

Read, Reflect and Renew
YOU EITHER GRAB THE OPPORTUNITY OR
LOSE IT

It was at Cologne/Bonn International Airport in Germany at Gate D82 that some thoughts for the newsletter came to my mind. I was in Germany to discuss the missionary work of my Order – the Apostles of Jesus. I understand that the Nazi caused catastrophic destruction to Britain including Coventry but we are not told how much destruction the allied forces caused to Germany to subdue its military infrastructure. Looking around, everything looks new, powerful and of great engineering genius. For Germany the end of the war offered an opportunity for a new beginning. What would have seemed to be a humiliating defeat was transformed into an opportunity to succeed which has made Germany the economic powerhouse of Europe.

Did you know that God has a plan for you full of opportunities? Probably you don't but if you want to discover this, just look back to your past.

Each year no matter how difficult it might be there are blessings too; blessings of a new job, blessings of good health, of a loving spouse, blessings of a fulfilled dream. These do not come to us just like that, God provides them.

A friend of mine told me that he hates celebrating birthdays and new years because they come so soon! I was surprised that he failed to see the opportunities in celebrating another birthday or another year come so soon would bring in his life. The New Year might have come so soon so that you might see your grandchild for the first time, or retire gracefully or pass the exams with outstanding results. If we wake up to a new day convinced that God has a plan for us, we soon realise that we are surrounded by opportunities ready for grabs. Either you grab them or they are gone forever!

**WE ARE BEING SWALLOWED UP
PLEASE HELP US:**

This alarm was raised recently by the Catholic youth of St. Mary's Parish. It is a cry that comes from real concern for the faith and for the love of the Church. You might not believe it, but our catholic youth go through daily martyrdom so as to remain faithful to the Catholic teaching. Think of a young person thinking of getting married and raise up a family but is now told that gay/lesbian marriage is one of the options! As a parish, we must see it as a great witness for a young person far from home and family to wake up on Sunday morning and come to Mass; remembering that there are so many '*catholics*' who live within the city but never go to the church until they are 'taken in'.

Young people from this parish realize the challenges to traditional Christian values they face daily such as due respect for parents and teachers, living a chaste life, humility etc.; these are not praised but

considered as weakness! For example a boy or a girl who could stand in the class and speak of his/her chaste life is likely to be ridiculed rather than praised and those who avoid gangs in order to remain obedient to their parents and teachers might be persecuted and called names!

Young people of the parish would like to form a group whose aim is to bring them together and to support each other to remain faithful to the Truth – Jesus Christ and to the church. Some street churches now taking over buildings which were once cinema halls or pubs aggressively prey on catholic youth by luring them to their cults. A parish youth group will offer catholic young people an alternative to the lure that undermine faith in their hearts and relationships. They will at one point talk to us about their plan.

GOD MUST BE IN OUR PLAN TOO

A warm welcome to 2013. This Sunday Mother Church invites us to celebrate the Epiphany of the Lord that is the appearance of God made man in Jesus now adored by all nations. I was listening to the radio on Thursday morning and I heard it mentioned that in January all Zoos in England make mandatory head-count of all animals and insects in their keeping. It must be a daunting task, yet it is required for the renewal of their licence.

In business, the New Year is often a stock-taking time; business people make a frantic assessment of their business and map out its future. This applies to Christians too, when the New Year comes along, a good Christian will look back into the past and trace the good hand and kindness of the Lord amid much failure, resistance and unfulfilled resolutions. These he will humbly thank God for. A good Christian will see the New Year as a sea of opportunity, privilege and

responsibility. If you take yourself seriously, you need to notice that New Year resolutions can achieve more meaning if they are founded on the three main virtues of **Faith** in God, **Hope** in his promises and **Love** of God and neighbour. People who make resolutions without believing in God or including him in their plans are as a matter of fact building castles in the air!

Lord in this New Year which we have begun, give us enough happiness to keep us agreeable, enough trials to keep us strong, enough freedom to keep us happy, enough failure to make us humble, enough wealth to meet our needs, enough faith to overcome depression, enough hope to look forward, enough love to give us comfort, and enough determination to keep going. Amen.

ARE YOU WORRIED ABOUT THEM?

Some of us had the opportunity to be introduced to the Christian faith by our parents but others were not so lucky. For some, becoming Christians has been a long journey of searching for the truth. If you were brought up in a Christian home, you might remember your parents asking you to observe some things such as going to the Sunday Mass. They were so careful not only to mind about your material welfare but they also worried about the salvation of your soul. The love for the eternal salvation of your soul made them to demand Christian moral behavior in all aspects. They must have insisted that you kept the 10 commandments and that you went to seek God's mercy through the Sacrament of Confessions.

Parents these days are far richer than those days; the children have gadgets to play with given by their families which our own parents would never have dreamt of. But

how many parents take into account that the salvation of his/her children's soul is as important as their material prosperity? How many families are really concerned for the salvation of each and every member in it?

Families need to help each member to strive to reach heaven since no one will be happy if some members miss it! It is true some parents have done their best to teach their children the Christian faith but children have chosen to go astray, others seem to have no interest in their children's souls. Our parents longed to live as a family here on earth; they also did their best to prepare us to be saved in heaven as a family. If you are mindful of your salvation but you neglect the salvation of your children, this will not take you to heaven either.

THANK YOU BUT WE MUST LOOK AHEAD

Last Thursday I completed five years as your parish priest. I reported here on 7th February 2008 having been asked to leave the peaceful and prayerful Monastery at Carmel in Wolverhampton where I was concerned only about my soul. Time goes fast; but thank God we have served God together for five years. I commend you for your fidelity let us move on. I have now completed the time of my stay at St. Mary's the authorities will take another decision.

When I came into the parish I visualized a kind of program of what could be achieved for the good of the parish. First the gospel had to be preached. Second physical structures had to be improved. To mark the first anniversary God enabled us to paint this beautiful church; to mark the third anniversary we repaired the flat roof and to mark the fifth anniversary it was my dream

to have the car park resurfaced. This was the kind of program I had in mind and for which I prayed to God to achieve.

My family upbringing, Catholic background and seminary formation remind me to take life seriously and to be categorical in those matters which are morally important and socially acceptable. As your priest I'm answerable to God to whom I will have to give an account of how I have taken care of you. Therefore my ministry among you in the past five years has not been flattery but a call to join hands in the building of the Church irrespective of personal gain. As we start a new phase there are so many things we have to do for the good of the parish and for our faith. It is always good to think positively and to work hard knowing that this is God's work, and it is to him that we look and wait patiently to save.

THE SACRED ALTAR

Someone asked me out of curiosity why the Altar is incensed during Holy Mass on Sunday. Every priest who is passionate about giving praise, adoration, honour and thanksgiving will be particular when it comes to incensing the altar in the church. Incensing has more to do with acknowledging the presence of God to whom all honour glory and sovereignty belongs. This custom goes back to ancient days of Israel.

In every Catholic Church, the Altar is not simply a table, it represents a person Jesus Christ himself who by dying on the Cross for our salvation became the Priest, the Altar and the Lamb of sacrifice. Catholics who fully understand the meaning of the Altar will avoid putting on it anything apart from that which faith demands should be placed on it; for example while we can place the offerings of bread and wine on it we don't put money, fruits birds or animals on the Altar although all might be gifts offered at Mass.

The use of incense manifests the holiness of the place and makes God's presence known. In the liturgy of ancient Israel, a special mixture of pure incense made with sweet spices was burnt upon the altar every morning and every evening Exodus 30:7-8, 37:29. The symbolism of this act can be discerned from a passage in the book of

Revelation where we read that in *the heavenly temple an angel 'stood at the altar having a golden censer; and there was given unto him much incense, that he should offer it with the prayers of all saints upon the golden altar which was before the throne. The smoke of the incense, which came with the prayers of the saints, ascended up before God'* (Revelations 8:3-4).

Many people including some priests are ignorant of what can and what should not be placed on the Altar. The sacredness of the Altar demands that only those things which are relevant to the sacrifice of the Mass ought to be placed on it. A priest starts the Mass and ends it by kissing the altar, what goes on between the two acts of veneration ought to reveal that point. While every Christian ought to respect the Altar, in my view it is the priests who must lead the way keeping in mind that they stand at the altar in the name of Jesus Christ to offer sacrifice on behalf of the people.

At the 11:30am Mass on Sunday we use incense as we call on the name of God in celebration of the Mass. Like the Psalmist of old we too pray that God would listen to our prayers and let our prayer rise to his presence like incense (Ps. 141:1-2)

WHY DO YOU CALL ME LORD, LORD!

Do you know that Jesus was often frustrated by some people? Yes he was and he did not just take it in but he showed too. When the people of Nazareth did not accept him he was amazed for their lack of faith. Jesus did so many miracles in Capernaum but their refusal to believe left him dumbfounded wishing that such great signs were performed among the pagan people of Tyre and Sidon.

Many people are talking about the new Pope, his simplicity and background. I'm sure some would like to transform into a 76 year old rock star! Given the fact that the governance of the Catholic Church has no opposition and no campaigning for the offices, being a Pope no matter from which part of the world makes no difference; their program is always the same as given by Jesus Christ to Peter 'from to day on you will be a fisher of men.'

Some years now have gone by by some people accusing John Paul II and Benedict XVI being so conservative with no wish to catch up with modernity. Others accused them of being so powerful. Well things have turned around, Pope Francis is a man who wants to be a pastor for the poor and

marginalised of society. He might be the kind of man that when you visit the Vatican you might mistake him with the window cleaners, or scramble for a seat on the commuter buses of Rome.

The simplicity of Pope Francis is a challenge to those people who claim to have been put off by powerful men in the Vatican. I personally look forward to seeing new faces in our churches particularly those who once accused the papacy under John Paul II and Benedict XVI of being so power centred. May be you met people who justified their leaving the Catholic Church as being due to its top leadership. I would advise that you search for them and let them know that things have changed, the man in the Vatican is one of us, he lives our lifestyle and speaks our language, let them come back, there are no more masters but servants. If churches are filled again on Sundays because of the changes in the Vatican we shall all be very pleased, but if the person seating next to you is the familiar face you have always seen, the know that people who justify their irreligious attitudes are empty and very sad people who wish that everyone feels as they do.

IT IS DECISION TIME:

I had the opportunity to teach in the Major Seminary in Nairobi for 10 years, those years helped me to deepen my Christian life as a baptised and to enter deeply into how things are done in the Catholic Church. Before and during the conclave the media was obsessed with who were the front runners, I took no notice knowing that, that is not the way how we do things in the Catholic Church. It was all sensational to sell their papers and to get your money.

Many people are talking about the simplicity of the new Pope. I'm sure some would like to transform a 76 year old pontiff into a rock star! As the governance of the Catholic Church has no opposition and no campaigns for the posts having a Pope from one part of the world or the other makes no difference; their program is always the same as given by Jesus Christ to Peter '*feed my lambs feed my sheep*'

Some years have gone by since some people accused John Paul II and Benedict XVI of being so conservative with no wish to catch up with modernity. Others accused them of being so powerful. Well, things have turned round; Pope Francis is a man who wants to be a pastor for the poor and side-lined of

society you and I. He will be the kind of man that when you visit the Vatican you might mistake him with the cleaners, or race with for a seat on the commuter buses of Rome!

The simplicity of Pope Francis is a challenge to those who claim to have been put off by powerful men in the Vatican. May be you met people who justified their leaving the Catholic Church as being due to its top leadership, things have changed will they come back? I look forward to seeing new faces in the church particularly those who once accused the papacy under John Paul II and Benedict XVI of being so power centred; do you know some? Look out for them and let them know that things have changed, the man in the Vatican is one of us, he lives our lifestyle and speaks our language, let them come back; there are no more masters but servants. If churches are filled on Sundays because of the changes in the Vatican we shall be pleased, but if the person sitting next to you is the familiar face you have always seen, then know that people who attribute their irreligious attitudes due to church leadership are sad and empty people who wish that everyone feels as they do.

**WATERING DOWN CATHOLIC PRACTICES
WILL NOT SAVE THE CHURCH:**

I wish you all a happy Eastertide. The liturgy of the last three days leading to Easter was extraordinary and symbolic as it recalled the acts of Jesus himself. From earliest times Christians celebrated these events. The priest leader of the community took the part of Jesus himself; thus he celebrated the Mass of the Last Supper and washed the feet of his disciples. On Good Friday he led the Stations of the Cross and the Good Friday prayers. On Holy Saturday he kept watch with the whole Church in prayer over what happened to Jesus. When Easter Vigil came the priest led his community to celebrate that great event of the resurrection. *This is the only time that Catholic liturgy does not begin with the Sign of the Cross, or when Christians depart in silence, or when prayers are conducted in darkness. It is the only time when a priest washes the feet of his parishioners in church and the only time when the Church recommends nine readings to be read at the same Mass instead of the normal three! Easter liturgy is special and unique.*

It is sad to learn that some good Catholics do not have time to recall prayerfully these practices and their implication in the life of Jesus because they consider them time

wasting and irrelevant! I'm talking about the prayerful veneration of the Cross, the washing of the feet, or listening to the 9 readings recommended by the Church. For those who go to fulfil just a duty Easter is a heavy burden.

You must never let your love for God be pretence or a mere fulfilment of a duty. By the end of Easter all the priests are extremely tired especially if they took it to heart to lead the people of God into a spiritually meaningful Easter. For those 'good Catholics' who see Holy Week practices (washing of feet, Good Friday Prayers, the liturgy of the fire, the readings) long and time wasting, they need spiritual revival. Priests who rush through the pages of the Missal might become popular for their short services, they may gather a following especially among those whose hearts are drowsy. Just as fast foods are hazardous for the body, unreflective prayers are extremely hazardous to the soul. During this Year of Faith, it is important to wake up to the truthfulness of our faith rather than shopping around to find out which priest chops off Holy Week celebrations to suit your convenience.

THIS MIRROR IS REVEALING TOO MUCH OF YOURSELF:

The way we dress tells a story about who we are. On a wedding, the bride will be very particular in choosing her dress. The dressing can either create a trust in the services you are going to receive or it can destroy it. Have you ever asked yourself why butchers, doctors and nurses dress in white gowns rather than in red, black or brown? A butcher in clean white gowns creates in the customer a conviction that the meat he is selling is clean and a doctor or a nurse in a brilliant white gown creates in the patient a feeling of good health and recovery.

Dressing modestly in the church is an issue that many of you have spoken to me about. The remarks are made by both men and women. They are about some among us who **put on too little and leave out too much.** Improper dressing is a sign of lack of self respect. People who respect who they are will be very careful about the way others will see them. It is for this reason why the bride is very concerned with her wedding dress; she wants to be taken seriously other than to be taken for a second hand.

Dressing inappropriately also tells how much

respect a person has for the occasion and for those who come to that occasion. Going to Mass on Sunday is a great occasion in our community of faith; it is good to dress up properly for the occasion, remembering that a church is not fashion show or contest. One should dress the best before God.

Some other people have spoken to me about the men who keep hats on their heads during the Mass. This is absolutely wrong! In our Catholic traditions women cover their heads but men do not. Therefore men who leave hats on their heads during Mass simply reveal their ignorance, they need to be reminded. Women are very much encouraged to make hairdo that reveals their dignity. While for a woman to cover her head is respect, for the man it is not.

As summer approaches I hope to see everyone properly and modestly dressed up for the Lord. We should always be conscious of the person before we stand, and as Jesus reminded the people, “there is someone greater than Solomon here” Matthew 12:42b

SHE FELL AT THE FEET OF JESUS AND THANKED HIM

In the Lady's chapel, a new machine has been installed for heating the place. You are fully aware that the running cost of the parish to keep the church warm is a big challenge. Some of you have been generous in paying **tithe** on your income and with other donations which have subsidised the upkeep of our church.

A student from a poor family overseas who prays in this church regularly came to me with an envelope when I was in the university recently. "*Father*", she said "*I have been praying in the church at St. Mary's asking God for a special favour; he has answered my prayer, I bring this donation to the church in thanksgiving to God for answering me!*"

This gesture took me by surprise. I took the envelope but I told the girl that I would not open it until I returned to the Church and after placing it on the Altar since it was not my gift but the gift of God. He needed to receive it first. Well when I returned home I took the envelope to the Altar, after some prayer to God who answers the prayers offered in this Church, I opened it.

In the Bible Jesus noticed the ungratefulness of some people in the abundance of God's blessings. He showed this by recognising those who thanked him. When he healed the 10 lepers only one returned to thank him; "*the other nine where are they*" (Lk. 17:17) he asked.

I'm sure that all of us here will appreciate the donation of the young lady which has contributed to the welfare of this house of prayer. When she'll finish her studies and return to her country, her memory will stay here with us as a perpetual reminder to us that she prayed in this church. It is always good to be remembered for the good we have done. Happiness does not depend on what we have accumulated but more so on what we have helped others to achieve.

On behalf of the parish I sincerely thank the girl, like the Samaritan leper, one among ten healed, she returned and thanked the Lord by her donation in spite of her poverty. As John Paul II once said '*a person that gives from limited resources will be blessed by God because someone can find somebody poorer than oneself*'. She will be remembered for this. This honour will not be taken from her.

COME TO ME ALL YOU WHO LABOUR

Fr. Thaddeus Doyle comes this Thursday to lead us in the retreat. Jesus understood very well the burden of daily chores and the necessity of rest that he asked his apostles to go with him to a lonely place where they could be by themselves and rest for a while Mk. 6:31. While real physical rest was not excluded, the most important thing that he wanted the apostles to be aware of was his presence in their midst. A parish retreat moreover during the Year of Faith has its purpose to put Jesus at the centre of everything about us and within us.

The second reading this weekend reminds us that discipleship is a difficult journey; “*we all have to experience many hardships before we enter the kingdom of God*” Acts 14:22. If we were to know these difficulties before hand may be we would give up straight away, and if we knew before hand that we would overcome them, there is a possibility that we would sit back and take everything for granted. Sometimes life throws us in the deep end and tells us to swim. We find ourselves in overwhelming situations that we

don't know how to deal with. Pain and hardships are inevitable. No one can escape them. Every single one of us, at some point in our life, will experience pain, suffering and hardships of some form or another. Since the future is never in our hands and the past cannot be reversed, we need to spend time with God, praying and praising.

The disciples were often stressed and went through difficult times; yet from time to time they turned to Jesus for help. Peter possibly put it more bluntly when he said ‘*Lord who shall we go to?*’ Jn 6:68.

As I get older and as things continue to turn out beyond my personal expectations, there is a clear indication that God is calling me to trust rather than to fear, to hope rather than to despair. The realization of this truth comes to us only when we retire from the noisy world to spend time with God in prayer. After all having seen the daily struggles of the people Jesus turned to them and said “*come to me all you who labor and are overburdened and I will give you rest*” Matt. 11:28.

OUR CATECHISM:

We are half way in our celebration of the Year of Faith. The teaching of the Church is summarised in the Catholic Catechism. Ignorance of the Catechism in my opinion is the reason why some Catholics are no longer rooted in faith. In the following Sundays we shall look at the Catechism so that we may learn how well founded the teaching is that we have received.

FAITH IN GOD: Who created you? *God created me.* Why Did God create you? *God created me to know him, love him and serve him and to be with him in heaven for all eternity.* Does God have a beginning? *No, God has neither beginning nor end.* To whose image and likeness did God create you? *God created me in his own image and likeness.* Is this likeness to God in your body or in your soul? *This likeness to God is chiefly in my soul.* How is your soul like to God? *My soul is like to God because it is spirit and it is immortal.* What do you mean when you say that your soul is immortal? *I mean that my soul can never die.*

Which must you take more care of, your body or your soul? *I must take more care of*

my soul for Jesus said; "What does it profit a man if he gains the whole world and suffers the loss of his own soul? What must you do to save your soul? To save my soul, I must worship God by Faith, Hope and Charity. I must believe in God, hope in him and love him with all my heart. What is faith? Faith is a gift of God which enables me to believe without doubting whatever God has revealed. Why must you believe whatever God has revealed? I must believe because God is the very truth, he can neither deceive nor be deceived. How are you to know what God has revealed? I'm to know it by the testimony, teaching and authority of the Catholic Church. Who gave the Catholic Church the authority? It is Jesus Christ himself when he said "Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations.

What are the chief things which God has revealed? *The chief things which God has revealed are contained in the Creed. On Sunday during Mass we make a statement of our faith by reciting the Creed. How is the Creed divided? The creed is divided into twelve parts or articles. **Next week we shall start to look at these articles.***

OUR CATECHISM:

This week we continue with our catechism. Parents at home can read this section to their children and explain it to them. Ignorance of our Catechism is ignorance of our faith. *The chief things which God has revealed are contained in the Creed. On Sunday during Mass we make a statement of our faith by reciting the Creed. How is the Creed divided? The creed is divided into twelve parts or articles.*

First Article: I believe in God, the Father Almighty Creator of heaven and Earth.

God is Supreme Spirit, God is Almighty, God is Creator of all things. God has no beginning God is everywhere, he knows, he sees all things even our most secret thoughts.

Is there only one God? *Yes there is only One God but there are three Persons in God: God the Father, the Son and Holy Spirit, are all one and same God.* What is the mystery of Three Persons in One God called? *The mystery of three Persons in one God is called the Mystery of the Blessed Trinity.* Is there any likeness to the Blessed Trinity in my Soul? *Yes although you have one soul, it has three powers namely, memory, understanding and will. These three make one person YOU.*

Second Article of the Creed: and in Jesus Christ His only Son Our Lord: *Jesus Christ is truly God because he has the same nature with God the Father, He was always God but became Man for us. He is the second Person of the Trinity. Jesus is truly human because he has the nature of man, having a body and soul like ours. He was not always a man. He became man from the time of his incarnation.* What do you mean by the term ‘incarnation’? *By incarnation I mean that God the Son (Jesus) took to himself the nature of man: ‘the Word was made Flesh and lived among us’”* Where is Jesus Christ? *As God Jesus is everywhere. As God Made man he is in heaven and in the Blessed Sacrament*

Third Article of the Creed: “who was conceived by the Holy Spirit and born of the Virgin Mary: *this article means that God the Son took a body and soul like ours in the womb of the Blessed Virgin Mary by the power of the Holy Spirit. Jesus had no physical dad. Joseph was not his ‘step dad as I heard one teacher say’ but a guardian or foster father.*

Fourth article of the Creed: ‘suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, died and was buried’

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Fourth article of the Creed: He (Jesus) ‘suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, died and was buried’. *The chief sufferings of Christ were, his agony in the garden, his scourging at the pillar, the crowning with thorns, his carrying of the cross, his crucifixion and death on Calvary*

Why did Jesus Suffer? He suffered to atone for our sins and to win eternal life for us.

Why is Jesus called our Redeemer?

Because his precious blood is the price by which we are ransomed.

Where did Jesus die? *On a hill called Calvary.*

Why do we make the sign of the Cross? *Well, to remind us that we were baptised in the Blessed Trinity, to remind us that Jesus died on the cross by the very form of the cross we make upon ourselves. Some Christian denominations come up with funny crosses, those are mere human inventions.*

Fifth article of the Creed: He (Jesus) descended into hell, on the third day he rose from the dead *by this we believe that as Christ was dead, his soul went into that part of darkness where souls of the just were detained because they could not go up to*

*heaven till Christ opened it for them. **What do you mean by the words ‘third day he rose from the dead’?** I mean this that after Jesus had been dead and buried, on the third day he came back to life, his life was unlike before his death transformed. The whole of Easter season talk about the experience of the disciples after the resurrection of Jesus and our Sunday Mass celebrates it.*

Sixth Article of the Creed: He (Jesus) ascended into heaven and is seated at the right hand of God the Father. *By these words I don’t mean that God has hands, for he is spirit but I mean that Jesus as God is equal to the Father and as man he is in the highest place in heaven. Jesus went to heaven body and soul on Ascension Day 40 days after his resurrection. Christianity is founded on a person so it is rooted in history. As St. Peter observed; ‘it was not any cleverly invented myth that we were repeating when we brought you the knowledge of the power and the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, we had seen his majesty for ourselves’ 2Peter 1:16.*
Explanation to be continued next week.

OUR CATECHISM:

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Seventh Article of the Creed: **From there He (Jesus) will come to judge the living and the dead:** *Christ will come at the last day to judge all mankind. He will judge our thoughts, words, works and omissions. To the wicked he will say "Go away from me" to the Just he will say: "Come you whom my Father has blessed"* Mtt. 25:34. **Will everyone be judged at death as well as at the last day?** *Yes since men only die once and after death comes judgement, (Heb 9:27).*

The eighth article of the Creed: **I Believe in the Holy Spirit.** Who is the Holy Spirit? *He is the 3rd Person of the Trinity. He proceeds from the Father and the Son equal to the Father and to the Son for He is same Lord and God as they are. The Holy Spirit came down on the Apostles at Pentecost in the form of what seemed like tongues of fire and strong wind (Acts 2:3).*

Why did the Holy Spirit come down on the apostles? *He did so in order to confirm their faith, to sanctify them and to enable them to establish the Church.*

The ninth Article of the Creed: **I believe in the One Holy Catholic and apostolic Church, the communion of Saints:** *The Catholic Church is the union of all Christian Faithful under one Head. Who is the Head of the Catholic Church?* *He is Jesus Christ our Lord. Has the Christ a visible representative on earth?* *Yes, the Bishop of Rome is the visible vicar of Jesus on earth. Why is the Bishop of Rome the Head of the Church?* *Because he is the successor of St. Peter whom Jesus himself appointed to be head of his Church when he said to him 'you are Peter and on this rock I will build my church ... I will give you the keys of the Kingdom of heaven.'* (Matt 16:18-19). *The Bishop of Rome is called Pope which means "Father" Papa. He is the Spiritual Father of all Christians. He is a shepherd and teacher of all Jesus told him "Feed my lambs" He also prayed that Peters Faith might never fail and asked him to strengthen his brothers (Jn 21:15-17, Lk 22:32).* **Explanation to be continued next week.**

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The ninth Article of the Creed: **I believe in the One, Holy, Catholic and apostolic Church, the communion of Saints:** *The church is **ONE** because all her members agree on one Faith, have the same sacrifice, same sacraments and are united under one Head. The Church is **HOLY** because she teaches a holy doctrine, offers to all people means of holiness and is distinguished in the eminent holiness in the lives of her members. The Church is **CATHOLIC** or Universal because she lives in all ages, teaches all nations and is the one Ark of salvation for all. She is not restricted to race, tribe, ages or nations. Some churches are tribal, racial or national, the catholic church is not like that. The Church is **APOSTOLIC** because she hold the doctrines and traditions of the 12 Apostles and because through the unbroken succession of her pastors she derives her Holy Orders and Mission from them.*

Is the Pope infallible? *Yes what it means is that the Pope exercising the office as a Shepherd and Teacher of God's people, cannot err when he defines a doctrine concerning faith and morals to be held by the whole church. In other words the Pope cannot lead Christians to believe in falsehood*

How do you know that the church cannot teach falsehood? *Simply because Jesus promised that the gates of hell should never prevail against his church, that the Holy Spirit should teach her all things and that he himself would be with her always even to the end of time Mt. 16:18, 28:20, Jn. 14:16-26).*

What does Communion of Saints mean in the Creed? *It means that the members of the church in heaven, on earth and in purgatory are in communion with each other as being one body in Jesus Christ. The faithful on Earth are in communion by professing the same faith, obeying the same authority. We are in communion with the Saints in heaven by honouring them as the glorified members of the Church. We are in communion with the souls in purgatory by praying for them for God's mercy upon them*

To be continued next week

OUR CATECHISM:

This week we conclude the Twelve Articles of the Creed. Never become ignorant of your faith. Without knowing what you believe and why you believe you have no defence. Parents can read this section to their children and explain it to them.

The tenth Article of the Creed: I believe in the forgiveness of sins: What is sin? *Sin is an offense against God by any thought, word, deed or by omission. By forgiveness of sins, we I mean that Jesus Christ has given the power of forgiving sins to the shepherds of his church (Jn. 20:23). Sin is forgiven principally by baptism and sacrament of Confession.*

How many kinds of sins are there? *There are two kinds of sins; Original sin and Actual sin. Original sin was the sin of pride and disobedience to God committed by Adam and Eve. It is that guilt and stain which we have inherited from the father of all mankind- Adam. All mankind has contracted this stain except the Blessed Virgin Mary and Jesus. This privilege of Mary is called 'the Immaculate Conception'*

What is 'Actual Sin'? *it is every sin we ourselves commit, it can either be a serious sin against God also called mortal sin or it can be less serious also called venial sin. Mortal Sin is so serious that it deserves hell.*

It kills the soul by depriving it of sanctifying grace. It is the greatest of all evils to fall into mortal sin. Those who die in mortal sin go to hell for all eternity.

The eleventh Article of the Creed: I believe in the resurrection of the body: *Yes we Christians believe that we shall rise again in our bodily form with the same body at the day of judgement. Christ is the first born from the dead. Just as we resemble him in his death, we shall also resemble him in his resurrection.*

The Twelfth Article of the Creed: "And Life everlasting Amen. *It means that good people who do the will of God shall live forever in the glory of heaven.. the glory and happiness of heaven is to see, love and enjoy God's presence forever. The Bible tells us that 'no eye has seen and no ear has heard things beyond the mind of man, all that God has prepared for those who love him' 1Cor 2:9.*

Shall not the wicked live forever? Yes they will also live and be punished forever in the fires of hell.

This our faith, this is the faith of the church we are proud to profess it

OUR CATECHISM: THE OUR FATHER

We now focus briefly on the Lord's Prayer. One day when Jesus was praying at the top of the Mt. of Olives the disciples were watching him. After his prayer one of them spoke to him and said; "Lord teach us to pray" Lk 11:1-4. Jesus himself taught his disciples this prayer. It is possible that this was always his personal spontaneous prayer to the Father! No prayer is greater than this.

God is called "**Our Father**" because he is the Father of all Christians, He is Father of all mankind, he loves and preserves them all. We say "Our Father" not 'My Father because we are all children of God, we should never fail to recognise the image of God in other people.

Hallowed be thy name: we pray that God may be known, loved and served by all creatures. If people were to have true knowledge of God there would be peace on earth. **Thy Kingdom come:** we pray that true knowledge of God may reign in the hearts of all in this world. **Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven,** by this we pray that God may give us his grace to do his will in all things. It is easy to prefer doing our will rather than God's holy will for us.

Give us this day our daily bread: we ask God to provide us daily with all that is necessary for our souls and bodies; that we may not suffer material or spiritual destitution. Daily Mass, daily clothing, daily food, daily good health and friends etc. are all part of daily provisions we ask from God as they are necessary for our souls and bodies.

Forgive us our sins as we forgive those who sin against us who among God's children has not sinned? Jesus knew our vulnerability; we need God to forgive us, yet this gives us the duty to forgive those who sin against us. **Lead us not into temptation** we pray that we may have the grace, will power and courage not to give in when we are faced with temptations including hard moments that would sway us from the love and service of God. **But deliver us from evil** we pray that God may free us from all evil both of soul and of body. None of us would wish to die in sin, Jesus himself knew how serious it was to end one's life overwhelmed by sin, so he taught his followers to ask for this grace from God. He instituted the Sacrament of Confession so that through it we may receive forgiveness.

IT GAVE A GOOD IMAGE OF OUR
PARISH:

Since I returned from holidays I have been visiting some families that were recently bereaved in order to share in their loss. The deceased were long standing members of the parish, they were well known almost to every parish priest that ministered to the parish not long ago.

As I listened to the members of the bereaved families I was pleased to have been informed of the care, support and concern that you showed to them during that difficult time. You did not ignore your duty to show compassion and sympathy there was

spontaneous solidarity. For this I thank you because it gave the bereaved a feeling of support and a conviction that they belonged to a community of faith.

A Christian family forms what we call a “domestic church” a parish community forms a wider family where people share their faith in Jesus Christ. We as a people of this parish endeavor to create a family where our shared catholic values have transformed us into a family of God; therefore the joys and pain of each member will have some impact on our own lives as well.

WHEN THE TENT OF OUR EARTHLY DWELLING IS FOLDING:

In the next few Sundays I would like you to know what you ought to do when there is a sick person in your family. St. James writing to the early Christians instructed them that ‘if one of them was ill, he would send for the elders of the church who would pray over him and anoint him with oil in the name of the Lord. The prayer of faith would save the sick person and the Lord would raise him and if he had committed any sins he would be forgiven’ (James 5:14-15). The role of a priest in the life of a Christian at the time of sickness is very important and comforting indeed; after all the priest has always taken care of the spiritual needs of the patient, it goes without saying that accompanying his sick parishioner during physical pain would be very important function for him as a pastor. It is the duty of every Catholic to call for a priest whenever someone is sick. As a matter of fact, whenever there is illness in your home and the sick is confined to bed, your parish priest should be informed. The patient need not be seriously ill. Anyone who is sick and cannot attend Holy Mass regularly should be visited by his/her parish priest so that Sacraments such as Holy Communion and confessions can be

administered.

When I was growing up in Uganda, I remember how the people used to fear a visit by the priest to a sick person. The sick were literally hidden away from the priest for many reasons including polygamy. When the family or the patient finally consented to the priest to be called, there was almost no hope for recovery; thus the Sacrament of Anointing of the sick came to be known as “The Last Sacrament!” As a young boy I remember my dad saying “ah now that the priest has gone to see the patient he is surely gone!” The person who received the ‘Last Sacrament’ was not expected to recover.

This was a wrong way of understanding the sacrament and a misinterpretation of the visit by a priest to the sick. I will try to explain what you should do when someone or yourself is sick and needs a visit from a priest. Do not look upon a call by your priest as a sign that the ‘Last Sacraments’ are about to be administered. Every priest will be happy to share in the happiness of his parishioners and rightly so in their sorrow. Visiting the sick is a work of mercy which is a vital part of the priest’s vocation.