a vibrant parish that St. Marys Church is.

My sister and I have left Coventry and the UK and we have returned to India. We left with happy memories and joy in our hearts. We wish each and every one of you the gift of life, peace and joy. May the Lord be generous to each and everyone of you; may he shower his graces on you and fill you always with his loving touch.

Fr. Eugene Lobo S.J. Bangalore, India

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THE PAIN WE FEEL AT THEIR DEPARTURE IS THE JOY THEY HAVE AS THEY WAIT FOR THEM TO ARRIVE:

This week we bade farewell to Fr. Eugene Lobo and his sister Mrs Leena Lobo who have been here on holiday. They came here specifically to visit Sr. Leera, who is their youngest sibling in the family. We enjoyed their company to such extent that I wished they stayed longer. Their departure at the airport was an emotional one as I kept in mind that probably we shall never see each other again in this life!

While the Sisters and I stood there to have a final glimpse of them before they disappeared through security and customs checkpoints, their family back in India were calling and texting them as they felt extremely excited to learn that Fr. Eugene and his

THERE IS MORE TO THE HUMAN BODY WHICH CALLS FOR SELF RESPECT

From childhood, society has taught us the Code of dressing. If you have not realised yet, the truth is that the way you dress up tells people who you are. Few days ago I met a woman pushing a baby in a pram. After greeting her, I turned my attention to the baby who I thought was a boy, the mother spontaneously said "*no she is a girl, don't you see the colour of her clothing*" I noticed that it was pink. On the face, the baby looked like a boy. By the colour of the cloths, the mother was telling the public the kind of baby she had in the pram she pushed along without saying a word.

The way someone is dressed not only tells the externals about him/her but it reveals so much of what is going on in one's heart and mind. When a boxer puts on the gloves, it tells that he is contemplating of having a big fight and when a doctor puts on his white gown it means that he is intent on treating patients and not to go to the garden.

Christianity teaches us that the human body is sacred, it is created by God and it will go to God on the day of the resurrection. To prepare us for that day, the Church consecrates our bodies through Sacraments and gives us respectful burials.

These days especially as we are enjoying summer, it is not uncommon to find people so scantily dressed that you are left wondering how much self respect they have for themselves. I'm not talking about the respect they have for others but the respect they have for themselves. Precious things are not put on display for every opportunistic person to see, but they are always kept away. We never pick up diamonds on the streets and gold is not common to the eye just as cigarette butts are. Therefore sometimes the way how people dress up reveals the hollow within their life!

In the gospels Jesus gave a parable of a rich man who prepared a party for his son's wedding (Matthew 22:1-14). For reasons we do not know, the invited guests refused to go, in desperation the rich man turned to the streets inviting everyone he could find to the wedding hall. In that parable, Jesus mentions of one person who came to the party without putting on a wedding garment. It does not mean that he was naked, but it could also mean that he was not dressed modestly enough for the occasion.

Christians who practice the faith ought to be sensitive with the way how they dress up. If you have a wife, husband or a partner it is good to remember

that the way your partner appears in public has a bearing on you as well, since the respect or the ridicule they have on account of their dressing has much to say about you as well.

Summer is here again, let us enjoy the sunshine. If you are going to Church remember that you are going into the presence of God not for body show contest. Don't become a point of talk after Mass. Yes there is more to the human body which calls for respect.

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EVERYTHINGS WAS FINE BUT THIS DID NOT SHOW RESPECT:

The last two weeks were very busy here at our Parish, we had two weddings and two groups of children who received their First Holy Communion. The turn up of so many people on such occasions, some of them for the first time in our church, reminds us that although many people may not be practicing the Christian faith, they understand the importance of the Sacraments so much so that they turn up in large numbers to witness the occasion..

The liturgy of these celebrations is elaborate, it might be slightly longer because of the readings (as what happens during Holy Week and Easter) or because of the number of people involved. No one would wish to rush children who are going to receive Holy Communion simply because we want to finish Mass and go. *It is absolutely wrong for anyone without sufficient reasons to walk out of Holy Mass after Holy Communion, before the final blessing and before the priest has left the altar.*

I must have spoken to you about the man who walked out of the First Mass; his name was Judas son of Iscariot. Judas became a traitor because he walked away from Jesus, he left him behind and disappeared into the dark. If Judas had stayed with the rest of the disciples, he would not have betrayed his master. Last Sunday many people who were seated in the back pews left the Church before the final blessing. What a poor image they gave to the visitors who were here for the First Holy Communion? It is a big offense to go out of the Church before the priest has left the altar. I wish to encourage one or two individuals who have the habit to stop it. I understand the church was fully packed and some hymns were in Polish language but that is no excuse.

As Christians who still practice the faith, we should

consider ourselves lucky and privileged that we believe in God, for that reason we should try our best to give good example to those who do not believe or to those who question what they believe. Jesus calls us the 'Salt of the Earth' and the 'Light of the world'. If our behaviour at Mass does not reflect that reality, what a darkness that will be! Everything was fine about the Mass but those who left the Church before the final blessing did not show respect for others.

God's love is not one sided, He loves us but he expects us to love him as well and to do our duty to him with joyful hearts. No priest will be happy to see his people doing good things because he is looking at them, but every priest will be pleased to see his people doing good things because they know that God is looking at them. Yes let us do things because God is looking at us. He knows all about us, he knows what we are going to do when we walk out of the Sacrifice of the Mass. We can hide nothing.

I'm extremely grateful for the Spirit of prayer that most of us have as a parish. Let us be on guard against any behaviour that does not reflect that we truly believe in God and value our faith.

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FOR THE SAFETY OF EVERYONE:

Few days ago, a new law was enacted which forbids companies to hold information about individuals without their explicit permission. Many of them have been at pains contacting individuals asking them for permission to continue keeping their information for security and for business purposes. It is all about safety and personal integrity of individuals.

Safety and safeguarding are big topics these days. Have you ever asked yourself: How safe am I? How am I keeping others safe? In case of an emergency how quickly can I or someone get away from danger? Have I placed something in the way (a baby pram, a bag, or a chair) which can become a hazard or contribute to the danger? If a fire alarm was raised, how safe could I and the children get away? Please become more alert and more conscious about your personal safety and about the safety of others when we come to Mass.

I have asked parents not to take children to the loft. Unfortunately some of them interpret this directive to mean that I don't want to have children in the church, or to go to a place where they can have a better view of the church from above. The reason why I don't want children to go to the loft is that if there is an

emergency of any kind (God forbid) children will either be the first casualties, or they will slow down your ability to get away from danger. I wish to say therefore that children are forbidden to sit at the loft during Mass. Parents should help me in implementing this directive.

Be familiar with the geography of this church and with the exit routes that can lead you to safe places in case it becomes necessary to do so. Some doors will not get you out but others will. Therefore it is important that you look at the doors to see the signs and to be familiar with escape routes you can use if you need to. The doors are open during Mass even though they appear closed to keep heat in.

When an alarm is raised, act immediately but don't panic, evacuate the place quickly and assemble in the carpark near the trees. You should not, walk to your home immediately or return to the building, but assemble at the three trees in the compound to make sure that everyone is accounted for.

Do not leave your purses and handbags unattended even in church. I'm touched by the honesty of many of you who have brought to me car keys, handbags, mobile phones, debit and credit cards etc.. which they find left unattended. The excuse of their owners are always the same: 'Oh I went to light a candle,' 'I had gone for a meeting' 'Nobody will come to church to steal'. This shows how naïve some of us are. I hope you will take this information seriously and help one to remain safe.

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"BUT IT WAS ONLY RIGHT WE SHOULD CELEBRATE AND REJOICE"(LK. 15:31)

These were the words a happy father delighted to receive his lost son safe and sound addressed to his angry son who learned that his dad had welcomed home a brother who had squandered family fortune. The full story of this event is found in the gospel of Luke. We commonly know the story as the Parable of the Prodigal Son. The father considered the celebration of the return of his lost son as mandatory, without considering the pain he had gone through and material loss he had suffered. All that mattered now was to celebrate the conversion of a son who had finally repented and returned home.

This coming Sunday June 24th 2018 at 3:00 O'clock your Parish Priest will celebrate 25 years of his priestly Ordination. Looking back he can clearly see how God's Providence has guided him all these

years, saving him from physical dangers and prompting him to make use of opportunities for the good of his people.

It is not long since he became a priest, it is just only 25 years. He did not expect it to be that short! However during that time God has worked through him what he thought best for him and for his people. As he gets older he discovers everyday that God called him for his personal sanctification and decreed that whatever would take place in his life would be as a means of his journey to God. Therefore, he has never, ever even once, doubted his vocation or had the slightest thought that he was mistaken in his ministry and all that it entails.

The celebration of his 25 years as a priest is not for him but for those who have benefited from the grace of God that has worked through him. For the last 10 years that Fr. Jimmy has been Parish Priest here in our Church he has **baptised 437** babies, prepared **319 children for their First Holy Communion**, He has **received 70 adults** into the Church, **Married 16 Couples** and **commended the souls of 187** members of his parish to the Mercy of God. We have no figures of the parishioners he has ministered the Sacrament of Confession to; or of those he has visited in hospital or in their homes. We have no figures of how many of us whose documents he has signed to obtain our passports, our visas or the jobs some of us have. We have no figures of the Masses he has celebrated in the last 25 years. What we know is that he has carried out all these duties.

Priesthood does not benefit the priest, just as soldierhood has no benefit for the soldier. It is others who benefit from the soldier when their country is firmly defended, or benefit from the priest as he, like a compass, directs his people to God as their final landing destination. A priest is God's gift to the people not to himself, therefore it is only right that we should celebrate and rejoice for the good things he has done for us through his priests.

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YOU HAVE YOUR OWN STORY TOO



Last Saturday I told the story of my life to my parishioners for the first time. The story was about my calling to the priesthood which did not come out of the blue but it seemed to be the natural way of a small boy to respond to what he had heard his parents speak about with great esteem. Twenty five years have past. Thanks to God for all that has taken

place and for the people that have worked hard to make it happen.

Every journey no matter how long or how short it may be, always starts with a first step. The last step brings us to our final destination. I can see the destination on the horizon and it is my prayer that my eyes are kept steadily to it. As every priest begins to close down the curtains of his life, he looks back and the sentiments of St. Paul come to mind:

Because of Christ I have come to consider all these advantages that I had as disadvantages. Not only that but I believe nothing can happen that will outweigh the supreme advantage knowing Christ Jesus my ord. For Him I have accepted the loss of everything and I look on everything as so much rubbish if only I can have Christ and be given a place in him. I'm no longer trying for perfection by my own efforts, the perfection that comes from the Law, but I want only the perfection that comes through faith in Christ and is from God and based on faith.

All I want is to know Christ and the power of his resurrection and to share his sufferings by reproducing the pattern of his death. That is the way I can hope to take my place in the resurrection of the dead. Not that I have become perfect yet: I have not yet won, but I'm still running, trying to capture the prize for which Jesus Christ captured me.

These are the same sentiments I feel as well as I recall that I followed God's call at a very early stage of my life.

Each person has a story to tell about himself/herself. You have your own story since your life is a journey which you walk everyday. The success of your journey depends on how much of everything you invest in it: your time, your energy, your relationships, your faith in God and your hope for the best among others. As I celebrate with you my 25 years of priestly ministry, I notice that my parents who encouraged me by their word and example will not be here, it is some years since they were called by God. None of my family members will be here with me on this occasion for the reasons that they used official immigration channels to come to this country as visitors but they were refused for fear they might claim benefits. We as foreign missionaries are used to disappointments. I'm happy that you will be here with me. Please enjoy yourself and make the best of this day thanking God for his love and mercy in the past 25 years.

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Dear Parishioners,

THANK YOU FOR YOUR ACTIVE PARTICIPATION

I wish to thank you for the work you did in preparation and celebration of the 25 years of my ordination. All of you were involved in activities of one kind or of the other, but in the end all things came together.

In one of my homilies I asked you to bring the children to that event. The reason for my request was to satisfy my desire that may be one day, these children having seen occasions of that kind might put their lives at the service of others. Thanks to those parents who brought their children to that Mass. I ask you to continue speaking to them about the significance of the celebration.

While it is true that the celebration centred on the Grace of God working in the priest, we should not forget that it centred also on the Grace of God working in the people since the priest does not work in isolation. I wish to thank the people who have kept me as a priest for 25 years. They made sure that I remained one. If the priest is surrounded by people who want to pull him down, how would he survive? On the contrary, all the people that have come into my life, it was for the purpose of supporting me to be a priest. For all these people, I'm thankful to God.

Some people have spoken to me about my tears at the beginning of the Mass. "*Father Jimmy*", one child asked me afterwards, "*why did you cry?*" Well the absence of my family members touched me, just as the presence of each one of you. Thank you for the food you so generously prepared and brought for all to share. Thanks to the parish choir who sang so well, thanks to the flower lady and for the flowers. Thank you for the cards you sent to me. Thanks to the entire organizing committee.

Let us continue to do our best, to support each other and to pray for each other. Just as the five fingers of our hands need each other irrespective of their size, so, we too need each other to build our families, our parish and the society in general. If you think that you can go it alone, I'm sure you are mistaken.

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LASTING CHANGE COMES FROM THE ORDINARY

When you talk of Monasticism the mind immediately jumps to St. Benedict, St. Francis of Assis and St. Dominic, these were Holy Men

who influenced the call to holiness and started houses where those who responded to their call supported each other to live a life founded on the evangelical counsels of chastity, poverty and obedience.

But it all started in Africa with Africans. A young man called Anthony had inherited his parents' fortune. One Sunday at Mass he heard the priest read the words of Jesus in the Gospel "*If you wish to be perfect go and sell what you own, give the money to the poor and you will have treasure in heaven, then come and follow me*" Mt. 19.21. Anthony took Christ's words literally. He disposed of everything and moved to a hut outside the town where he stayed for 15 years practicing asceticism as a new form of martyrdom. He gathered followers round himself and literally started religious life. It started in Africa with Africans about the year 251.

Two hundred thirty years later in 480, a young man called Benedict (the patron saint of our parish) was disillusioned by the worldliness of Rome. He abandoned his studies to become a hermit. He settled in a rocky cave in Italy near Subiaco where he spent his days in prayer and fasting. Like Anthony he attracted followers who he organised into 12 small communities and governed them by his teaching and example. Benedict's monasteries became centres of worship and learning which has influenced European culture and world civilization for centuries.

When Catholics were given freedom to worship publicly in England, Benedictine Monks built the first church in Coventry and named it "Church of the Blessed Sacrament and St. Osburg" who is a local saint. With the influx of Irish Immigrants in search of work, another church was necessary, therefore the Benedictines built it in the eastern part of the town and gave it the name of St. Mary (in honour of the Mother of Jesus) and St. Benedict in honour of their founder. On 11th July is a feast of St. Benedict. It is our Parish Feast. There will be two Masses the first at 9:30am the second will be in the School with the children at 1.30pm. Let us remember that lasting things start with ordinary people and in ordinary places. Africa where religious life began was marginalised as

a “Dark Continent!” Benedict was an ordinary man. Let us be ordinary so as to bring about lasting change in the society we live in.

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LET US REMAIN CONSERVATIVE IN THIS ASPECT

Few days ago I was on flight from Milan Malpensa International Airport in Italy to Birmingham International Airport. Shortly before the flight took off, we were given the routine safety instructions by the cabin crew: ‘fasten your belts this way’, ‘take note of where exit doors are’, ‘in case cabin pressure drops oxygen masks will drop to you’, ‘life jacket is under your seat’ and so on. Then a categorical statement was announced **SWITCH OFF YOUR MOBILE PHONES**. When that statement was made, there was rattling sound as passengers tried to reach to their handsets to make sure that they were switched off. For those who had them in hand, they switched them off and for those who had them in their pockets, it was time to make sure that they were switched off. I asked a cabin crew why I had to switch off my handset. She told me that messages passengers send through their handsets on flight interfere with pilot’s communications in the cockpit. There are no known recorded incidents of crashes having been definitely caused by such interference, but that said, causes of some plane crashes remain unknown. A flight recorder may not identify that a certain critical system has failed because of electromagnetic interference from passengers’ devices.

My mind went straight to some churches where I have attended and heard one mobile handset go off after another. The people in that church looked unbothered but for those who had gone to that church to pray, they could not imagine the nuisance as worshipers walked out to attend to their telephone calls.

I’m so pleased that here at St. Marys Church almost all of us either switch off our mobile phones upon coming to church, or we put them on silent mode. This is a good practice and something we should continue to observe. A mobile phone going off in a flight can cause loss of life of everyone on board. In the same way mobile phones going off in church during Mass, distracts everyone.

Some priests have embraced modernity by either tolerating mobile phones going off here and there during Mass, or they are afraid to comment on the distraction that they cause. There is no modernity in matters relating to our personal or community communication with God.

Let us continue to remain conservative on this point. When we come to church, the first thing is to switch off the phone or to avoid the distraction it may cause to others. Since the Sunday Mass is the only meeting we have in Seven Days to pray together as a parish, let us aim at having undivided attention to the Lord. Let us listen to his word and feel privileged to break bread together.

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AND THE WORD BECAME FLESH AND HE LIVED AMONG US:

Every time when I read the Bible especially the New Testament, I ask myself: “If the Bible was not an inspired Word of God, how could ordinary men who spent much of their time on the shores of the tiny Sea of Galilee, come up with such fundamental theological teaching and a theological language by which they expounded the mysteries of Christian faith”?

I soon realise that the first Christians did not want to complicate things but they explained them as they were perceived. For example, they spoke about Jesus things that no world leader would wish to be spoken about him: *Jesus was an immigrant (Matt 2:14)*, *Jesus was hungry (Mk 11:12)*, *Jesus scattered people’s merchandise (Jn 2:15)*, *the family of Jesus thought he had gone crazy (Mk 3:21)*, *Jesus wept (Jn 11.35)*, *Jesus hid (Jn 8:59)*, *Jesus was overcome by fear (Matt 26:37)*, *Jesus was arrested (Matt 27:57) etc....* There is no world leader of any time that would like to hear such things spoken about him. Donald Trump must be a Commander in Chief, not a weak and humble man. These concepts do not evoke the qualities a commander in chief ought to have.

On 26th July we shall celebrate the feast of Ss. Joachim and Anne the parents of Mary and grandparents of Jesus. The gospels say nothing about these saints but early Christian tradition without hesitation remembers their names as

Joachim and Anne. It is easy to sing the praises of the Mother of Jesus and to forget the parents of the girl who was highly blessed to become the mother of the Redeemer. Those parents deserve our honour too because when their daughter consented to the Incarnation, she took upon herself the most important decision ever taken by any human being and the fact that she took it, is to a great extent the work of her parents Joachim and Anne. The Holy Spirit gave her the strength to take the decision but her parents' training gave her the wisdom to choose.

The Evangelists were not ignorant of the extended family of Jesus however they did not put much emphasis on it because in Jesus they saw a truly human person, not different from other people but in him they experienced the very presence and nature of God, such that they spent much time writing and preaching Jesus the Word of God who became flesh and lived among us. Jesus True God and True man. Let us remember to pray for our grandparents so that like Joachim and Anne, we may be blessed through their life.

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THESE CHRISTIANS ARE WORTH OUR IMITATION:

During this week the Church gives us through its calendar three ordinary Christians who became great saints. The Church wants us to imitate them.

St. Ignatius of Loyola (31st July) a Spanish nobleman and a soldier who pursued military career until a bullet shattered his leg during the war against France in 1521. while recovering in Northern Spain he read a book about the Life of Christ and experienced profound conversion. He later founded the Society of Jesus commonly known as the Jesuits.

St. Alphonsus Liguori (1st August) During sixty years of Christian service in Central Italy opposition of every sort came to him. His father resisted his ordination. Powerful anticlerical battled his Religious Order of the Redemptorist. Jansenists denounced his book MORAL

THEOLOGY that sought to correct them. People threatened him because of his reform as Bishop of San. Agata. Rheumatism bent his head into his chest a deformity he suffered for the last 20years of his life. A controversy between the Pope and the king of Naples over the Redemptorist Rule resulted in his exclusion from the community he founded; and for two years just before he died Alphonsus was assailed with the dark night of doubt, fear and anxiety.

St. John Vianney (4th August) the famous parish priest of Ars, he was not intellectual in worldly things but through his simplicity and prayer, extra ordinary grace converted thousands to God. The devil took notice of John Vianney for thirty years day and night he put up with intrusions he regarded as diabolic including noises, personal violence and even the mysterious burning of his bed.

John blended strictness and gentleness. He upheld the commandments with uncompromising severity and loved people with motherly tenderness. His preaching emptied the Pubs of Ars and restored the Sunday observance. The feasts of these saints occur during this week at the beginning of August. They were ordinary Christians like ourselves, they were assaulted by temptations and all of them were doubted by people. Some were literally put to the test.

The feast of a Saint is a reminder that we can make one. *“Remember your leaders who preached the Word of God to you and as you reflect on the outcome of their lives, imitate their faith. Jesus Christ is the same today as he was yesterday and as he will be forever. Do not let yourselves be led astray by all sorts of strange doctrines”* (Heb 13:7-9)

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FATHER YOUR CASSOCK IS OUTDATED

This morning I attended a Holy Mass to celebrate the death anniversaries of our Founders Bishop Sisto Mazzoldi and Fr. John Marengoni. For some of you who are familiar with Blessed John Henry Newman he said, “God has created me for a mission in this life whether I know it or not he has created me for a

mission. I may not know it now in this life, but I will be told in the next.”

Seeing many priests, Brothers and Sisters , members of the Religious Institutions they started in Africa, I could see clearly that they had a mission in this life. As the Mass went on the eyes of my mind lingered into the pews of St. Mary's and I could see that everyone assembled here today has a mission that God has created him/her to accomplish. Just open your heart.

I was privileged to live with the Founders and to listen to them. They received me into the Institute and they gave me the Religious Habit with these words: Brother Jimmy Lutwama receive the habit of the Religious Missionary Institute of the Apostles of Jesus, wear it at every liturgical celebration as a sign of humility and innocence.”

Every Religious who has received a religious habit feels literally naked when he/she does not put on hi/her habit. The other week a visitor to our church who is not familiar with dressing code of the Parish priest of St. Mary's on Sunday found him dressed in his cassock and said to him: “Ooh Father your Cassock is awful, you should be dressed in black suits like other priests.” she promised to bring me one.

Well, I like putting on my Cassock because of what it symbolise namely it is a '**symbol of humility and innocence**'.

But, it takes a lot of courage to tell who we are and what we do especially when you belong to the minority. However, it makes a powerful point when someone appears different from others. Take an example: a crucifix or a Rosary beads worn decently round the neck distinguishes you as a Catholic from one who is not. For that reason I did not feel persuaded to give up my cassock no matter how 'awful' it looked to go for a black suit. I'm still convinced that my cassock is the best dress for Sunday morning.

Let us always not be afraid to wear our religious symbols publicly , it may be a Rosary beads, a medal, a crucifix or a dress with the paintings of Jesus and the saints. These symbols speak loud either to those who criticise them or to those who find consolation. Enjoy your religious symbols and feel honoured that you are putting them on as a sign to many.

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THE ASSUMPTION OF MARY A SURE HOPE FOR EVERY MOTHER



On Wednesday the 15th of August the church will celebrate the Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary into heaven. The Assumption of Mary is different from her Immaculate Conception. One refers to her conception in the womb of her mother Anne while the other one refers to her glory in heaven.

In spite of her position, the Church has never attributed miraculous powers or so great influence to Mary. She is always portrayed as an ordinary woman going through the daily chores of life.

She is a girl at the prime of life trying to make sense out of the message brought by a stranger that she was going to become a mother. She is a confused mother desperately looking for a lost child. She is a woman rather upset that the young couple had run short of wine for their guests on their wedding day. She is also showed as a mother standing helpless by the cross seeing her son dying! If at all there is something special about the Blessed Virgin Mary, it is that she is like any other woman you can think of.

But ordinary things and ordinary people produce extraordinary things. Mary is Mother of God! It is through her that God became one with us. It was only through her that the first manifestation of Jesus as a God was first revealed when she told the steward at Cana: '*Do whatever He tells you*'. Mary our Mother, is a model of our mothers. I could say that every person who loves his or her mother should find no difficulty in loving and honouring Mary the Mother of Jesus.

Motherhood is a special vocation that God bestows upon those he wishes. It is a divine call whose end is to prepare a people that should become like Jesus Himself. Every mother who is faithful to her vocation and who is not afraid to let the sword pierce through her heart in fulfilling the Will of God will, like Mary, come into the presence of God. There is much to learn from Mary the Mother of Jesus.

Some other thing rarely spoken about is the “widowhood” of Mary. Yes, Mary was a widow after the death of her husband Joseph, leaving her to bring up the child Jesus singlehandedly. In her widowhood Mary worked hard to bring up Jesus who without personal claim was addressed by the crowds as Rabbi - teacher. It is that son who taught others the ways of virtue, a son who was willing to give up his life for his friends. Just as the navel reminds us that we have a mother, so all the attributes we can make to Jesus is a reminder to us that he had a mother who deserves our every respect. Oh, Mary Mother of Jesus, who was taken into heaven pray for us. AMEN.

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THE HEN CALLED UPON ME FOR HELP

After the long sessions of one meeting after another, we were asked to take a break for one day. Our principle house in Nairobi is surrounded by tall trees where an eagle has a nest with young chicks. It looks the chicks were very hungry, making noise every time; calling for food and for more food.

The previous day, the hen of Father Superior hatched 12 chicks which has brought a lot of excitement. After spending 21 days incubating her eggs, mother hen was very hungry, she needed to find food as soon as possible and to take out her brood to show them around. However, it was a dangerous territory with eagles hovering in the trees laying ambush to find food for their hungry chicks too. Mother hen was clever she invited me to take watch over her as she showed her new family around and tried to find food for herself. Since hens have better eye sight than human beings, every time she sensed danger she made noise to call me for support and protection. So I spent the day scaring away the eagle which I'm sure was very angry with me.

The two mothers were engaged in a serious battle which called for great responsibilities. If the eagle did not find food that day, her chicks starved to near death. As I sat there with my eyes everywhere in the trees, I was challenged to ask myself, *'who do I turn to and who do I put my trust in when there is danger?'*

The hen was so pleased have someone that day watching over her and her chicks. How much more happy we should be to know that in spite of the dangers hovering above us, God is with us always keeping an eye on us! Although I kept an eye on the hen with her 12 chicks, I did not take the danger away, the eagle was still in the sky. In the same way while God keeps watch over us, he does not take temptations and dangers away, that is why it is important to pray all the time and to endeavour to remain in good relationship with Him.

As dusk fell over Nairobi that day, I was so pleased that mother hen retired with all her brood in her possession. It could be the reason why Jesus rightly said that finding the lost sheep or the lost drachma gave much joy because it meant that the number was complete.

Sometimes it is amazing to see how nature shows that it has a sense of duty, responsibility and accountability. The mother eagle showed that she had the responsibility to find food for her chicks even if this would entail stealing the chicks of the hen, while the Mother hen showed that she had the responsibility to protect everyone of her brood from hungry eagles.

That is what responsibility is; a constant endeavour to do what is expected of us. Remember to call on the intervention of God above when you need protection just as the hen did. But also don't give up trying because despite the obstacles God finally gives the answer. So the eagle kept on trying again and again.

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THE PROPHET MUST COME FROM WHERE WE DO NOT KNOW

On the morning of 3rd August, this year, I was sitting in the chapel of the principal house of the Apostles of Jesus in Nairobi –Kenya making meditation on the Word of God. The Gospel was talking about the visit of Jesus to his home village of Nazareth. He came into the synagogue and joined the worshippers in the prayers. It is not common to invite late comers to read important messages, therefore it is certain that unlike many Christians who go to church late, Jesus was there in good time. He was asked to take a reading but not necessarily to explain or to interpret what it meant. That work was reserved to the recognised rabbi or to their scribes.

The people were at home with the reading and with Jesus as a reader but they were agitated when he applied what he read to himself. *"This text is fulfilled as you listen"* he said. Yes the text could be fulfilled but in somebody else, from someone they did not know or from somebody much better than themselves, they thought. But a prophet to be someone they knew was impossible to accept by the people of Nazareth.

Meditations bring many thoughts in our soul searching exercise. At that moment I thought of the times when some people out of good motive tried to correct me, to warn me or to help me to become a better person but I brushed them off simply because I thought they were not better persons than myself. May be the same thing has happened to you when you refuse to listen to someone or to seek advice from somebody simply because he is too familiar. The truth is that prophets are among us. I'm sure there is somebody in your life who has ever spoken to you asking you either to correct an attitude or to encourage you to continue doing something. It does not matter who the person is, all of us are guided and governed by what other people expect from us.

In family life the first prophet is your spouse. He or she will speak to you about things, behaviours and attitudes you need to change or about things you need to carry on because they build your lives and family. Unfortunately, we do not pay attention to these prophetic voices because we think that they are spoken by people we know very well who have nothing to contribute to our lives. It is normal and natural to have

feelings of shame and guilt . Persons who have no feelings of “shame” or who are not sensitive on upholding their good reputation cause a lot of pain to others.

In our time, people are desperately looking for prophets and miracle workers, remember that you have people who have challenged your behaviour for your good. Listen to them. It may be your spouse, your child or your colleague at work. Every prophetic voice is meant to make us better persons no matter how painful the process may be.

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A NEW ACADEMIC YEAR FOR YOUR CHILD WHAT EXACTLY ARE YOU WORKING AT?

I'm sure most of the children have returned to their schools, thanks to God for the long summer rest they have all had and for the good things they enjoyed as they met friends and families. The return of the children to school is a stressful business as parents want to do their best for the children as they return to school.

In the course of the week, I was cycling on one of my parish streets when I came across a young man who was in our school but was looking forward to go to secondary School. I asked him about the school he was going to join and what he wanted to achieve by the time he left. While the boy knew the school, he had no idea of what he wanted to achieve at the end of his study there! As we stood by the street, I started to make all sorts of analogy to help him to understand the importance of setting a target to work at even before one starts an undertaking.

This problem of not aiming at something is typical of so many parents who work hard to send their children to school but do not challenge them to work at some kind of a target, aim, or a goal to achieve. The boy had no idea of what he wanted to achieve, leave alone his ignorance whether there was anything to achieve in getting an education! People who work at a certain target, will develop a kind of a program or an orientation of life. As a result of this whatever they do is directed at achieving it. A child returning to school or joining a Secondary School or College without a kind of idea of what he/she wants to achieve is likely to fail, since there is no focus. This is one of the reasons why someone who studied Law ends up becoming a mechanic or someone who took music becomes a computer technician.

African wildlife has something to teach us. When hyenas, lions or wild dogs go on a hunt, they identify a potential prey and set it as a target. They will isolate their target from the rest and act as a team to run it down until the victim gets exhausted. Other opportunities for easier catch may come up, however, since these were not on the set target, they are all ignored.

As the new academic year starts motivate yourself or your child to work towards something, particular grades to achieve, broken relationships to restore, vices to give up etc.

When a fishmonger casts a hook in Swanswell Lake in Hillfield he does not do so to retrieve ‘anything’ (dead cat, shopping plastic bag etc) but his target is to get a big fish. So it is with the education of your child, motivate him/her from the very start to aim at something and to work hard at it. If you do not do this do not blame anybody when he/she returns home empty handed.

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THIS PEACE OF THE SOUL WILL BE OUR CONSOLATION:

During the week, I visited two of our parishioners who were terminally ill. I'm not a doctor and I'm far from preachers who fake miracles. I visited them to say goodbye to them for the journey their doctors said was not too far away. During my visit, I was not praying for a miracle either although it would be graciously received if the Will of God provided it. There were two reasons why I visited them:

1. To make a final profession of our Faith in Jesus Christ with them.
2. To thank God for the triumph of his Grace which has been at work in their from the day of their baptism to that moment as they lay on hospital beds. I wanted to pray to God that he continues to sustain their faith until their last breath.

What impressed me most was their serenity and peace of mind. They were like someone anxious to go on an exciting vacation. As Christians, they knew that someone *Jesus Christ* would come one day and take them to himself. They had spent their life preparing themselves through prayer and Sacraments deepening their love for God and for one another. They were zealous and faithful servants, who at this time of terminal sickness could look back

in their Christian life and feel proud of what they achieved.

During this week the Lord visited our Parish and took to himself Mrs. Vanencia Mapuranga (in Zimbabwe sister to Mr. James Mapuranga), Mrs. Jane Gaturi, and Mrs. Kathleen Bradley. What they had in common was that they were firm believers in God. It is this faith that kept them at peace as they waited for the final call.

God has assigned to us some tasks to do in this life. He will not expect us to have completed them by the time he returns. Like a man who employs somebody to do a particular work, when that man returns, the work may not be finished yet, but it gives him great joy when he finds the person he employed faithfully busy at the work he was assigned to do. If we carry this thought with us it gives us a sense of duty; purpose, commitment to God throughout life and peace in our souls as we approach the evening of our earthly life. That peace of the soul (conscience) will be our consolation. I found this peace in the life of our parishioners who were terminally ill in hospital beds. Those who visited them seemed to be troubled but they were not bothered by their sickness. I understand that both have died but they are at peace with God.

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THE ENVELOPE TOLD ME WHAT WAS INSIDE BEFORE I OPENED IT

Few days ago, a post man brought a parcel to my door in a brown dirty envelop which required a signature. The way it was wrapped up revealed to me that it was not to be handled with care, therefore instead of taking it in my hands, I told him to throw it in the corner while I put a signature on the papers. As the post man literally threw the parcel an idea flashed through my mind about the human body. It is indeed a precious parcel which not only embraces our earthly life, but a temple where God lives.

Thanks to Christian morality which reminds us to have respect for the human body and to dress it properly. We call it the virtue of modesty. If the body is a temple where God lives, and also vessel that we use to serve God and other people here on earth, to abuse it, to neglect dressing it properly or to dispose of it with disrespect can be sinful. Take care of your body and the bodies of others because it is God's

gift.

Different occasions have different dressing code. Among my people in Uganda, if you are visiting your "In-laws" you don't put on casual dresses; and if you are going to meet an important person such as your Parish Priest, the Bishop or an Officer you do not dress up in tracksuits; you dress up properly as a sign of your self respect in the eyes of the important person you are going to meet. Just as we do our best to dress to the occasion, so we should when we are going to meet Jesus our Lord, present in the Holy Eucharist.

Some of my parishioners commented on the dressing of some people when they come to Sunday Mass. A badly dressed person at Mass destroys the positive opinion of the people about that person, just as a carelessly wrapped up parcel destroyed my opinion of it as something that deserved to be handled with care although it held precious things inside. It is true "*A habit does not make a monk*" but what is outside can sometimes tell what is inside or what someone is up to. Therefore the way you present yourself externally speaks volumes about what is going on internally .

With regard to the Church, each of us should strive for 'good manners at Mass.' Parents should teach their children good Mass manners and from the start help them to know that the Church is not another vast play area. Remember; children will capture values only on condition that someone has taught them to identify them. In the next few Sundays, I will mention in this column what I consider as inappropriate behaviour at Mass. Unfortunately they way we do things can tell whether we believe or not!

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I SAW A MOTHER DOING THIS IN CHURCH HOW MANY CAN FOLLOW HER EXAMPLE?

Last week I mentioned in this column that parents should teach their children good manners in Church. I understood later that some took me for someone who does not value the presence of children in church. What I know is that there are many things we can do to help the children to know what it means to go to Sunday Mass. Start with yourself as a parent or a guardian: leave home with time to arrive at church before Mass begins, preferably about 10 minutes. Doing so allows everyone to have a few moments for prayer and to be ready to participate in the Mass. It teaches children the importance of timekeeping not only for school but for the Church. Circumstances arise which will delay a family; such a situation is different from the perpetually late

parishioners. When someone invites you to a function and you report late, it lowers his opinion about you. What can we say about perpetual late comers at Jesus' weekly banquet?

Before coming into church compound, discard any gum in a proper container. There must be a special place in purgatory for those who stick gum underneath the pews! Those who smoke in the church grounds or leave their cigarette butts everywhere show disrespect to Jesus present in the Tabernacle nearby. It is all about self-respect.

As your priest, I like standing at the back of the church to welcome you for Sunday Mass. One of the things I observe is to see how many of you on entering the church, make the sign of the cross with the holy water. It is just few individuals; but this gesture reminds us of our baptism and does dispel evil.

Before entering the pew, genuflect. It is an important act of reverence to the presence of Jesus in the Tabernacle. If you believe that He is present in the Sacrament particularly in the Eucharist, genuflection must be reverent. Thanks to those who mind to switch off their mobile phones as they enter the Church. Phones that go off during Mass speak volumes about you. Switch them off upon entry.

Participate in the songs and prayers, follow the readings and listen attentively to the homily. I am sometimes surprised by those "pillars of salt" who never open their mouths to sing or to pray. Those who do so are telling others that they are not touched by the Holy Spirit.

During the homily, it is not the time to read the newsletter. Listen to the Word of God being explained. Sunday School is good but the best way to teach your children the faith is by parents sitting with them in church and guide them. Last Sunday, I saw a mother following the readings with her finger so that her two young children could more easily and attentively follow them. How I wish all parents would do this!

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THE HOLY MASS IS ABOVE ALL OTHER PRAYERS AND DEVOTION



In the previous weeks, I wrote about good manners at Mass. When I was young, my parents spoke to us about table manners. Two things still remain in my mind we were cautioned from time to time: "Do not talk with food in your mouth, swallow it first. The

second is do not look at other peoples plates to compare the amount of food they have with yours." They told us that these were bad table manners.

Since the Holy Mass is a banquet prepared by Jesus for his people, it is important that we learn good manners. An assembly of people at prayer should not be as if it is a gathering for a fight. Likewise when someone is addressing God or praying for someone, it should not be as if he was speaking to a deaf and stubborn mule. Catholics are often accused of being cold in their prayers than being charged ad blasting the roof off. The reason why they are calm is because they worship a living God, with ears to listen , mouth to speak and eyes to see. So let us always observe good etiquettes.

When receiving Holy Communion, do it reverently. We should be very conscious that we are receiving Jesus. If receiving on the hand, the hands must be clean and held like a throne for the Lord. After receiving, one should consume the Sacred Host before turning around to go back to the pew. If you come with someone who is not a Catholic, it will be good to let him/her know that it is time for Holy Communion to which only those Catholics who are ready can attend. After Communion, each person must give thanks for the precious gift received and allow the grace to fill our souls. How tragic it is to see people leave Mass right after Communion, not because of an emergency, but because they want to get out of the parking lot first. I can only think of Judas, who was the first person ever to leave Mass early. There are one or two persons who run out of Mass. I wonder how they would feel if someone left their own home in the middle of the meal without even saying thank you.

After the Mass is concluded with the blessing, wait until the priest has proceeded down the aisle before leaving the pew. Put the hymnal back in its holder and pick up used tissues, bulletins, or other items. It is your sign of respect for the house of God.

I want my people to respect the Holy Mass, I love to offer. Yes, we live in a very casual world where many people have forgotten proper manners and discipline. Receiving Holy Communion at the back of the Church should be reserved for the elderly and disabled who cannot walk to the front. As long as God keeps you on your two legs, use them by walking forward to receive HIM.

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THE STAINED GLASS PICTURES ABOVE THE SANCTUARY

After children had had their School Mass, some days ago, I went to school and a little child asked me

a question I was not prepared for: “How many women were there among the Twelve Apostles”? Well as far as I know, all the apostles were men I replied. The child was not convinced and tried to show off that she was observant as she sat in the church. Well Father, when you go back to Church there are four pictures in stain glasses above the sanctuary one of them with blonde hair was a woman called Joannas which is also the name of my elder sister” I was so pleased with the challenge the child had given me, when I returned back to church I wanted to see what she claimed .

The names of the Apostles in the glass stained windows in our church are written in Latin, and the mind of the child with a bigger sister called Joanna, it could make sense to conclude that there was a woman or women among the Twelve Apostles.

Like that little child, I want you to be observant and to get used to the symbolic language of the church. If you look carefully , each picture of these four evangelists is represented by a figure of an animal or a bird. Do you know what they mean and what they require of us as Christians of our time:

Matthew the Evangelist, the author of the first Gospel account is symbolized by a winged man, or angel. This represents Jesus’ Incarnation, and so Christ’s human nature and implies that we should use our power to reason to achieve salvation.

Mark the Evangelist, the author of the second Gospel account is symbolized by a winged lion – a figure of courage and monarchy. Mark has John the Baptist preaching “like a lion roaring” at the beginning of his Gospel and this symbol implies that Christians must be courageous.

Luke the Evangelist, the author of the third Gospel account (and the Acts of the Apostles) is symbolized by a winged ox or bull – a figure of sacrifice which suggests that Christians should be prepared to sacrifice themselves as believers.

John the Evangelist, the author of the fourth Gospel account is symbolized by an eagle – which is reputed to be able to look straight into the sun, suggesting that Christians should be able to look on eternity without fear or flinching.

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ST. JOHN PAUL II POPE

When I was growing up, academic writers started to simplify academic disciplines which made those hard subjects to become easier to study. They produced books that carried titles such as “Psychology Made Simple” Philosophy Made Simple” “ Latin Made Simple” and so on. Therefore when someone picked

up that book, he was more inclined to study it, after all the subject it was treating was “made simple”.

Reflecting on these words “Made Simple” I can apply them to Sainthood. Tomorrow Monday 22nd October, will be a feast of Saint Pope John Paul II, a man that most of us remember as our Holy Father the Pope. In the past, we thought that Saints were men and women of the past whose heroic acts we only read about in books but we did not see. In Pope John Paul II, we are reminded of how close Saints are to us and how it can be easy for anyone of us to become a Saint. John Paul II served as Pope and sovereign of the Vatican City State from 1978 to 2005. Born: 18 May 1920, Wadowice, Poland Died: 2 April 2005 at the Apostolic Palace, Vatican City. His Full name was Karol Józef Wojtyła Buried: 8 April 2005, St. Peter’s Basilica, Vatican City. He said many things, I’m sure these are relevant to us just as we are here today:

About Life: “We are facing an enormous and dramatic clash between good and evil, death and life, the “culture of death” and the “culture of life”. We find ourselves not only faced with but necessarily in the midst of this conflict: we are all involved and we all share in it, with the inescapable responsibility of choosing to be unconditionally pro-life.”

About the need to evangelise: “The liberating message of the Gospel of Life has been put into your hands... Like the great Apostle Paul, you too must feel the full urgency of the task. This is no time to be ashamed of the Gospel. It is the time to preach it from the rooftops!”

Against Abortion and Euthanasia “A society will be judged on the basis of how it treats its weakest members; and among the most vulnerable are surely the unborn and the dying.”

About the presence of Jesus in our lives: “Remember that you are never alone, Christ is with you on your journey every day of your lives! He has called you and chosen you to live in the freedom of the children of God. Turn to him in prayer and in love. Ask him to grant you the courage and strength to live in this freedom always. Walk with him who is “the Way, the Truth and the Life”.

This is a heavy stuff. As we celebrate his feast tomorrow, let us thank God for such a great pastor in the church. Moreover in our own life time.

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WHAT YOU ARE DOING NOW WILL PAY YOU OFF TOMORROW

I bring you news from Uganda especially from my family. Having celebrated the Jubilee of my priesthood with you, I felt indebted to go home to celebrate a Mass of thanksgiving at the graves of my parents with my sisters following the denial of the

visa by the Home Office to them to come and join me last June. It was God's plan. In their presence and in the presence of my friends we turned to God in thanksgiving for twenty five years of fidelity. It was a very -well- arranged -prayerful occasion with many priests, Sisters and Brothers not to mention so many Christians and Muslim friends. It was also a providential time to meet some of my former teachers who could hardly believe that the small boy whose running nose they attended to and whose shirt buttons were always put in wrong button holes could one day become a priest. Each of them had something to say about the small boy.

During the Holy Mass, I remembered the little children of St. Mary's especially those whose parents endeavour to come along with them at Sunday Mass. I 'm now fully convinced that as long as you give good example to your children from the start, be sure one day they will become somebody.

Occasions of that kind evoke other facts. It is true that every serious person intent on doing his duty well goes through trials. I give some examples; a teacher to train an illiterate child to become literate, is not a simple job. Security men risk their lives to keep us safe and doctors work round the clock to make us feel better. The list goes on but at the end of these sacrifices there is a great joy when those who shaped our lives see us successful. I'm sure that some of you who have helped somebody to climb a ladder of one kind or the other feel proud that you did so. Still happier are those people who see where they are land remember to thank those who took them there.

As I sat there seeing people enjoying themselves, I learned another thing: almost all of us suffer from stress due to the work we are doing, however, unrewarding as it may seem, there is joy when you see the seeds you planted in tears in full blossom. It is important never to give up doing good or what is right.

I wish to thank you for the good work you have been doing to support each other as a people of God. The parish has changed a lot for the better in the few days I have been away. Of course this has been out of the initiative of everyone. It is a family spirit whose credit cannot be attributed to an individual but which is enjoyed by all. This parish spirit makes us a unique parish as it draws worshippers from other parishes to come again and again. Keep this family spirit up.

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DO YOU GET WORRIED OF WHO IS IN CHARGE OF THE COCKPIT?

I do not know how many of us have had a chance to travel on Airbus A380. The **Airbus A380** is a double-deck wide-body four-engine jet airliner manufactured by European manufacturer Airbus. It is the world's largest passenger airliner, and the airports at which it operates upgraded facilities to accommodate it. It was initially designed to challenge Boeing's 's monopoly in the large-aircraft market. The A380 made its first flight on 27 April 2005 and entered commercial service on 25 October 2007 with Singapore Airlines. At a cruising altitude, the airliner runs at a speed of 900 km/h, 560 mph.

During one of my recent travel from Dubai to Birmingham, a good number of passengers including myself, noticed that one pilot had gone to the toilet while another one walked straight through the aircraft aisle and went to the very back end of the aircraft where he disappeared. Shortly before this happened, we had been warned to fasten our belts; therefore the absence of both pilots from the cockpit worried us a lot. Even though some of us had heard in the past that once the aircraft reaches a desired altitude in good weather, pilots can engage a cruise-control device which then takes control of the aircraft without human control, this was not enough to avert our fears.

Some thoughts came across my mind at that time: why do human beings behave and act as if they have full control of their life and its destiny? Do people ever take God in their life as the one in the cockpit, the one without whom we cannot live? Jesus spoke of himself as the Way, the Truth and the Life but how many people would take his word? Both pilots outside the A380 double deck Airbus worried us. How much worried should we be if we notice that someone's life has no God in it? A God-less person scares us no matter how much good he/she seems to do. It is good to remember that without God in life, our activities become like robotic responses, since robots do so many good things without the intention to benefit itself or the recipients of its services.

Few days ago, I received the sad news of one of my work colleague who had committed suicide.. He had a good job with a big salary to take home at the end of the month, he had a happy family. He boasted of travelling the world over and never missing his cruise holiday. Unfortunately he never believed in God, there was nobody else beyond himself. Well, how I wish he took time to know that there was someone (God) in the cockpit directing his life other than himself. Awareness that God is in control will help you to gain meaning and purpose in whatever goes on in your life. When difficulties of life make us feel that God, like our two pilots on A380 Aircraft has left the cockpit, we shall remain calm, because we know that he is in control of our life.

NOVEMBER IS MORE TO THE GLORY OF GOD IN THE SAINTS THAN TO THE DEAD

The second half of the 20th century, saw a number of Christians persecuted in Eastern Europe under the influence of the Communist regime. There was a heroic Bishop, who had been orphaned at a young age and lived with his grandmother. The communists arrested the parish priest and ransacked his house for any religious article, documents or images that could be found. Finally, when they finished looting everything, as they left the grandmother and the boy, stood at the entrance of the presbytery. One of the soldiers, with contempt and mockery asked the old lady, "Well, do you have any more religious articles or crosses that we can take with us?" The grandmother, with boldness and courage, looked into the face of the soldier and said: "Well, I do have one but you cannot take that away from me!" Saying so, she made the Sign of the Cross! The soldiers were taken aback and left, without saying a word.

The powerful witness by the grandmother, sparked the fire of Divine Vocation in the heart of that young boy who became a priest and later a bishop. Such are saintly lives; they inspire, they motivate, they spur us on to live Christian lives with courage! November starts with the celebration of these Superheroes of God— the Saints. But it soon gets overshadowed by the thought of the dead whose souls might not yet have experienced the mercy of God. The Church invites us to lift our gaze to heaven to thank God for those who not only persevered in their faith but actually lived their lives in such a way that they built up Christ's Kingdom in the world.

Saints are often considered to be people beyond our reach and too holy for our lives for whom the path to sanctity was made easy and cosy, who are given a special boon from God to live a holy life.

But the truth perhaps, is quite contrary Saints are people who are truly very close to us and lived in simple and ordinary life situations like us who had to struggle through many hardships and trials in the path to holiness who co-operated with the grace of God and remained faithful to their commitment and call. Every Christian is called to a life of Holiness and to be a Saint. Therefore we should never consider Saints as super human beings what makes them saints, is their faith and fidelity to their baptismal promises.

The Saints' Favourite Food: The Holy Eucharist. Their favourite Dress: The Armour of Faith. Their favourite pastime: was in doing anything with immense love of God. Their favourite symbol: was the Crucifix. Their favourite moments was in

discovering more the depth of God's Love. Let us spend this month reflecting on the Church in heaven, the church in Purgatory and the pilgrim church on earth. For November is more to the glory of God in the Saints than to the dead.

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IT IS ALL DUE TO IGNORANCE

A story is told of a king who had a lovely flower garden because of his servant who took great pains to make it a true paradise. One morning the servant discovered that one of his best flowers had been cut from its stem. Soon he saw that many more beautiful flowers were missing. Filled with anger, he hurried to his fellow servants and asked: "*Who stole my beautiful flowers?*" One of them replied, "The king came into his garden this morning, picked those flowers himself, and took them into his house. I guess he wanted to put them in the rightful place of beauty in his palace." The servant was sad but he realized that he had no reason to be so because it was perfectly right for his master to pick some of his own prized blossoms. True, the servant missed his flowers but also realized that he was only a caretaker. The flowers belonged to the king, therefore he, picking them up for his palace would be cause for joy than sadness!

Such is life. In the garden of earthly life we are servants; we feel sad when one of us dies, he/she is the prized blossom of our life. But when we realize, that it is the King Himself – God – who has picked them "to give them the rightful place of beauty in His Palace," we are consoled and get a better realization that there is no reason to be inconsolable like people who have no hope. The flowers in the garden of our lives – the faithful departed, in the true sense, belong to the King, and to Him alone!

During this month of November we pray for all the Faithful Departed; those flowers, who have gone away from the garden of our lives; yet whom we believe, are safe in the Mercy of God! We reach out our prayers that those brothers and sisters of ours, may come to God. The dead are not dead for God. Therefore, it is logical and reasonable that we pray for the faithful departed. All Souls Day, is not only a reminder that our loved ones are gone but it is also a reminder of our own death. During my recent celebration of the jubilee Mass by the graves of my

parents in Uganda, the silent graves of my relatives was a reminder that when the evening of our life dawns, all that remains is God's peace. Death is frightening for the faithless but for the faithful, it is the doorway to the Fountain of Faith! Death is horrifying for the loveless but for those who love, it is the passage to the Fullness of Love! Death is devastating for those without hope but for those who hope, it is the entry to the fulfilment of hope. Death is a reality. It is human ignorance of what is to come that makes people anxious and afraid.

May the Blessed Virgin Mother who bore the pain of death of her child Jesus be our refuge and strength. May the prayers of the Church in heaven be our inspiration and strength. *Yes, let us pray: "Eternal rest grant to them, O Lord, and let perpetual light shine upon them. May the souls of the faithful departed, through the Mercy of God, rest in Peace- Amen."*

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JESUS CHRIST IS LEADER DO YOU KNOW OF WHICH PARTY?

Long before the Europeans invaded the tribes of sub Saharan Africa, the people there lived a very peaceful life. Natural resources were acknowledged as God's gift to the community and they were shared in common. Leaders were born and not elected therefore there was no competition for leadership. This does not mean that there was no effective leadership, on the contrary the people recognised their leaders, with or without weapons in his/in her hands, the people followed and obeyed the leader who on his part served the people without distinction or discrimination. A tribal leader was like a dad in a family at the service of all his children.

When the Europeans invaded Sub Saharan Africa in late 17th century, they took such peaceful leadership for being primitive, they dismantled traditional social structures. and cheated the people of their peaceful non competitive political organisation. To respect authority was seen as weakness and hereditary monopoly of power was called dictatorship. It was no longer seen as valuable for a paramount chief to be succeeded by his son and the son to pass on that power to his grandson. The result of that was instigation of hateful feelings towards those in authority, exploitation and anarchy. The Law of the jungle (Might is Right) was established for the first time. We call it dictatorship. In traditional African society and in those communities around the world which the so called enlightened people call primitive, they never look

upon their ethnic leaders as dictators, neither do their leaders take themselves to be at the service of those who supported them to come to power or who belong to their party. They are servants of the people.

Today we celebrate the Feast of Christ the King we are reminded that we belong to someone who loves us without distinction or favour. Jesus is a King of the people, not a political party leader. To celebrate the kingship of Christ, is to confess that every human person is a living member making his kingdom present here and now.

Recently, someone was upset by the Christians because for more than 2000 years they have never conducted elections to choose a new leader to replace Jesus Christ. *'You should hold a referendum on his 2000 year rule'* he said. Some people might think that the Church is a kind of a party of which Jesus is a leader. I don't know what you make out of your understanding of Jesus Christ as your King; however it is important that we deepen our understanding of what He meant when he said before Pontius Pilate: *YES I'M A KING*. He also said to the people *"The Kingdom of God is among you"*.

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ADVENT WREATHS AND CANDLES

You notice that the Advent wreath is up again. It is one of the first symbols of Advent that was brought into the home. It has Northern European origins which were adapted by Christians a tradition that we still practice today. This evening in our city, all Catholic Churches will have Advent wreaths and at 4:00pm this afternoon a Christmas Crib will be unveiled in front of Marks and Spencer Store. Hmm Christmas is near!

Every aspect of the wreath has meaning: Evergreens represent eternal life. Laurel mean persecution and suffering. Pine and yew signify immortality. Cedar means strength and healing. Holly's prickly leaves remind us of the crown of thorns. Pine cones signify death and resurrection. The circular construction represents the eternity of God, for He has no beginning or end.

What is the meaning of Advent in the Catholic Church? Advent is a time of expectant waiting and preparation for the birth of Jesus the Saviour of the world at Christmas as well as his return at the end of the world. The term is a version of the Latin word meaning "coming".

What do the 4 Advent candles represent? The wreath is made of a circle of **evergreen** branches laid flat to symbolize **eternal** life. Four candles (traditionally purple in colour) stand in the circle and each one represents one of the four Sundays of Advent. In the centre of the circle is a fifth candle (traditionally white), the Christ Candle, which is lit on Christmas Day. As a whole, these candles represent the coming of the light of Christ into the world. Each week of Advent on Sunday, a **different** Advent candle is lit.

Why is the advent Colour Purple? Purple is also the colour of royalty and the sovereignty of Christ, demonstrating anticipation of and reception of the coming King celebrated at Christmas.

Why do Catholic priests wear purple during Advent? It reflects hope in suffering. The Christian people await the arrival of the Saviour Jesus Christ and his suffering of 40 days in the desert (Lent). The colour also came to symbolize wealth, power and royalty because in antiquity **purple** dye was very expensive.

The reason for Christmas, is the coming of Jesus among us. Whether people confess him openly or deny him the fanfare of this season unites all them to realise that Jesus is Lord of lords and King of kings otherwise there is no any person in the whole universe past, present or in the future, who cheers the world as he does.

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GOD LED THEM INTO THE DESERT AND SPOKE TO THEM

As I mentioned in the newsletter last week, I have planned to have a day of recollection with you the parishioners of St. Marys on **Saturday 15th December starting from 10:00am concluding with Mass at 1:00pm**. This is in preparation for the celebration of the Birth of Jesus our Saviour. A recollection of this kind and in the present circumstances, is very necessary and appropriate. We live a very busy life, we get lost in doing this or that throughout the day/the week. Unfortunately in the course of time we might lose some relationships with those we love. It is when we stop to reflect on ourselves that we rediscover those things which are really important in life.

A parish recollection is an opportunity for our family of St. Marys to come together and reflect on some of those Christian aspects of our life

that matter to us. Recollections and retreats are so important; the Catholic Church recommends that serious decisions and renewal, should never be taken without making a good retreat first. Jesus himself would go to a private place and pray.

The Christian Hebrew Bible talks of a God who time and again drove his people into the desert; there, excluded from the noise of life and from the rest of the people, he spoke to them. Abraham, Isaac, Jacob and Moses received their calling in the wilderness, that is to say—in the silence of their lives. The prophets too, it was in the separateness of their life that they grasped the missions God was calling them to carry out and they would not let them go.

One of the unfortunate attitude that many people have today is to think that Christian religion is no longer relevant in their lives. The truth is that it is. Christianity answers the questions of our existence and puts into perspective everything that goes on in our life. Christianity gives us the privilege to live a sober life here on earth in spite of the challenges, but above all it promises us eternal life. When we come together and talk about these things, we are strengthened to walk with confidence. The dangers surrounding us may not go away, but we are given the means of how to conduct ourselves when they come. Please let us come together, and spend this time together in prayer.

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ARE THEY HOLY PEOPLE OR NOTORIOUS SINNERS?

I'm very grateful to the members of our parish who turned up to celebrate the Sacrament of Reconciliation last Tuesday. It was an act of Faith in God, an act of Hope in His mercy and an act of Love of him. Faith Hope and Love are cardinal virtues.

The English word Sacrament comes from the Latin word "Sacramentum" meaning 'Saving Sign'. Therefore Catholics who turn up for the Sacrament of Reconciliation and Confess their sins are doing nothing but to celebrate Mercy as a Saving sign of God given to us in the Sacrament of Reconciliation.

Confession reveals the holiness of an individual, the holiness of the parish and the holiness of the church. In family relationships, the spouses start to get worried if either of them no longer consider it important and necessary to say sorry to the other. In

