

Fr. Jimmy's Columns- 2017

New Year Message from the Parish priest

It is the first day of the week, the first day of the month. The first Sunday of the month, the first day of the year 2017. We celebrate our First Sunday Mass together as a people of this parish. We offer this sacrifice to God who has brought us to this day and to this New Year 2017. Everything is new we are new people too. God has a plan, he is calling us to carry out a mission together.

As your priest, I wish to say some few words from my heart. First, thanks to God for every one of us here. We are God's gift to one another, none of us can pass through life without being supported by others. Therefore our unity and collaboration in serving God will bring immense benefit to us all.

The existence of our parish, is brought about by people like you who show their faith in action. I'm touched to see how many of you devote your time, energy and money to support the parish. Try to ask yourself, what would have happened if you did not make that extra sacrifice for God and for his church? I pray that God who inspires such action may be your reward.

Our parish was blessed to be named Jubilee Shrine of Mercy. Many of us took the opportunity to renew our relationship with God and with one another. Some marriages were blessed, many of us confessed our sins, others forgave and let go. This is what reveals the holiness of a parish. As your priest I thank God for you.

Deepen your faith: we are blessed that we believe in God, that we hope in his mercy and that he has promised us eternal life. God is not an abstract idea or an invented myth. He has made himself visible in Jesus Christ, Christmas celebrates that historical fact. God has planted the seed of his life in us. If we are to stand the dangers and trials we face because we believe in Him, then we need to deepen our faith. If the martyrs and holy men and women of all time did not have deep faith in God, they would not have lived such heroic lives.

These days, the enemies of the church are within the church, people who falsify the truth about God, or who promise salvation without Jesus Christ or who use Christian religion as a means of getting rich. People who intentionally and notoriously cause scandal. I pray that we all do our best to keep our faith in Jesus and to support one another to be faithful. This makes our Sunday Mass an unmissable prayer event in our life.

I thank the families that bring the children to Sunday Mass and share their faith with them at home through prayer. The greatest gift we can pass on to the children is the gift of faith.

THIS IS HOW MARY COULD HAVE TOLD THE STORY

Before reading and writing were invented by primitive man information was passed on by word of mouth. A good story teller felt duty bound to grasp the story, understand it and pass it on. Those days people were careful to keep the story with its original message otherwise it ceased to be the story that was being told. The greatest story ever told is that concerning Jesus of Nazareth. The Good News about him was not his miraculous conception and birth, but his crucifixion, death and resurrection. These were publicly seen. On the contrary the events surrounding his birth are likely to have been told by the Blessed Virgin Mary his Mother, since they took place in private. None of the evangelists was in picture then, so whatever they wrote about the conception and birth of Jesus must have come from his mother. This is how Mary told the story according to Luke :

“Caesar Augustus issued a decree for a census of the whole world to be taken. This census— the first, took place while Quirinius was governor of Syria and everyone went to his own town to be registered. So Joseph and I set out from the town of Nazareth in Galilee and travelled up to Judea to the town of David called Bethlehem since he was of David's house and line in order to be registered with me since I was betrothed to him and I was with child. While we were there the time came for me to have the baby and I gave birth to a son. I wrapped him in swaddling clothes and laid him in a manger because there was no room for us in the inn.

In the countryside close by there were shepherds who lived in the fields and took it in turns to watch their flocks during the night. The angel of the Lord appeared to them and the glory of the Lord shone around them. They were terrified, but the angel said ‘do not be afraid, I bring you news of great joy, a joy to be shared by the whole people . Today in the town of David a saviour has been born to you, he is Christ the Lord. And here is a sign for you ; you will find a baby wrapped in swaddling clothes and lying in the manger. Suddenly with the angel there was a great throng of heavenly host praising God and singing:

‘Glory to God in the highest and peace to men who enjoy his favour’

When the angels had gone from them into heaven the shepherds said to one another, ‘Let us go to Bethlehem and see this thing that has happened which the Lord has made known to us. So they hurried and found Joseph and I and the baby lying in the manger. When they saw the baby they repeated what they had been told about him and everyone was astonished at what the shepherds had to say.”

I know that during this time friends and families will sit together, share stories and crack jokes. Please share this story too but don't include it among the jokes. I wish you a very peaceful celebration of Christmas. Thank you for being here.

WHEN THEY CROSS IT THEY CALL IT A BAD YEAR

I welcome you to the New Year 2017. Thanks to God for bringing us to the New year. I consider it a very special blessing not only to see the light of a new day but the light of a New Year. Sometimes you will hear people looking at the past year with bitterness speaking of it as if all it brought them were misfortunes! I think this is not right you should always look at the passing year as your best years because you are alive. Millions of our brothers and sisters were not lucky but died in the course of the year. The year that sees you healthy and out of hospital, a year that has kept some food at table for your family or kept you in work, a year that has kept tragic news from your ears or one in which you have had your dreams come true is a very good year indeed. Do not curse it or think of it as a bad year, no matter the difficulties you might have encountered. The main point is that you are here still alive by God's grace. If you curse the outgoing year how sure are you that the new year will bring you fortune?

Common to many of us is the taking of new year resolutions. Someone the other day called it a "wishful thinking for the poor!" No matter what people say it is important to do so because resolutions help us to work towards a target, to remain focussed and to evaluate the course of our success or failure. Good resolutions can shape up our life while bad ones will ruin it. Not taking any resolution will lead to aimless living!

Another year means another opportunity to change and to improve oneself. The Bible talks of a land owner who had a fig tree in his garden but year after year it bore no fruit. Tired of seeing this barren tree taking up space, he told his servant to cut it down. The servant pleaded with his master to give the fig tree another chance; he was going to prune it, dig round, water it and manure it to see if it would bear fruit, if not, then it would deserve to be destroyed. The servant too would cut it with a clear conscience. I think as we start the new year let us aim to have inner transformation of ourselves other than to be transformed by external circumstances. When an egg is broken from outside it marks the end of life, but when it is broken from inside, it signals the beginning of life. People who wait for circumstances to transform them keep on waiting for

miracles which never come. Remember that the greatest miracle in your life is your life, the rest of what you want to be or to achieve will depend on that great miracle. You will hear some people boasting of their healthy eating habits, or congratulating themselves on visiting the gym more regularly. Others will boast of their health insurance policy, not to forget those who will blame the sick for being careless. But the truth is that good health is God's gift and bad health is nothing but an invitation to share in a condition which Jesus took upon himself by becoming like us in all things except sin. Let us learn to be thankful by becoming true friends of God. In whatever situation you find yourself remember God in your life and serve him in those who are less fortunate than yourself

THIS SOUNDS AWKWARD CANT YOU CHANGE IT PLEASE!

When I was a small boy we watched a military parade as soldiers were preparing for the national independence day of my country Uganda. If your country did not suffer colonial rule, you will not understand the fuss that nations make when the commemoration of their independence comes. As a number of children and I watched the soldiers and policemen marching passed, their leader shouted at them from time to time. Every shout caused a manoeuvre, it was a real command. How could they understand what he said and how could they perform so many actions in such a synchronised manner! It looked like a miracle. I'm sure you might be wondering as well at the language that military men use, if you are not part of the group, you are left lost.

Someone visiting the church over Christmas came and spoke to me. *The Mass was good he said, but I don't know why you said Happy are those called to the Lord's Supper instead of saying happy are those called to the Lord's breakfast or lunch just depending on the time Mass is celebrated.* Don't you think the language of the church is awkward and needs to be changed to fit with time?

Just as the military men have their language, the church too has its own language, that language will not change because by doing so, it will change the concept. During Mass the priest elevating the sacred chalice and host will say "*Behold the Lamb of God who takes away the sins of the world, blessed are those called to the SUPPER of the Lord*" Jesus does not become a four legged animal.

There are two reasons why the priest uses the word "*Supper*" irrespective of the time Mass is celebrated. First of all the Mass recalls the Last Supper when Jesus reclined with his apostles to eat the Passover meal, he instituted the Eucharist and ministerial priesthood.

Secondary the Mass also anticipates the **Heavenly Banquet** where the faithful are called at the end of time. The Holy Mass is a fore taste of that heavenly supper when God will be all in all. Therefore the language that the Church uses to celebrate the mysteries of our faith may sound awkward and meaningless just as the language of the soldier commanding a parade will sound meaningless the onlooker. For those who belong to the group, everything is clear that is why the soldiers do not crush into each other.

I'm sure that one of the reasons for the decline of Christianity is partly due to the fact that many people do not try their best to understand the language either of the church or of their faith. Try your best during this year 2017 to deepen and to understand your faith. If the visitor knew the language of the church, there would be no reason to think that Mass could either be called "Breakfast", "Lunch" or "Supper" of the Lord.

HE IS THE FIRST AND LAST PERSON WE WOULD DESIRE TO SEE:

On Wednesday January 25th we shall welcome two Religious Missionary priests in our parish of St. Osburg. It has been a very long journey, a journey that ends well as God has given us what we asked for. All of us have had to make some sacrifices of one kind or the other, I would like to thank you for your understanding inspired by true love of the parish and hard work. We can now talk about welcoming new priests.

At every celebration of the Mass, the people of God welcome the person sent by God among them. Do you remember the Latin saying '*Benedictus qui venit in nomine Domini* =Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord'? The two priests are coming to us NOT in their name but in the Name of the Lord. Let us always look at our priests as men chosen from among us by God and sent among us by God to act as our mediators with God.

A priest is someone that should never be taken for granted. Our life in Christ begins with the hand of that man we call the Priest. When life is at its best (as on wedding day or at baptism of a new baby) we turn to him and ask him bless our baby and our love and to witness what we are doing. When life is feeble we call him to pray with us and over us to strengthen us in sickness. When life finally comes to a close, the priest is the last person we desire to have by the side of our dear one. It is the hand of a priest that we would like to see bidding farewell and commending us to God.

Therefore, the coming of a priest among us is good news for us.

But let us remember that a priest is somebody's beloved son, is some ones brother. He is a man who has sacrificed his life for others. The priest might sleep in a good house but like Jesus, he has nowhere to call his home. He did not choose to be a priest because he could not manage to do what you are doing, he just responded to a call. It is very important to give profound respect for the priest. As long as the priest is with us , we want him to use his **mouth** to speak to us, His **eyes** to see us, his **hands** to bless us, his **legs** to walk towards us, his **ears** to listen to us, his **head** to understand us and his **heart** to love us.

Jesus was very critical he was verbally violent against the Pharisees, the Lawyers, the Scribes, and the Politicians to the extent of calling Herod a Fox but there is not a single occasion that he criticised the priests or the priesthood. The reason is that Jesus knew that in spite of the priest's personal sins, he still acted in the name of God. I have heard of people who send nasty text messages to priests, but I know that the presence of a priest indicates the presence of a hand to welcome us into the family of God at baptism; the presence of a hand that will be raised to absolve us of our sins, the presence of a hand that will unite us in matrimony, a hand that will break bread among us, a hand that will finally commend us to God. Yes I'm thankful for a priest among us. Are you?

IF YOU THOUGHT YOUNG PEOPLE DO NOT SAY THEIR PRAYERS, THINK TWICE

These days I have had great admiration of young people in our City of Coventry. I rarely go out of the city therefore I will find it difficult to comment on what is going on in other cities. Walking the other day from the University towards the Council House, I was struck by the number of young people whose trousers were torn around the knee area. I'm sure that you too have noticed how the trousers of our youth are literary tearing to pieces around their knees. They must be praying a lot otherwise why should jeans trousers of young people get torn around the knees! I greatly admire this. If you thought young people were not saying their prayers, you have the evidence. Nevertheless if shredded jeans round the knees is just a fashion, it is a crazy idea!

The Holy Mass is the greatest prayer of the church since young people seem to be praying a lot , I wish to

allude to some comments that some great saints made about the Mass:

St. John Chrysostom said “When the Mass is being celebrated the sanctuary is filled with countless angels who adore the divine victim immolated at the altar”

St. Augustine of Hippo said: “The angels surround and help the priest when he is celebrating Mass”

St. John Bosco. Said “The best time to ask and obtain favours from God is at the time of elevation. Be eager to go to Mass on weekdays also even if it cost a sacrifice. Jesus will reward you with his blessings and make you succeed in all your undertakings.

St. Thomas Aquinas said: “The celebration of Holy Mass is as valuable as the death of Jesus on the cross”

St. Theresa of the child Jesus was overwhelmed with God’s goodness and she asked Jesus “Lord how can I thank you”? Jesus replied “Attend one Mass”.

St. John Vianney said “When we receive Holy Communion we experience something extraordinary a joy, a fragrance a wellbeing that thrills the whole body and causes it to exalt. There is nothing so great as the Eucharist. If God had something more precious, he would have given it to us.”

Padre Pio said “It would be easier for the world to survive without the sun than to do without Holy Mass” .

Back at home in Uganda goats do not have fur over their knees, could it be that they too are praying a lot? It is unfortunate that crazy ideas and fashions are attractive instead of sound traditional human values such as modesty and self respect, respect of elders, service to the needy among others. While I too have embraced modern gadgets like computers and mobile phones, *Twitter, WhatsApp* and *Imo* I can assure you that my knees will not go public in the name of fashion. What about you?

***** ***** *****

THEY CALL THEM WEAK I CALL THEM BRAVE

When I was growing up, I was taught that a woman must be assisted at all times. The work of heavy lifting or being sent to shops alone was left to me. The explanation I was given by my parents was that I was a man, stronger than my sisters even though they were bigger than me. That is how society trained us to be brave and manly in character.

The Christian Bible has another opinion of women, it by no means portray them as weak or inefficient. IThe Old

Testament has many examples of women who spoke words of courage and displayed a kind of God-confidence that is to be admired. Consider the following women in the Bible who were courageous in their Spirit-led interventions that they were used by God.

Moses was about to be put to death by God but **Zipporah** his mother wisely intervened by circumcising his sons thus saving his life so he could fulfill his mission to lead God’s people out of Egypt (Ex 4:24-26).

Deborah boldly told hesitant Barak to obey God’s orders reminding him of God’s promise to go before Israel and the blessings that come with obedience (Jud 4:6-7).

Ruth humbly called Boaz to recognize that he was God’s choice to provide that protection. Ruth became the mother of Obed, grandfather of David (Ruth 3:9).

Hannah: the Priest Eli was unable to understand the difference between a rambling drunk and troubled woman seeking the LORD, but Hannah corrected him and opened his eyes to see how God was at work. God’s answer to her prayer, her son Samuel, became a great prophet who would anoint David as king (1Sam 1:12-18)

The woman of Tekoa David was unwilling to forgive his son, but woman of Tekoa helped him to see that reconciliation was better than revenge (2Sam14:12-13).

The woman of Abel-Bethmaach pleaded with Joab who was prepared to destroy an entire city because of one guilty man, she helped to find a peaceful solution, saving many lives (2 Sam 20:16-21a)

Esther used her influence to change the King’s deadly decree, she requested that all the Jews in Susa gather for three days of fasting, to show her belief that only God could save her people (Esther 4:15-16).

These women intervened for the good of others, some at the risk of their lives. They were bold and used their influence to rescue, to protect, and to guide. May we all embrace the quick-thinking of Zipporah, the diplomacy of Deborah, the exhortation of Ruth, the correction of Hannah, the discretion of Abigail, the clever speech of the wise women of Tekoa and Abel-Bethmaach and the courage of Esther. They knew the greatness of their God and had a boldness of speech to match. If women were to use their influence positively I can see a new Pentecost in the world.

***** ***** *****

HE WAS NOT POLITE ENOUGH

If you have driven along Raglan Street into St. Mary's car park, from either side, you should have noticed the congestion along that Street. There is a lot of building work in our city, the population of students of Coventry University is big, therefore motorists are trying to park their cars on every available free space, causing unease on our city roads.

The other day I was driving into the car park with my 'local engineer' when another motorist was driving out. Since cars were following me closely I could not reverse, the other motorist was supposed to reverse back into the car park to let me in, instead he jumped out of his car came to my window and divulged every dirty word you could think of out of his mouth. My 'local engineer' intervened but the man could not close his mouth. Unfortunately he wore a big religious symbol around his neck.

The Oxford Dictionary defines politeness as 'having or showing behaviour that is respectful and considerate of other people'. Basically it's treating people with respect. As the man emptied his mouth, I thought of his parents, his own children and of his wife. What a bad name he gave to them and what a bad image he gave to the big religious symbol that hung round his neck!

Each culture has its own way of interpersonal relationships, but one of the basic rules for interaction that has remained true across cultures is the importance of treating others the way one wants to be treated. Be polite with your mobile phone; be polite in whatever you do or say. I heard the other day that since children returned to school, there has been a number of incidences where staff members have been spoken to in a rude, foul and even abusive manner by parents or guardians either in person or over the phone. The teacher is there to help your child, why should you as a parent or as a guardian behave impolitely by verbally abusing those who are educating your child to become someone in life? When I hear of such cases, again I think about the children whose innocent minds are corrupted by those whose duty it is to keep them clean! How will a child be polite at school if he/she has never experienced it from the parents at home?

Polite behaviour helps defuse tensions and to resolve conflict; on the contrary impolite behaviour fuels the fires. Someone who speaks to others in a courteous manner is more likely to make a good impression than someone who is bad mannered. Many accidents on our roads are caused by impolite and ill mannered people who think of no one except themselves.

Remember the Oxford dictionary definition of Politeness as 'having or showing behaviour that is respectful and considerate of other people.' If you do not do to others what you would not like to be done to you, you will have acquired the art of politeness.

THIS KIND OF ANXIETY IS AN OFFENCE TO GOD

I have been Catholic Chaplain to Coventry University for the last 9 years; during that time I've come to realise the sacrifices that parents make for their children. It is the hope and desire of every parent that their child live a better life than themselves. As a consequence, every effort and sacrifices are made by the parents for the sake of their children. Education is expensive all over the world. Loans, bursaries and scholarships are offered by governments or by individuals on condition that the money will be paid back. Parents spend fortunes to give an education not because they want their money back but because they want their children to live a good life. That is how many of us got an education, that is how we have many young people among us pursuing an education.

While parents are trying their best to offer their children opportunities they never had in life, not all children are reciprocating with cooperation and gratitude. I have had several conversations with parents of both home and international students who expressed deep concern that children see them as interfering in their lives when they try to keep in touch or to know how the child is going on. Leaving a home to go to study introduces a child to new settings, new lifestyle and friends, but this should not make you to think that you have won your freedom.

At the time when colonialism was coming to an end in Africa, the biggest academic certificate that was held by the so-called African elite was just a primary school teacher certificate. People like Julius Nyerere the founding father of Tanzania, continued to be called "*Mwalimu*" "*teacher*" even after they became presidents. You can imagine how many Africans were lucky to get an education to that level! Since many of our parents grew up during that time, they never had an education that they are offering their children today.

I would like to ask the students and all those who are under sponsorship of any kind to realise what great sacrifices other people make for your wellbeing. It is also important to live within the means of your sponsor. An expensive watch on your hand, golden earrings, an expensive mobile phone, so many pair of shoes, fancy

dresses in a wardrobe all for your comfort do not do justice to the parents who labour in warehouses or under hot-day sun to make sure that you get an education.

Parental anxiety for their children is hard-wired into their hearts. Therefore when a parent tries to call you from time to time it is not because he/she is monitoring your movements but because they love you. I have been contacted by desperate parents whose calls are not picked up for several days because the child sees them as an interference to his/her life. Such behaviour has left parents spending sleepless nights wondering whether the child is alive or dead, healthy or sick, in lecture hall or in a prison cell! I think that undue anxiety children cause to their parents is an **offence to God**. Please avoid it always.

IT WAS RELEVANT TO THE ROMANS IT CAN BE TO US

I welcome you all to this Holy Season of Lent. This is a joyful time because we are invited to come closer to God and to one another through prayer, listening to the Word of God and reconciliation forgiving each other and repenting our evil behaviour. A time such as this, which is meant to bring us to God and to loving others, forgiving them as God has forgiven us in Christ, can never be a time of sadness but of joy. That is why Jesus began by telling us on Ash Wednesday not to put on gloomy looks or to pull long faces. Apart from fasting Lent calls upon us to discover within ourselves the gifts that God has given to each one of us and to make sure that we put them at the service of others. As a matter of fact, all that we are and all that we possess has value as long as it is put at the service of others.

When Paul visited Rome, he came into a city whose people were from all walks of life; citizens and slaves, Jews and Gentiles, rich and poor. All these put together formed the might of Rome. Paul was a great opportunist, the mixture of cultures and social classes were not opposed to the Good News, instead he saw them as tools to help him to preach it. He did not look at the rich as swindlers from the poor, the un employed as people interested only in state benefits. Paul did not see slave owners as oppressors or urge the slaves to fight for their freedom. He did not see the less talented as lazy or encourage

those with practical skills to behave as if they owned them! Instead he urged them to put all these gifts at the service of others. As a matter of fact, Lent is a time to get involved in getting things done and to persevere

in doing what is right.

Paul in a mixed city as Rome was, gave the people of the city some good advice which is relevant to our Lenten observance too:

“ I urge each one not to exaggerate his real importance, you must judge yourself soberly by the standards of the faith. As a human body has several parts and each part has separate function, so in union with Christ we form one body and as different parts we belong to each other. Our gifts differ according to the grace given us. If your gift is prophecy then use it as your faith suggests, if administration then use it for administration, if teaching then use it for teaching, let the preachers deliver sermons, the almsgivers give generously, let the officials be diligent and those who do works of mercy do them cheerfully. Do not let your love be a pretence but sincerely prefer good to evil. Love each other as much as brothers should and have profound respect for each other. Work for the Lord with untiring efforts. If you have hope, this will make you cheerful. Do not give up if trials come. Keep on praying. If any of the saints are in need you must share with them. You must make hospitality your special care.

This practical advice of St. Paul can become a guiding principle in our Lenten journey. It was relevant to the Romans, I'm sure it is relevant to us as well.

KEEP THE TRADITION TO AVOID CONFUSION:

Saul of Tarsus who became St. Paul was a fanatic observer of the traditions of his people. When he heard that a new religion had emerged moreover based on a condemned man Jesus of Nazareth, he went from place to place hunting down those who believed in him until he found himself on the frontiers of Damascus. After his conversion to Christianity, Paul tried as much as he could to observe the Traditions of Christianity as these had been passed on to him by the founding Fathers of Christianity namely the Apostles. To the Corinthians who had lost the sense of what the Eucharist meant he said *“For this is what I received from the Lord and in turn passed on to you...1Cor 11:23.*

At Galatia Paul had preached the gospel as he had received it from those who were Christians before him, but as soon as he left, spurious preachers emerged who distorted the Tradition. The people were misled and Paul immediately gave his warning *“let me warn you that if anyone preaches a version of the Good News different from the one we have already*

preached to you, be it ourselves or an angel from heaven he is to be condemned”....Gal 1:6-9.

To some Corinthians who questioned the traditional belief in the resurrection of the dead, Paul wrote “ *Now if Christ raised from the dead is what has been preached how can some of you be saying that there is no resurrection of the dead? If there is no resurrection of the dead, Christ himself cannot have been raised, and if Christ has not been raised, then our preaching is useless and your believing it is useless, indeed we are witnesses who have committed perjury before God.*”.1Cor15:12-19 When the church jumps on the bandwagon of modernity ‘**because that is what people like**’, the consequences can be disastrous. How can the church remain faithful to Christ if it acts and thinks worldly? How can the church be prophetic if what the world says, that is what she preaches?

Some practices in the local churches have been allowed to respond to temporal practical situations. Making them the norm has not done her any good. A good example is the Saturday for Sunday Mass. While this practice responded to a need, many people have now lost the sense of Sunday as the **Dominica** that is the Day of the Lord to the extent that many churches are almost empty on Sunday because Christians are busy shopping! What a bad witness to our Christian discipline! Do you see how not keeping one’s tradition can be dangerous? As we are about to start Lenten Season remember our tradition of the Stations of the Cross on Fridays of Lent. It is important to know that Good Friday Stations of the Cross are followed by the celebration of the Lord’s Passion. This was the sequence of the events of the First Good Friday. Jesus did not die and buried, then he went to carry the Cross, If you keep yourself faithful to the customs and traditions of the Church, you will not be confused or misled.

IF IT IS A BAD IDEA, IT IS MY DUTY TO LET YOU KNOW

I would like to thank you all for the generosity you show towards the parish through your financial support. Many of you work for long hours, others switch from one job to the other so as to make ends meet. As you work hard to put food at the table and a roof over your head, the government taxes your income with which it provides us with the services we all need such as health care, education etc... The government operates a scheme called Gift Aid that allows charities to claim 0.25p for every pound donated. Take Joseph as an example; he is working and he pays tax on his income.

Today he put £10.00 in the collection. Since he has not signed a Gift Aid form, his donation remains just £10.00. If Joseph had signed the Gift Aid Form, the government would have refunded to him £2.50 to benefit the church (charity) to which he made the £10.00 donation which means that the church would have received £12.50 at no extra cost to Joseph. If you are in work and tax is deducted on your income, giving your Sunday donation under Gift Aid means that so much more money can be raised by the parish with relatively little effort.

The gift aid rules require the completion and signing of a Gift Aid form which is available for you to complete today. This provides us with the information required for the parish to claim tax from the government taken on your donation. To ensure that the Gift Aid is valid, (meaning we can claim the money back), it’s vitally important that all the information asked for on the Gift Aid Declaration Form is provided. In our case your full names, address and signature. Gift Aid does not deal with how much you earn or with how much you spend, all it does is for the church to appreciate the donation you give and to claim refund from the government which taxes your income.

When the parish receives a donation from a UK taxpayer, we are entitled to claim an amount of tax (calculated at the basic rate of income tax in that tax year) paid on that donation. Once you have given your permission for us to do this on your behalf (by signing the Gift Aid form), there is no need for you to do anything else. All that is required is that the amount of tax you pay in a given tax year is at least equal to the amount of tax claimed by the parish in that same year. The amount the parish claims is £0.25 pence on every pound you donate, this makes 25% of the total value of your donations in that tax year. The more you use your Gift Aid envelope on Sunday, the larger the amount the parish can claim. If your tax situation changes and your gifts no longer be eligible for the Gift Aid scheme please tell us and we will amend your record accordingly.

In the last 4 tax years, St. Osburg has been able to receive an additional income from Gift Aid of £13,616.00 and St. Marys is expecting to receive £17,096.50 in the same period. Thanks to all those who give their Sunday collection through Gift Aid Scheme. If Gift Aid Scheme was a bad idea, it would be my duty to let you know.

I'M SURE HE HAS NOT INTRODUCED NEW MASS TIME

I'm pleased that we have gone back to our previous Mass times. I thank you all for understanding the circumstances that led me to unilaterally take the decision to change the Mass times. I was so pleased to see how involved you got when I asked for your opinion whether we should go back to the Mass timetable designed by the priests of the denary or to adopt my suggested Mass program which was inspired by lack of a resident priest at St. Osburg.

Some four years ago, the provision of Masses in Coventry denary was discussed by all the clergy with their parishioners. Coventry was divided into clusters whereby the parishes clustered together would assist any priest within that cluster with ease if a need arose. St. Mary's and St. Osburgs belonged to different clusters, the parishioners of both parishes had opted for 11:30am Sunday Mass. When in 2015 St. Osburgs was put into my hands, I found it very difficult to find a priest to supply at either church since Mass was celebrated at the same time. I took a unilateral decision and moved the 9:30am Mass at St. Marys to 9:00am and the 11:30am Mass at St. Osburgs to 10:30am so that I could rush back to St. Marys for the 11:30am Mass. Father Moses too did the same whenever he celebrated Mass on Sunday at St. Osburg. I remember mentioning to you that it was a temporal solution to a difficulty which would ease with getting resident priests at St. Osburgs.

A good number of Christians from both parishes have been asking me when their 11:30am Mass would be restored. Well, now that St. Osburg has resident priests, the Mass time-table as decided upon and adopted by the denary which was approved by Archbishop Bernard has been restored.

In the course of the week I received some telephone complaints and some e-mails blaming Fr. Jimmy for moving "our Mass" again! Well Fr. Jimmy has not changed anything at all, instead he has gone back to the Mass timetable which was decided upon by the catholic faithful that make up our denary of Coventry.

It is not a good sign of courage and fidelity to one's parish if switching to another parish because of some difficulty or some slight changes is that so easy! In my country Uganda, we do not abandon the home because we have seen a snake in the house, instead we stay in the house to kill the snake. For those who travel by bus or train, when you find that your bus or train is cancelled, you do not give up the journey instead you wait for a next one. We need to translate these ordinary

reactions to change into our Christian life. This is where true fidelity originates.

I wish to thank you all for your cooperation and support which has been answered by God sending us priests. Let us settle and continue building the body of Christ—the Church.

THESE STATISTICS ARE WORTH THE COST

Some years ago I was seated in my office when I saw over my computer the face of a priest I knew. He was celebrating Mass which as the site claimed was being broadcast live. I wondered how that could be! To prove whether it was a live broadcast I took my missal and tried to follow the readings. Yes it was live. Someone not so computer literate as myself, it looked a little miracle. How did the priest do it, I wondered!

By following that Mass live, I saw the advantages there could be if such system could be installed in my parish church for the benefit of my parishioners who could not come to Mass for different reasons. I had in mind especially the sick and housebound and those who take care of them. Well the system was installed for that purpose. I did not know however that many people scattered over the world were going to use it either as a means of keeping in touch with the parish because they were once part of it, or simply because they like the manner in which we celebrate our Sunday Masses. I was interested to know how many people tuned in for Mass since the beginning of January 2017. I received encouraging figures. The following are the statistics of the people who have followed Mass on line from 1st January to 19th March 2017 from the three parishes in Coventry run by the Missionaries of the Apostles of Jesus:

At St. Osburg 2,325 people have attended Mass on line

At St. Mary's 2,270 people have attended Mass on line

At St. Elizabeth 1,245 have attended Mass on line

These people from different parts of the world have followed Mass over our internet connection. Between the three parishes **5,840** people have followed Mass broadcast live. The average Mass attendance every Sunday through the parish web-cam is **487** Christians between these three Churches.

There is some fundamental truth which we ought to draw from here as parishioners, namely we must

prepare our liturgy well, readers must practice and get it right; altar servers must not play on the sanctuary, the choir must prepare good music, the priest must not preach football and the people at Mass must not behave with disrespect during Mass or turn the church into a conversation parlour. When you come to church remember that 487 people are watching you or listening to you. Our parish audience is more than what you see. Whatever we do in the church must be done with reverence. I know that there is a number of good Catholics who cannot attend Sunday Mass because of sickness or age, I encourage their families to help them have live Mass broadcasts from the church they so much love to go to for their Sunday Mass. All you need is internet connection and a computer. A small gadget is available to connect to your TV directly at cost £100.00 . If you need one please let me know and I will order one for you.

THE PALM BRANCH IN YOUR HANDS:

Five years ago, I had the opportunity to visit the Holy Land, the place where Jesus lived. In Jerusalem we came across a man who had a cart drawn by a donkey. Poor people in Jerusalem still use donkeys as a means of transport. Most of them of course are Palestinians. What captured my interest was to see a cart drawn by the donkey with big words: **JESUS' TAXI**. This coming Sunday will be **Palm Sunday** a feast that falls on the Sunday before Easter. It commemorates Jesus' triumphal entry into Jerusalem, an event mentioned in all the four gospels. On that day nearly every Christian wishes to carry a palm in his/her hand why? Intentionally or unintentionally, the palms represent the branches that the crowd scattered in front of Jesus as he rode into Jerusalem. A palm in hand is an ancient Christian symbol of triumph and victory.

The triumphal entry of Jesus into Jerusalem captured the prophecy of Zechariah 9:9 *See, your king comes to you, righteous and victorious, lowly and riding on a donkey, on a colt, the foal of a donkey*". Unlike the kings of old who would use the horse (the weapon of war in ancient times) to enter into a vanquished city, Jesus entered Jerusalem on the back of a farm animal—the donkey! If Jesus was to be king according to the mentality of the people, entering the city on the back of a donkey instead of a horse could only dishearten his supporters. The Sanhedrin was angry with a man who in whichever sense was acclaimed to be king, came on such limousine!

The entry was a prayerful event as the crowds chanted Psalms 118: 25–26 – ... *Blessed is He who comes in the name of the Lord. We bless you from the house of the Lord.* This was a customary practice for people of great

respect. At that moment Jesus was recognised as more than an ordinary son of a carpenter or more than a preacher. Throughout the Christian world next Sunday the people of God following the followers of Jesus will walk in their footsteps chanting the praises of Jesus. Palm branches and an olive branch are recognized symbol of peace and victory, hence their preferred use on Palm Sunday.

The use of a donkey instead of a horse is highly symbolic, it represents the humble arrival of a king and prophet of peace, as opposed to arriving on a steed in war. A week later, Christ would rise from the dead on the first Easter not to torment his persecutors but to bring peace. On Palm Sunday Mass, palms are distributed to parishioners who carry them in a ritual procession into church. The palms are blessed and many people will fashion them into small crosses or other items of personal devotion. After Mass do not throw the palms away. Take them home and place them in a place you can look at them. You may return your palms to the church if you wish. Since they are blessed, they may not be discarded as rubbish. Instead, they are appropriately gathered at the church and incinerated to create the ashes that will be used on Ash Wednesday observance next year. I wish you a blessed ongoing Lenten season.

IS THIS SEASON TRULY TIRING AND BORING?

Someone said the other day “ I hate Lent and Easter, it is a season tiring and boring” I did not say a word. Yes, we are starting the most important time in our Christian calendar with the dramatic event of the entry of Jesus into Jerusalem. This season will tell the greatest story ever told namely the passion death and resurrection of Jesus.

Many critics today find it hard to believe in the resurrection of Jesus. The apostle Paul had to quash rumours in the Corinthian congregation that Jesus Christ had never been resurrected at all, so in 1 Corinthians 15:5-8 he named even the eyewitnesses who had been with him after rising from the dead. Former persecutors and detractors like Paul (previously Saul) did not dispute the records. Christians were willing to live under the constant threat of death—which would have been unthinkable unless they were convinced that Jesus was not an invented myth .

At this time of the year in the northern hemisphere nature itself testifies to the death and resurrection as spring kicks in. Three months ago, we welcomed two priests from Africa, Fr. Pontius and Fr. Sunday. They arrived in this country in the middle of winter when all

green vegetation was gone. They wondered what a desert England was; *'we thought we had left the Sahara desert in Africa, but again here we are in the midst of it. Every tree is dead!'* Just the other day, I was told a different story *'Father how wonderful it is to see every plant coming to life again, we thought these were dead trees but every tree is literally rising from death to life'* they said.

This season is unique and special. There is no time that we have the priest on his knees washing his parishioners feet, or prostrating in the church as if he was dead or trying to sing a solo (Exultet) even when he has avoided joining our parish choir, the excuse he makes of course is "oh I don't know how to sing". There is no time that we listen to nine readings at Mass except during this time. Some people do complain that the liturgy is too long as if to say to the priest, *'cut this off,' 'slice that between,' 'patch that up'* etc. The nature of the liturgy leading to Easter is so arranged by the church in such a way that the priest as a leading teller of the story narrates it in detail with all the dignity it deserves.

For someone who has not entered into the meaning of the story, Good Friday, Easter Vigil and Easter Sunday liturgies are very, very long, tiring and boring. When you are inclined to think like that, it means that you need to dig deep into your faith relationship with God. Remember too that we never get tired of watching, listening or doing things that we are interested in. Therefore if Easter liturgy is long and boring, it may be a serious deficiency and appreciation of what Jesus did for us on the Cross.

I BELIEVE IN THE RESURRECTION OF THE BODY

This Easter Vigil at St. Mary's and Benedict Church, we shall witness something extraordinary, 10 members of the parish who have been doing RCIA program will be received into full communion with the Catholic Church. Unlike most of us who were born and brought up in catholic families, these 10 candidates are joining the Catholic church after a long soul-searching journey. We cannot explain in human language whatever happened in their life or in our life that has made them to make this decision. They too do not have a reason that can be proved either in a scientific laboratory or before the court of Law as to why they want to follow Jesus Christ and his teaching as lived and proclaimed by the Catholic Church.

In his teaching, Jesus told the people not to go for things beyond what they saw and heard, because whatever they were seeing and hearing were proofs that the Kingdom of God was already among them (Lk

11:20). In the same way, whenever there is a baptism even if it is a baby, or of mature men and women being baptised or received into full communion with the Catholic Church, it is a sure proof that the reign of God is among us.

The 10 candidates will make a public profession of faith in Jesus Christ. The Law of the church Canon 380 demands that before taking canonical possession of an ecclesiastical office, he who is promoted to this office makes public profession of faith and takes the oath of fidelity. To be a Christian means **taking the office of "being a witness to Christ"** in the world. Christianity is not a "private", "personal" or "individual" faith, it is meant for all and to be exercised in communion with others. One of the disheartening experiences that we priests have these days is to visit a sick and housebound member of the parish or to be called out to see the dying and then upon arrival the rest of the family vanishes into the rooms upstairs as if to say: 'we do not want to pray for our sick relative.' Praying together before the sick is a public show that we believe in God's power to save.

The mystery of Easter is not in the death of the man Jesus BUT in the willingness of Jesus to die for me. It shows how much **He loves me**.

We the priests of the Religious Missionary Order of the Apostles of Jesus ministering to you here at St. Mary's, St. Osburg and St. Elizabeth take the chance to wish you all a holy and blessed Easter. We thank you for the support you give to each other and to us your priests. Together let us continue to witness to the resurrection of Jesus. Let the mysteries we have meditated upon during Lent and which we celebrate at Easter find a home in our life.

I LEFT THE CATHEDRAL STRENGTHENED

On the Wednesday of Holy Week 12th April Archbishop Bernard Longley presided over a Chrism Mass in the presence of his brother bishops and priests. In the presence of the bishop and the people the priests renewed their promises to serve God and his people as ministers of the Word and Sacraments. **'Presence'** in our Christian faith tradition is not simply the body being here or there but the involvement of the whole person in the action taking place. Thus in the presence of the bishop and the people, the priests renewed their promise to be devoted to you. The Easter event revealed the generosity of God. The Archbishop asked us to draw inspiration and courage from the words of Bl. John Henry Newman who said:

'Let us pray for each other, as well as for ourselves, that the gifts He has given us may not be squandered on ourselves, and used for our own gratification or our own reputation, but for His glory and for the good of His Church.'

He spoke of the importance of the cross: *'The cross lies at the center of everything we believe as priests and it gives meaning to everything we teach. Christ has always seen our capacity to shoulder his cross for the sake of others, lifting their burdens and lightening their hearts.'* Even though, *'we may not recognize this fully or clearly within ourselves.'*

He emphasized how it is important for all to come together for the Chrism Mass because *'It is not good for us as priests to be isolated – it jars against the nature of our calling.'* Adding that the Chrism Mass is a time when, *'the priests renew and refresh their relationship with the Lord as his priests in the midst of the Church – and where they also re-commit themselves to take care of their brothers in the priesthood.'*

The Archbishop prayed that friendships amongst priests 'may be a source of encouragement and inspiration' and called for 'understanding and acceptance of those priests who may be struggling with their health, with physical or mental frailty, with discouragement or disappointment.' He spoke of his need for our prayers in his ministry. I don't know when you last prayed for your priests. During this time of stress and cynicism towards the priesthood I encourage you to pray for your priest because it is not easy to be a priest these days. If your priest is doing well, pray for him, if he is not doing well as you would like him to, pray for him, may be it is because you do not remember him in your prayers. Get involved in his ministry by supporting him, the rest leave it to God .

people in my ministry who would give testimony at every occasion to tell how they loved God. Like Simon Peter they would say to Jesus "Lord I will lay down my life for you" however once death visited their families, they turned against God and against the church. They became angry with God questioning where he was and what he was doing when their dear one died?

The strange thing I greatly admired in the behavior of the two families that lost their dear ones was that even after receiving the news, they came to Sunday Mass, said their prayers and commended their grief to the Lord. There is a lesson we can all learn here and it is this: any meaningful bereavement cannot exclude the recognition of the presence of God. When we realize that whatever takes place in our life and whatever goes on in our innermost selves is because God has willed it, every tragedy achieves meaning and every success is seen as God's providence.

In the past people used to have prediction of what might come; they could see life coming to a close such that they prepared themselves for the worst. It is no longer the case these days, you are not sure whether your dear one will return home not until he returns. I'm not sure whether we are heading for greater surprises but the way some people react to tragedies can clearly shows that their faith in God is the reason to keep calm and strong. As I get older I realize that my body is playing up here and there but I realize too that any meaningful mourning of the aches and pains we all have cannot exclude our trust that God knows it all, he will take care of us. God knows me personally, he will take care of me personally.

WHERE DO I GO FROM HERE?

During the week, I received sad news from some members of our parish community concerning the tragic death of their family members. One incident involved a 22 year old soldier who was killed in a suicide bombing by Boko Haram along the Cameroon–Nigerian boarder. He had an ailing dad in hospital, when this dad received the news of his son's death, he simply decided to go. The two bodies of father and son were placed side by side in the family parlor. The other incident involved the death of a mother (59) who was nursed by her children for several years. She died and was buried leaving nine children amidst tears.

There is nothing strange about death since it comes to everyone but there is something strange about the way people react when it comes to us. I remember meeting

ALMOST CAUGHT OUT: WHO, WHERE AND WHEN

Children can ask you a question which can cause you embarrassment if you do not know the answer. I remember a deacon in Uganda who was asked by a nursery pupil who the grandmother of Jesus was. The deacon did not expect the question so he was embarrassed that he did not give a spontaneous correct answer to Year 2 children who were learning catechism. The other day standing in a class of small children a small boy put up his hand and asked me "Who founded the Catholic Church"? I answered Jesus Christ who is True God and True Man. All other churches were founded by men for personal, political, economic, social and spiritual motives. Before 1517 every Christian was a catholic.. As such today we know that:

If you are a Lutheran your church was started by Fr.

Martin Luther in German 1517.

If you're a Mennonite your church was started by Grebel Mantz and Blaurock in 1525.

If you are Anglican then your church was started by King Henry VIII in England 1534

If you are a Presbyterian your church was started by John Knox in Scotland 1560.

If you're a Congregationalist your church was started by Robert Brown in Holland 1583.

If you are a Baptist your church was started by John Smith in Amsterdam in 1606.

If you are a Methodist your church was started by John Wesley in New Jersey 1770

If you are a Mormon your church was started by Joseph Smith in New York 1829.

If you are a Seventh Day Adventist your church was started by William Miller in 1831

If you are a Salvation Army your church was started by William Booth London 1865

If you are a Jehovah Witness your church was started by Charles Russell in 1872

If you are a Redeemed Christian your church was started in Nigeria by Josiah Akindayomi in 1952

If you are Deeper Life Bible then your church was started by William Kumuyi in Lagos 1973.

If you are Mountain of Fire your church was started by Daniel Olukoya in Nigeria 1989.

Apart from the Catholic Church every other church was started by mortal man. We were founded by Jesus Christ himself the risen Lord (Matt 16:18) Beginning with that gathering on Pentecost Day (Acts 2:1) and we can trace that lineage through 266 Popes successors to St. Peter who was given the keys by Jesus himself.

As Pentecost Sunday will soon be here remember more than 2000 years of the Catholic church existence. It is the only church that takes you back to Jesus himself. The Catholic Church has stood firm because it was started by Jesus Christ true God and true Man. His grace will guard it until the end. AMEN

THEY KEPT THE FUTURE CONSTANTLY IN MIND

I was in discussion with some priests in the course of the week trying to catch up with current affairs. Local elections have just ended and the general elections are few weeks away. As the United Kingdom prepares to leave the European Union (Brexit) I'm sure that politicians have little or no sleep at all in the night. No

political leader is willing to go down into history as someone that destroyed the hopes of the nation. I'm sure they hardly enjoy their meals or their ivory beds with good sleep. Each one is searching for the best deal.

The Christians who lived before us in our parish were encountered with situations of such kind. They did not want to go into history as a people on whose watch the parish reached a tragic end. They felt obliged to find the best deal for the parish.

There are two major difficulties that every parish priest has:

1. the maintenance of vast parish buildings including the church itself
2. keeping the church warm.
- 3.

Huge buildings of course mean huge insurance premiums. Our predecessors came up with ideas to help them raise funds that would give response to these inevitable needs; they included organizing annual 'Christmas bazaars', weekly or monthly 'Bonus Ball', 'Family Draw', '300 Club' among others. Thanks to the recent development of the government's plan to support charities chosen by tax payers through Gif Aid Scheme. Thanks to the parishioners who have supported these efforts from generation to generation. It is important that we do not lose them as numbers of participants get low. The weekly Bonus Ball at St. Marys costs £1.00 for entry, if you are lucky to win it you end up with £30.00 in cash.

The 300 Club is another initiative at St. Osburg which enters its 18th year. It has brought in £122,000.00 which partly financed the restoration of the Church. The entry charge is £2:00 every month if you are lucky to win it you might end up with £100. 1st prize, £50 2nd prize, £30. 3rd prize or with £20.00 4th prize. Family Draw, Bonus Ball and 300 Club are voluntary charitable support within the parish to support the church. What a great work that these have done to improve our church infrastructures! As numbers of entrants go down, I wish to encourage you to support the efforts made through them. It will be tragic if we lost any one of them.

Like our fore fathers we must keep the future of the church constantly in mind. The fundraising efforts of the church is an ongoing process. I'm sure every priest, bishop or the Holy Father himself are never short of words to thank the people who support the cause of our faith through prayer and other material sacrifices

GOOD MEMORIES ABOUT YOU? START NOW”

This coming Saturday 3rd June, it will be a big solemn celebration for the people of Uganda as they will celebrate their countrymen the Martyrs of Uganda who died for their faith in Jesus Christ leaving us a good example. It is the good example left by the martyrs that has made Uganda to stand firm in the midst of trouble. Good memories are rarely sustained, people tend to remember the negative of ourselves than the positive. Many times whenever I tell people that my home country is Uganda, they at once say ‘oh that country of Idi Amin!’ They do not remember him for the good he did of course. But I do ask the same people ‘ Have you heard of the Uganda Martyrs, the Ugandans who died for their faith in Jesus Christ, who chose death instead of sin? The answer is always ‘**No!**’ It reveals to me how easy people forget the good person and carry on in their whole life the memories of a bad one.

These days you will hear people making up stories about how good and generous someone was, his dedication to the family and his commitment to the Christian faith. Some of these are made up stories. As these good things are spoken about someone, the people who knew him are left wondering whether the person spoken about is the one they knew or it is somebody else. Of course made up stories will not improve the image of a person in the mind of the listeners..

The Uganda Martyrs left to the country and to the church a high degree of moral purity. Homosexuality was introduced in Uganda at the time when foreign religions were being introduced in the country. It is said that an 18 year old King Mwanga who was unstable in character was introduced to the habit. St. Joseph Mukasa Balikuddembe one of the king’s pages rebuked him for doing things which did not even have a vocabulary in Ugandan languages and cultures to describe them. (When something does not have a single word to define it, it means that it is foreign to that culture). Joseph Mukasa protected the young boys from the king’s advances but the king beheaded him in November 1885.

The Martyrs of Uganda set a moral standard for the country ; their faith, their trust in God and their fidelity is acclaimed through out the Church. Today Uganda is seen as a country which denies its people the freedom to engage in gay practices. The ordinary people are not bothered but the so called ambassadors of freedom and globalisation of cultures think that this must be one of the signs that people are free and their government democratic. You can get to know the feelings and attitude of the people if you understand the values of

their culture. It is good to be remembered for the good we have done. Remember that every day of your life you are building a picture of what people will speak of you when you are gone. If you have not started to build it, start now otherwise tomorrow is too late and too far even to think about it.

THE FIRST MEMBERS OF THE CHURCH.

When we talk about the Catholic Church some people think that it is one of the sects just like many Christian sects we have around. But it is not. The Catholic Church is Catholic because from the beginning her first members came from all over the known world excluding none. She accepted everyone who wanted to believe in Jesus men or women slaves or citizens alike. But who were the first members of the Church on Pentecost day? Where did they come from? Today’s 1st Reading talks about their origins:

Parthia is a region in north-eastern Iran. It was the political and cultural base of the Arsacid dynasty (247 BC – 224 AD) which occupied the whole of modern Iran, Iraq and Armenia, parts of Turkey, Georgia, Azerbaijan, Turkmenistan, Afghanistan, Tajikistan Pakistan and Syria.

The **Medes** were a people who lived in Media north western Iran between 1000 BC to around 900 BC. They spoke the Median language.

Mesopotamia is a territory between rivers Tigris and Euphrates it corresponds to Iraq, Kuwait the eastern parts of Syria and southern Turkey. It is the site of the earliest civilization in human history including the invention of the wheel the planting of the first cereal crops, the invention of cursive script, mathematics, astronomy and agriculture.

Judeans were people who had come from the mountainous southern part of Canaan.

Cappadocia is present day Turkey it means "the country of beautiful horses"

Pontus is a region on the southern coast of the Black Sea located in modern eastern Turkey. **Phrygia** was a kingdom in the central part of Turkey on the Sakarya River.

Asia, Indians, Japanese, Koreans, Chinese were all members of the first church on Pentecost Day. There were visitors from Rome may be to represent the Europeans.

Cyrene is Libya. On the first day the church started, the Africans joined it. The man who helped Jesus to carry his Cross was an African from Libya. Africa not only gave sanctuary to Jesus as a refugee, it helped him also to carry his cross. As we celebrate Pentecost

today it is good to know that when the Church first began, you were represented. From the very beginning she was Catholic (universal) and Catholic she must be. The Catholic Church is not a sect but a Mother. If she has lived for so long and endured so much, it means that Pentecost was not a one-off event even here and now God continues to strengthen us with the consolation of the Holy Spirit.

ARCHBISHOP BERNARD ON THE DAY FOR LIFE

The weekend of 17/18th June has been designated as this year's 'Day for Life'. This year it is particularly significant as it is 50 years since the 1967 Abortion Act was passed in England, Scotland and Wales. The *Day for Life* provides us with an opportunity to pray for and to remember all lives lost before birth through negligence or sadly through human choice. It offers practical and emotional support to women and men who are worried and concerned about an unexpected pregnancy. For those who have had an abortion, this anniversary year is a reminder that 50 years on "*there is no sin that God's mercy cannot reach and forgive when it finds a repentant heart seeking to be reconciled with the Father*" (Pope Francis, Apostolic Letter, *Misericordia et Misera*, 12).

There will be a mandatory second collection in parishes to support the Day for Life. Proceeds of the collection will go to The Anscombe Bioethics Centre and other Church-supported life activities. The Office for the Day for Life at the Bishops' Conference has produced material for this year's Day for Life, which includes prayers, stories and detailed structure for holding a Vigil or a prayer service as far as this is possible on or around the weekend of 17/18 June, together with material for the 27th October 2017. These and other resources are available at: www.dayforlife.org. I do thank you for your help in drawing attention to these two important events. With my prayers and kindest wishes,

Yours fraternally in Christ

Bernard Longley Archbishop of Birmingham

On the archbishop's remarks can I add on my own sentiments concerning the duty of each one to preserve the sanctity of life. God and only God can give life and it is only God who should take it away. These days life is lost not only on the battle fields but on our streets and in our homes. There are some habits people engage in which as we know lead to death intentionally or unintentionally. We are living in a toxic world. The law banning smoking in public places did not ban the practicing of the habit in private places such

as the home. Doctors at our local hospital were saying that smoking is the greatest cause of lung cancer in our country. They were begging the public to stop it because of the horror they face in the theatre everyday. But their appeal does not square with the way how some people glamourize the habit. It is important to evaluate our actions in the light of life and death. A parent who engulfs his children in a fog of smoke from his tobacco is as a matter of fact killing those children. If you wish to see your children grow up in a healthy environment, it is your duty to create it. And if it is your wish to see your children's children, it is your duty to develop a culture of life. The Day of Life means so much to me just as it does to you.

"A KING'S GOOD SERVANT—BUT GOD FIRST"

It is very difficult to tell how many politicians have ever made it to heaven. The church has canonized and beatified thousands of people but in such multitude we hardly hear of politicians being among them. Politics must be a very dirty game. Indeed as Nick Clegg the former leader of the Liberal Democrats said the other day as he was being interviewed on his election defeat, "*in politics you live by the sword and you go by the sword*" no wonder it is difficult to make a saint out of a politician.

Heaven is not totally empty of politicians, we know for certain of one politician who is in heaven St. Thomas More. Our certainty of this is based on the fact that the man could not compromise his conscience with cheap popularity, money or worldly ambitions which all politicians seem to have. Thomas More, a family man happily married with four children, a law barrister, a member of the British Parliament and an officer in the local government; he was very close to the King, a man who had every privilege to live a comfortable life. His position would earn him anything but his conscience would not approve of everything.

The human conscience is that inner voice of God which cannot deceive us and which we cannot deceive too. In life there will come a moment when following it becomes the ultimate guiding principle of our actions. St. Thomas More had such kind of conscience, he resisted the King's command saying "in this matter it is our duty to disobey." He followed his conscience and it is his conscience that made him truly free.

I thought that brave people who obeyed their conscience were of the past but the other week another

politician listened to his conscience and obeyed it. I'm talking of Mr. Tim Farron the former leader of the Liberal Democratic Party. Tim had been battling with his conscience *vis a vis* the political correctness which he was bound to observe if he was to win popularity and positions of power. In a resignation speech few days ago, he publicly said that he could not compromise his Christian faith values, even for the party he loved. *"I joined our party when I was 16, it is in my blood, I love our history, our people, I thoroughly love my party, but I cannot compromise my beliefs as a Christian therefore I step down as leader of my political party."*

Well as Christians there comes a time when we must do the unthinkable by saying like Thomas More or Tim Farron **"in this matter it is our duty to disobey."** What does it profit a man to win the whole world and ruin his life Mk.8:36? As I reflected on the life of Thomas More and the action of Tim Farron, I came to realize that while we must be the King's good servants, we must put God first, then we shall be truly free.

IS IT TRUE THERE ARE NO MIRACLES IN THE CATHOLIC CHURCH?

A young lady who was close to me told me recently that she is no longer going to the Catholic Church for Mass because no miracles happen there. At my new church she said, my pastor is like Jesus, he heals people by a mere word, the blind, the lame, those with HIV are all healed by the breath of his mouth. It is true, it is true she said. He is Jesus.

In a world of competition where businesses try to keep customers, men and women who have taken to starting churches as a way of making money, come up with new acrobatics to attract 'customers. The more acrobatics you make the more audience you attract. No wonder pastors who need to keep their businesses afloat might need to pretend to play divine or to preach the unthinkable!

The Catholic Mass has not changed in 2000 years! As early as the second century we have the witness of St. Justin Martyr who tells us how the Holy Mass was celebrated from the earliest time. This has given us the pattern of celebrating the Mass as it was from the earliest time at the Last Supper until today. St. Justin wrote to the pagan emperor Antoninus Pius (138-161) around the year 155, explaining what Christians did every Sunday:

On the day we call the day of the sun, all who dwell in the city or country gather in the same place. The memoirs of the

apostles and the writings of the prophets are read, as much as time permits. When the reader has finished, he who presides over those gathered admonishes and challenges them to imitate these beautiful things (**homily**). Then we all rise together and offer prayers* for ourselves and for all others, wherever they may be, so that we may be found righteous by our life and actions, and faithful to the commandments (**bidding prayers**), so as to obtain eternal salvation. When the prayers are concluded we exchange the **sign of peace**. Then someone brings bread and a cup of water and wine mixed together to him who presides over the brethren. He takes them and offers praise and glory to the Father of the universe, through the name of the Son and of the Holy Spirit and for a considerable time he gives thanks (in Greek: eucharistian) that we have been judged worthy of these gifts (**Consecration**). When he has concluded the prayers and thanksgivings, all present give voice to an acclamation by saying: 'Amen.' When he who presides has given thanks and the people have responded, those whom we call deacons give to those present the "eucharisted" bread and wine and take them to those who are absent.

The authority of the Catholic Church is derived from the Bible and from Church Tradition. We do not invent things, or claim to make miracles or preach what the people want to hear so as to keep them entertained. We are so lucky because what we are doing today is what has been done in the last 2000 years.

WHAT DOES THE LAW OF THE CHURCH SAY?

Imagine that as we drive along the motorway all the motorists were to forget the traffic rules for one minute, how many of us would return home or reach our destinations! There would be chaos and carnage on the road, but because we keep the rules and laws at all times, there is order and harmony on our roads. An accident must be a accident traffic offenders as we know are severely punished.

For harmony to exist, there must be rules that guide society to avoid excesses. Communities that were thought to be made up of savages have some of the most sophisticated rules which regulate their lives and keep them so impenetrable by outsiders. Without rules no society can exist.

The Catholic Church has 1752 Laws that regulate her life and discipline. We call them Canon Law. I wish to use this column in the next few weeks to quote and to explain what the Law of the church says about certain persons and about things. It is important that all the Catholics understand to a certain degree the laws that govern their lives and their relationships. I'm sure that the ignorance of our Rule of life as baptised Catholics is one of the temptations for many people to find the easier way.

The Catholic Church is composed of the faithful who as a body are united in the Holy Spirit by the same faith, by the same Sacraments and by the same government. The catholic faithful are made up of different groups held together by their hierarchy and so form particular churches or rites. Even though these groups or churches differ somewhat among themselves in the way they conduct their liturgy, in discipline and in spiritual tradition, they are all equally entrusted to the pastoral guidance of the Roman Pontiff in whom Christ established a lasting visible sign of unity and communion.

The Laws of the Church bind all those who are baptised or received into the Catholic Church, who have a sufficient use of reason and, unless the law expressly provides otherwise those who have completed their seventh year of age. It means that not every member of the Catholic Church can be blamed for breaking church law except those who can intentionally or unintentionally break it.

The Laws of the church are constructed from the experience of the faithful through the centuries. No government, no empire so vast as the catholic church has lived for so long as the Catholic Church. Do you know one of the reasons why this has happened? The answer is found in its wise rules and obedience to Jesus Christ. We shall start to read about the Laws of the church from next week.

WHAT DOES THE LAW OF THE CHURCH SAY? (1)

CHRIST'S FAITHFUL: I would like to start this column by mentioning to you what the Church law terms as "**Christ's faithful or "the People of God."** The people that the Law of the Church calls Christ's faithful are those who are incorporated into Christ through baptism. The baptised are the people the Law of the church refers to as the people of God. They participate in their own way in the priestly, prophetic and kingly office of Christ. They are called each according to his/her particular condition to exercise the mission which God entrusted to the church to fulfil in the world (Canon 204.1) There exists no spectators in the Church, we are all called to be loyal, assiduous and faithful workers in the vineyard of Christ. This is the fundamental equality of Christ's faithful. Yet alongside this basic equality there is certain **functional inequality** within the church. Priests and laity have different functions; the functions of the bishop differ from that of the priest, the functions of a married woman differs from that of a religious Sister etc... Nevertheless all the baptised have an essential part in the overall mission of the church to the world., after the

command of Jesus : "**Go**" , "**Teach**", "**Baptise**" Mtt. 28:19-20.

Canon 207: By divine institution among Christ's faithful there are in the church sacred ministers who in law are also called clerics, the others are called lay people. Fundamentally there are two categories of persons in the church, clerics and lay people. Drawn from both groups are those of Christ's faithful who professing the vows are consecrated to God. Their state although it does not belong to the hierarchical structure of the church, does pertain to its life and holiness. We call them Religious.

Do you know your obligations and rights as Christ's faithful? Here are some:

Canon 209: Christ's faithful are bound to preserve their communion with the church at all times even in their external actions. They are also to carry out with great diligence their responsibilities towards both the universal church and the particular church to which they belong. We cannot belong to the universal church without belonging to a local church (diocese or a parish). When we support the local church we are at the same time supporting the universal church.

Canon 211: all Christ's faithful have the obligation and right to strive so that the divine message of salvation may reach all people of all times and places. The faithful have the obligation to evangelise and the right to do so.

Canon 2013 Christ's faithful have the right to be assisted by their priests from the spiritual riches of the church specially by the word of God and the sacraments.

Canon 222 Christ's faithful have the obligation to provide for the needs of the church, so that the church has available to it those things which are necessary for divine worship, for works of apostolate and of charity and for the worthy support of its ministers.

WHAT DOES THE CHURCH SAY (2)

I was surprised some years ago when I went to one village in Uganda. Upon my arrival an elderly woman went through the village calling young people between the age of 15 and 25 to come and meet the priest. "*The priest is here*" she said, "*please come and make your confessions we are now old we have no more energy to sin!*" Indeed the young people came and I ended up spending the visit hearing confessions!

According to Canon Law seeking holiness is not for some individuals or for particular age groups of people. There is an age when people start sinning but there is

no age limit when they stop. Seeking holiness is a continuous journey till we meet God.

Canon 210: *All Christ's faithful each according to his or her own condition must make wholehearted effort to lead a holy life and to promote the growth of the church and its continual sanctification.* Irrespective of who we are, all of us are called to strive to live a holy life. The laity are exhorted to seek Christian education to mature as human persons and to have knowledge of the mystery of salvation (Can 217), priests are encouraged to behave with due prudence in relation to persons whose company can be a danger to their obligation of preserving continence or can lead to scandal (Can 277), Bishops are asked to be mindful that they give good example of holiness in charity, humility and simplicity (Can387) since a life characterised by charity, humility and simplicity will help the bishop to lead the people to fulfil their own particular vocations. The religious without exception have the obligation to live a life of holiness and to promote it by means of prayer and penance. (Can 673). Children in schools are to be offered an education that attains them their eternal destiny, (Can 795)

Canon 220 *No one may unlawfully harm the good reputation which a person enjoys or violate the right of the person to protect his or her privacy.* Catholics are forbidden to spoil the good name or the good reputation of others, they are also forbidden to unlawfully intrude people's private lives. Listening to gossip, letter reading, tapping telephone conversations are part of attempts to violate some one's private life or to tarnish his/her good name.

Canon 226: *Those who are married are bound by the special obligation in accordance with their own vocation to strive for the building up of the people of God through their marriage and family. Because they gave life to their children, parents have the most serious obligation and the right to educate them. It is a primary responsibility of Christian parents to ensure the Christian education of their children in accordance with the teaching of the church.* The law of the church sees the family as a domestic church. Married people ought to give clear proof in their lives of the indissolubility and holiness of the marriage bond, to assert with vigour the duty of parents to give their children Christian upbringing, to defend the dignity and legitimate autonomy of the family. It is the family which gives us all the initiation into life.

WHAT SEED ARE YOU PLANTING IN YOUR CHILD'S SOUL?

It is with great sadness to learn about the death of Josephine Lobo (pictured) the mother of Sr. Leera Lobo, one of our parish Sisters. She died peacefully on 24th July Monday morning at the age of 92. She shared her birthday with the queen except that hers always passed on unannounced.

Mrs. Josephine Lobo spent her entire life teaching her children

about Jesus Christ and about the need to do his will whatever the cost. She helped them to love God and to love the Church. As a consequence one of her sons Eugene Lobo SJ went to the priesthood and became a Jesuit priest. He worked in the Vatican for many years. While her other children got married in the church, her last born daughter Leera Lobo, could not resist the fire kindled in her heart by her mother as a little child urging her to serve God if an opportunity came. Being a lastborn Josephine gave the best education for her daughter, she sent her to high school, then to college and to the university where all along she grabbed several papers that show her intellectual power. Once Leera completed university, several proposals came; every man wants to marry a bright educated girl of course but she turned them all down because all she wanted was to become a religious, to serve God and to be at the service of the church. That girl is Sr. Leera Lobo.

So we go back to our question: *“What seed are you planting in your child's soul?”* Do you know why we never forget our mother tongues ? It is because that is the first language that was recorded by our mind; we cannot get rid of it. The same applies to the values that a child is disposed to from birth onwards they get imprinted in their souls such that to get rid of them will be an uphill struggle.

Josephine Lobo lived a saintly life. In her house the infamous Indian caste system did not exist; 'every person is a child of God' she told her children, the rich and the poor were all at home in her house. Her love of the church was put to the test when the Sisters of the Little Flower of Bethany were sent to her area to start missions. They had no house, no food, no money or transport. Mrs Josephine Lobo invited them to stay in her house, she cooked for them and provided for their needs for several years, until they were able to build their convent. Their first convent was in her own house. It is this purity of heart that influenced her children Eugene Lobo and Leera Lobo to consecrate their whole life to God. This shows the influence of a mother on the soul of a child. God has given this authority to every mother to be a teacher, a model and a moulder of a child's soul. Happy those who die in the Lord, happy

indeed the spirit says, they can now rest since their good deeds go with them. May she rest in peace.

WHAT DOES THE LAW OF THE CHURCH SAY? (4)

Forming a Catholic Priest: the proliferation of “Born again/ Pentecostal Churches” has diluted the authority of Christian religion. You need not walk several streets before you come across someone who with a bible in hand gives himself biblical titles such as “*patriarch* so and so,” “*apostle* so and so” “*prophet* so and so” “*evangelist* so and so. These are biblical titles which no body should lay claim of just to market oneself. When you look around to see whether the person claiming such titles had any formation, you get shocked. What most of them claim is to have had a call as in a dream. Lack of formation in sound doctrine by so called evangelical preachers has dealt serious blows on the Christian doctrine.

The formation of a man to serve at the altar (a priest) goes back to Jesus himself; he formed his apostles (Mk 9:30-37). St. Paul writing to Timothy and to Titus gave them the guidelines to follow in the selection of those to become priest or deacons (1Tim 3:1-13, Titus 1:5-9) Christian sects which have no formation procedures of its pastors end up with mediocre preachers prone to teaching heresy than sound doctrine. But what does the Law of the church say about the training of a priest?

Canon 242: In each country there is to be a programme of priestly formation. drawn up by the Bishop’s conference and approved by the Holy See.

Canon 244 the spiritual formation and the doctrinal instruction of students are to be so planned that the students each according to his talents develops the required human maturity and acquire the spirit of the gospel and close relationship with Christ.

Canon 245 students are to be so trained that filled with the love for Christ’s church they are linked to the Roman Pontiff the successor of Peter, to their own bishop as his faithful co-workers and to their brethren in friendly cooperation.

Canon 252 Theological formation given in the light of faith and under the guidance of the teaching authority of the church (magisterium) is to be imparted such that students learn the whole of catholic teaching based of Divine Revelation so that in their ministry they may proclaim it and defend it. They’re to be instructed with special care in sacred scripture, in dogmatic theology based on the written Word of God and on Tradition so as to penetrate deeply into the mystery of salvation.

Canon 254 students are to be taught so that they themselves are enabled to research various questions by their own research in a scientific manner.

Catholic priests spend many years of formation they are well prepared for their ministry

EVERY PRIEST IS TECHNICALLY MARRIED (5)

Many dioceses are struggling to find priests but some others are better off with plenty of vocations. Catholics may wonder why priests do not move at will from diocese to diocese to minister in those churches that face acute shortage? Can a priest float around supporting churches without a particular authority he is attached to? The answer is **NO**.

First of all the Law of the church forbids catholic priests to work independently without the authority of a diocesan bishop or a religious superior. Just as every wife is attached to a husband so every catholic priest is married (incardinated) to a particular church, a personal prelature, or in an institute of consecrated life or a society which has the faculty to have priests. Vagabond priests are by no means allowed in the catholic church according to Canon 265. It is like marriage, when a woman or a man marries, he joins a family and becomes a part of it for his/her whole life. He is not expected to leave that family. When a man is ordained a deacon he joins a particular diocese or a religious community. He is not expected to leave it. Every priest therefore is “technically married” to a particular church, we call it incardination.

Canon 266 By reception of the diaconate a man becomes a cleric and is “married/ incardinated in the particular church or diocese. A person who takes perpetual vows in a religious institute is “married” to that institute. It means that seminarians at Oscott college studying for the priesthood are not ‘*married to the diocese*’ until they are ordained deacons. From then on, they belong to that sole husband we call a diocese.

The Law of the Church forbids a bishop to steal or to fish another bishop’s priest or to take him into his diocese without following some strict procedures: **Canon 269** states that a bishop is not to incardinate a priest unless the need or the advantage of the diocese requires it and the provisions of law concerning the worthy support of the priest are observed. Secondly the bishop who wants to recruit a priest in his diocese must know by a lawful document that incardination has been granted and has been obtained from the ex-

cardinating bishop. Under strict secrecy if need be, appropriate testimonials concerning the priest's life, behaviour and studies must be obtained first. Thirdly the priest must declare in writing to the new bishop that he wishes to enter the new diocese in accordance with the norms of law.

Every catholic priest takes divorce reprehensible, they expect and pray that married couple stay together until death. In the same way every priest takes his ordination with great seriousness, he prays that he works in the diocese until his death. The fidelity of your priests should be an inspiration for us all to be faithful in our calling.

THE HIERARCHICAL CONSTITUTION OF THE CHURCH:

It is said in our Christian religion that 'pride is the greatest sin,' but I want to add on that to misinterpret or to reject the teaching of Jesus Christ is a great sin too. Since the time of Protestant Reformation there has been systematic denial that the successor of St. Peter (the Bishop of Rome) the Pope is the Vicar of Jesus Christ. Jesus was very categorical about it: "*Feed my sheep*" "*I will give you the keys of the kingdom*" "*You are Peter upon this rock I will build my church*". Whoever succeeds Peter the Fisherman as pastor of the church, has a responsibility, he has authority, he is the leader of the flock and answerable to none as a teacher of faith but to Jesus Christ himself. The shepherd cannot lead the flock into error. The sheep cannot reprimand the shepherd. So, what does the Law say about authority in the church?

Canon 331: The office uniquely committed by Jesus to Peter the first of the apostles and to be transmitted to his successors, abides in the Bishop of Rome. He is the head of the college of bishops, the vicar of Christ and the pastor of the universal church on earth. By virtue of his office he has supreme, full, immediate and universal authority in the church and he can freely exercise this authority.

The authority of the Pope is *supreme* that is there is no other authority above it in the church. It is *full* that is it lacks nothing in its exercise. It is *immediate* that is the pope can exercise his authority without intermediary. It is *universal* that is it is exercised over the whole church. It is *ordinary* that is it belongs to the office. It is *freely exercised* that is the Pope's authority is independent of any other power be it ecclesiastical or civil. His

authority is not given by any queen or prince, he is not a representative of any earthly super power.

Canon 333: By virtue of his office the Pope not only has power over the universal church but also has pre-eminent ordinary power over all churches, dioceses, and parishes. There is neither appeal nor recourse against the judgement or decision made by the Pope. Since there is no authority higher in the church than that of the Pope. No one can appeal against a decision made by the Pope.

It is not difficult these days to find Catholics criticising the teaching of the Pope or talking about him as if he is one of the men they share a pint of Guinness every Friday night. The office of the Pope unites him to every man on earth and yet excludes him. Every Catholic priest is taught to have profound love, respect and support for the Pope. It is for this reason that when the Pope is to visit a country, priests get as excited. Churches without unifying authority end up disintegrating every other day. The Church not being a human invention stands firm if it follows the teaching of the Pope.

FAITH CAN DO GREAT THINGS

I arrived home safely in Uganda and I have started catching up with life here. Like any person who has been away from home for some time, there are lots of changes here. Children have become adults and those I left as young adults have earned themselves new titles such as parents or grand parents. Time passes very fast.

On Monday morning I visited the mother of my brother priest Fr. John Baptist Ssenyondo who was kidnapped and murdered in Mexico some 2 years ago. His body was found in a massive grave with other bodies. He could only be identified by dental formation.

The disappearance of my brother priest in Mexico was known to me, the possibility of his death was also being contemplated but we kept the news to ourselves because we feared the ill health of his mother who suffers from acute high blood pressure, arthritis and diabetes. The media worldwide picked up the story and it was being run on every Radio station and TV. We could not hide the story any longer from his mother who by this time was

wondering why his son had spent long time without writing to her.

Finally the family asked me to break the news. May be everyone expected me to say how hard and devastating the news was instead I called the ailing mother and congratulated her on giving birth to a priest who had courageously suffered a martyr's death. I went on to explain to her what it meant to kidnap a good priest and have him Martyred. It is a great privilege to complete ones journey as a faithful servant. Giving birth to someone who gets killed for faith and morality is a gift of God. The ailing mother started to see the death of her priest son as a great privilege rather than a curse.

As I visited the elderly mother she was a new person all together. She gave birth to a son who was martyred in Mexico. There is no reason to afraid or worried. He chose the way of the cross by preferring death other than sin.

Well as Christians we need to understand that our faith in God gives us the strength to face every difficult situation. It is not we who keep the faith instead it is our faith which keeps us.

***** ***** *****

THE CATHOLIC BISHOPS:

You will hear some men and women who have invented their own churches calling themselves 'bishops'. Well they use that word in a very loose and broad sense because such men do not possess apostolic succession. If you try to trace their family tree as bishops, it does not take you long before you get stuck. At once you find that a certain man (often without sacred ordination) started his church and constituted him bishop. Catholic bishops are not like that; the family tree of each of them will take you to the 12 apostles of the Lord. It means that every Catholic bishop is a direct descendant of the Twelve apostles of the Lord.

Canon 375: *By divine institution , bishops succeed the apostles through the Holy Spirit who is given to them. They are pastors in the church, teachers of doctrine, priests of sacred worship and ministers of governance. By their episcopal consecration the bishop receives the three offices of sanctifying, of teaching and of governing the people of God* The office of a bishop is not simply an administrative convenience established by the church, something which could be abandoned; rather it is the

will of Jesus Christ for his church. Catholic bishops form a teaching and governing body of the universal church; we call it *magisterium*. They are successors of the apostles, a succession not merely a human affair but a divine institution. The bishop is a **teacher** of Christian doctrine, a **high priest** of sacred worship and a **governor** of the people of God.

Canon 377 *The Pope and only the Pope appoints bishops or confirms those lawfully elected.* In the early church, the people elected their own bishop. Later, the election was restricted to members of the clergy of that diocese. Politicians and rich families as usual poked their claws in the affairs of the church, such that The Holy See came to reserve to itself the right to appoint bishops. As a matter of fact the majority of catholic bishops are appointed by the Pope himself.

Rome is never taken by surprise. Do you know that every three years the bishops of an ecclesiastical province draw up by common accord and in absolute secret manner a list of priests who they think are suitable for the episcopate and send it to the Apostolic See? This helps the Pope to have relevant information on possible candidates among priests who can take the episcopal office should the need arise. An individual bishop is free to suggest to the Apostolic See names of priests from his diocese who can become bishops. Unlike some politicians who never want to give up power, Catholic bishops are constantly on the look out to find suitable men who can succeed them.

The episcopal office in the Catholic Church carries great responsibility and accountability before God. The Catholic Bishop is not 'one of the men we have around, He is a Father, a Pastor, a Priest a Law giver and a Judge' Remember to pray for your bishop.

***** ***** *****

THE EFFECT CANNOT BE MORE PERFECT THAN ITS CAUSE:

Recently I heard of a bible exhibition in one part of the city which attracted my attention; I went to see what was going on. Someone welcomed me at the door who immediately entrusted me to somebody she called a bible scholar; "this one will take you through the whole Bible" she said. Well the explanation of the Bible started full of wrong interpretations. You see people who have little knowledge about something are the ones who act as if they know everything about it. After going through the whole bible exhibition, I wanted to ask some questions because I felt that the exhibition was based on heretical arguments which neither reason nor

common sense would sustain. For example I was told that I must take whatever was written in the bible literally otherwise to say anything extra or to seek meaning other than that implied would make me a judge of the Word of God, such that it would cease to be an authoritative Word.

It is sad to note that in the Catholic Church Bible study is not very common in families or among small local communities in parishes . Because of this, you cannot tell how much distortion of the bible message is being done by the so called self styled bible teachers. In the exhibition I was told that the world was created in 6 days, That Noah took all animals in the ark and God closed their mouths until after the flood. *(The replica of the ark was there showing which animal was kept where)* It was said that Mary had other children beside Jesus because the bible says that , “His brothers and sisters came looking for him” “The Catholic priests should not be called ‘Father’ because the bible says ‘you should not call anybody ‘father’. The Pope is not Vicar of Christ or successor to Peter because he is not appointed by or approved by the Queen. It was also claimed that there was no Bible in the church until the Authorised King James Version published in 1611. All sorts of rubbish was present in the so called bible exhibition.

It is important that as Catholics, we do our best to understand the history of the church. The proliferation of Christian preachers has brought about so many churches. As you know founders of different churches apart from the Catholic Church which was started by Jesus himself sowed within those churches seeds of heresy which cannot be reconciled with the traditional faith and teaching of the church. While you might find a lot of condemnations and accusations made against the church, its liturgy, its authority and beliefs, it is natural that those who separate from the source find themselves carrying with them some heretical ideas condemned by the source. It is ridiculous to think that the result (effect) of something is more perfect than that from which it comes! To put it more simple, it will be a wishful thinking for anyone to imagine that after centuries of the existence of the Catholic Church, one has discovered errors in it, therefore he or she has decided to start a more perfect church than that founded by Jesus Christ.

***** ***** *****

NO WHERE I HAVE FOUND SOMETHING LIKE THIS

I am quite sure you are all keeping well. I have been informed how you are all united in supporting each other which has led to an increase in your personal holiness. This has made me feel so happy and to love you more.

This morning I visited the church where I was baptized, confirmed and received my First Holy Communion, it was in 1978 when I was here. Sometime back I caused a row

when I spoke about the true meaning of mothering Sunday. I said that it has nothing to do with celebrating mother’s day (although we need to celebrate them) but that it was and it should still remain a Christian tradition when the Christians at least once a year visited their mother church which could be a place where someone was baptized, a parish or a cathedral church. A person who went on such visit was spoken of as “Going mothering” and on Sunday people visited their mother church was called mothering Sunday. Commercialism and pagan secularism soon realized that it was the best day to make money as people especially in America replaced the celebration of the church as our spiritual mother, with the Celebration of our physical mother’s. As a result there is no restaurant , hotel or pub in Europe or in America which does not make good money on mothering Sunday.

Well this morning I went “Mothering” in the true meaning of the word. My mother church was built in 1900 it is one of the oldest churches in Uganda. When the European missionaries came my area they decided to build a church but they had no tools to blast stones to make foundation or to chisel wood. They were told of a young man who had exceptional skill in stone and wood work they contacted and asked him to help them to build a church . They baptized him first and gave him the name Leo Bagenda. This Leo became the father of my dad’s mother. The church which my great grand dad constructed with the advice of the missionaries is called Narozali parish church it was supported on two columns of huge pillars of wood 24 in number. It remains a mystery how the huge trees were transported from far awaibon the forest at the time when lorries were invented and how they were made so stand when cranes were not even thought of! Narozali parish is one of the wonders in Uganda. It was in this church where I was baptised, made my first Confession, F. H. Communion, Confirmation and where I stood this morning to celebrate Holy Mass as priest. It was a moving experience for me. Let us always love the churches where we receive or where we experience life changing moments.

We are all attached to a church for different reasons: for some like myself it might be because of the sacraments received in it, for others it might be because of a friend or a loved one who is but died from there. Nevertheless the church where your heart is, deserves some frequent visit. Don’t follow my bad example of going mothering for the last in 1978. The reasons for this you know it of course but I made it a point this time to go mothering as part of my holiday.

***** ***** *****

THE CHALLENGES OF MISSION WORK HAVE NO END.

I'm spending few days visiting some parishes both new and old to gain some experiences. Above all I want to see how African priests spend their time. Here God blessed the churches with so many vocations since nearly every parish has no less than three priests. Some parishes are old such that some infrastructure is falling to pieces. Other parishes are very new, just being established such that you might not know where to start. But there is one thing in common to both: it is the great number of people who have such interest and enthusiasm to build their churches.

This morning I visited a place where the bishop of Masaka diocese John Baptist Kagwa has asked the Apostles of Jesus missionaries to establish a parish. It is located in Katovu area along Masaka Mbarara highway. It is very humbling to be here. The church is just a shed. The two priests are literally sleeping rough. I had a shower literally in the open (I waited till night fell). I have not come across priests so happy like the two missionaries here. They are hopeful that one day the parish will grow and all the sufferings and sacrifices now being made be part of history.

As I spend the night here, I fully realise that it is the duty of each baptised to do something for the building of the church. There is a lot of poverty among the people here but we cannot fail to recognise the great wealth of Faith that these people possess. Everyone feels obliged to do something.

We who live in places where physical sacrifices for the faith may not be experienced, we need to realise that we are challenged to walk along with those who struggle to expand the mission of the church and to keep alive the gift of faith in the mission's. Let us not feel burdened when we are called for duty, but instead feel privileged that we are asked to do something.

The two priests here Fr. Richard Ntambaazi and Andrew Ssali are living a very simple dedicated life with so many sacrifices. They hope that one day they will have priest house in which to stay. It is this hope that sustains them and propels them into constant action. They are looking forward to start building a priest house in this wilderness to start with. I notice some goats are being reared here to be sold later on to raise money to build a priests house. Please remember the two priests sent to establish a parish here. Let us support them with our prayers and goodwill. If we can send them something please let me know next week.

THANKS TO EVERYONE

Dear parishioners I send greetings to everyone and I thank each one of you for working so hard to keep the parish together. Every parish priest going on a long vacation has some anxieties because as you know, the parish operates most of the time on day to day occurrences some of which are not expected but come out of the blue. Yet every parish priest has the innermost conviction in his heart that since the parish is the people, they will not fail to respond generously and courageously to the need of the parish. I thank you all for the good works each one of you has done. There is not a single area that has not been taken care of. Masses have been celebrated and well attended, sacraments have been well attended too. Children liturgies have been well conducted, our parish choirs have been wonderful and all who do voluntary services have done so well.

The strength of a parish is seen through the number of people who come forward to render service when need arises. In our particular case the strength of our parishes is also showed when all the activities of the parishes continue as normal in the absence of the parish priest. This shows that our family spirit has grown and that we should all endeavour to make it bear more fruit.

I bring you greetings from my family in Uganda. I had a very busy time not on the sea side or in parks watching wild life, much of my time was spent at home in the field and taking care of spiritual well fare of the elderly of our village. There is something I learned. My parents passed on some years ago; I was in the missions that time. Now I notice that once you lose your parents, the home changes; you literally need to have some extra graces to catch up with the changes that take place when the parents are gone. In many communities the eldest son or daughter assumes the office of keeping the family together; mediating, calling to obedience, correcting error, listening and comforting. If such things have to be established in the home, then the holiday time of an African is not a matter of rest under sunshine with dark glasses over the eyes or coloured bikinis but it can be a rough ride.

I had the opportunity to follow the Mass over the internet with my family which gave us much joy. I thank the priests Fr. Moses, Fr. Sunday and Fr. Pontius who accepted to supply during my absence. I thank my parish sisters Leena, Leera, Filomena and Theresa without whom we can do so little as priests but with whom we can do so much. I thank all the leaders of different department's which make up our parish community. Thanks for your good ministries. It will be unthinkable not to mention my 'local engineers' who much of the time do the rough work which the parish

priest hates to do. Yet it is this work that keeps the machinery of our parishes stay lubricated.

I extend my condolences to the members of our parish family who have lost their dear ones. I send regards to the sick and housebound.

***** ***** *****

IT IS ANOTHER WAY TO TELL WHO WE ARE:

This week I went to the printing factory to place an order for the Christmas bazaar raffle tickets. I was convinced that possibly I was the only priest in Coventry who is interested in raising some funds for the running of the parish. I was surprised however to discover that the man was overwhelmed by the amount of orders that have been placed by priests and vicars as each of their parishes were organising themselves to have Christmas bazaars. I immediately realised that Christmas bazaar is a very good idea otherwise not many priests and vicars would take the trouble to organise them.

For our two parishes of St. Osburgs and St. Marys, Christmas bazaars are very necessary due to the circumstances in which we find our parishes today. At St. Osburg for example, we are battling with the huge debt incurred as a result of the restoration our church; and at St. Mary's we are just recovering from the £100,000.00 debt which we paid off not many years ago. Beside the parish has again undertaken a huge project to install new heating systems in the church and in the parish hall. The heating system has run its lifetime. It has been quoted to cost tens of thousands of pounds. The present heating system is very expensive to run and its carbon emissions were troubling the engineers who carried out the annual services! Any fundraising activity for our two parishes will indeed be a special moment to help us to overcome our situation.

The presence of a building which we call a church, is a sign of God's presence among the people. It tells that in it God's name is called upon. It also tells another story namely that in that area, there exist people who believe in God and call upon his name. Therefore every effort we make as a people who believe in God is worthwhile.

The organisation of a parish Christmas bazaar is a big undertaking thanks to those who have volunteered year after year to make it happen. I wish to appeal to you that we join hands to celebrate together this event in which we raise funds to enable us to pay for the upkeep of our parish. We need donations of all kinds from bottles of wine, spirits and soft drinks, tinned foods (must be within consumable dates) to bric-a-brac. We shall need donations of cash, small valuable for

tombola stall. Above all I request for your generous presence on the day. Bring your family and friends. I can assure you that when we get actively involved in such things that build our parish from the other aspect of its existence we tell exactly who we are and our attitude towards the church.

Please remember these dates: The Parish Christmas *bazaar at St. Osburgs* will take place on *Saturday 25th Nov 2017* starting at 11:00am and ending at 2:00pm. The Christmas bazaar *for St Mary's* will take place on *Saturday 9th December 2017* starting at 1:00pm ending at 4:00pm. Raffle tickets are available for you to buy or to take them to your friends. Remember to bring the money and the stubs for the draw before the day.

***** ***** *****

UPDATE ON HEATING INSTALLATION IN OUR CHURCH

As we are moving towards the cold season of winter, I'm sure most of us and those visitors from other parishes who come to our parish will be interested to know about the progress being made on the new heating installation being made in our church. I must confess that for reasons I did not know the work was delayed by the contractors for over two weeks. It was to start on 18th Sept. then differed to 25th but even then it did not start until Thursday 5th October. As you can see some work is in good progress.

The following installations will be made:

Two new 90KW boilers will be fitted with individual shunt pumps. There will also be electronic filling device on the boilers to replace the aged top-up water tank.

All the old 16 fan convectors in the church have been removed and replaced with *new 16 Dunham Bush AM 25 units*. A new fan convector will be installed in the Lady's chapel to replace one of the radiators there. It will provide 12.5 KW of heat in that area.

Christians who attend Mass from the balcony have often complained of cold draft upstairs at the gallery. Therefore across the rear of the balcony *four new triple panel radiators about 300mm high x 1800mm* long will be fitted.

Heating in the church will be *controlled by a Remeha* I sense control panel which will replace the antique control panel present for the moment in the sacristy. Two room thermostats will be introduced in the church. This is the first phase.

When work is done in the Church the second phase will start in the parish hall where a *new Remeha Quinta Pro*

65Kw boiler will be installed. A mikrofill electronic filling device, expansion vessel and suitable circulation pump will be introduced to the system. The existing fan convectors will be removed and replaced by six new ones.

The *side room in the hall* will have two new **Glenn Dimplex** wall mounted electric heaters. This will improve heating in that room which is used every day of the week for meetings and catechetical discussions.

As I mentioned earlier on, this project is funded by the Gift Aid Claim submitted to and honoured by HMRC (Revenue Services). As this work is being done let us thank all those who give their Sunday donation to the church through Gift Aid. It is a reminder to all our Catholics who pay tax on their income to consider giving the Sunday donation through the Gift Aid. There is much good outside there which we should not miss out on. Thanks to all those who work tirelessly to follow up the donations which the people of God, namely Mrs. Byrne Roisin, Sr. Leera Lobo and Mr. John Collins.

THE SIGN OF PEACE IS NOT A “GOOD MORNING” GREETING

During my holidays an elderly lady came to me complaining because she had gone to Mass the previous Sunday and the priest did not tell the people to greet each other. *“Ooh Father I was so disappointed she said, “because I had wanted to greet my neighbour who has not greeted me for a long time, she accidentally sat by me during Mass and I thought the priest would tell us as he usually does to say hallo to one another during Mass. When he did not tell us to do so, I felt disappointed because my neighbour left without speaking a word to me.”*

Well the lady might not be alone, there might be so many Christians who might look at the ‘Sign of peace we exchange at Mass as an occasion to say ‘halo’ to the person next to us. It is not.

The spiritual symbolism of the act is found in the Gospel of Matthew, where Jesus said, “If you are offering your gift at the altar, and there remember that your brother has something against you, leave your gift there before the altar and go; first be reconciled to your brother, and then come and offer your gift” (Matthew 5:23-24). The Sign of peace is shared just before Holy Communion. It comes at the breaking of the bread during which “the Lamb of God is implored to give us his peace.” The early Christians took to heart the instructions of Jesus and incorporated the action into their celebrations of the Eucharist.

After the resurrection, Jesus greeted the disciples with the words “Peace be with you” During the Sign of Peace we invoke the peace of the risen Lord to come upon our neighbour. Christianity is about challenging our own prejudices and put others first. I find it odd that some worshippers make a big show of sociability at the Sign of peace; some pat on the shoulders, others slap, others hug and some give hot kisses in the middle of the Mass –and then completely ignore each other thereafter. None of these is liturgically correct since the Sign of Peace at Mass is not a liturgical form of “good morning,” but a witness to the Christian faith that true peace is a gift of Christ himself through his death and resurrection for our salvation. **‘Therefore The Peace of Christ be with you’**

The Apostolic Constitutions, a document written in the 4th century, instructs that after the Prayer of the Faithful, “let the bishop salute the church, and say, The peace of God be with you all. And let the people answer, And with your spirit; and let the deacon say to all, Salute one another with the **holy** kiss.” Underline the word HOLY

Next time you share the sign of peace with someone during Mass, remember that you are doing the action of Christ himself. Know what you are doing, and do it sincerely in his name. It is a solemn moment of a Christian Assembly celebrating the Mass.

THIS IS A VERY BAD EXAMPLE!

Childhood memories end up shaping our behaviour and developing our character as we grow up. Holding a baby in my arms last week, a small girl standing by asked me: *“Father how do children learn to talk? I answered her that children learn to talk because they have **heard us speak.. A Language develops because someone has spoken it, the other person has listened and the listener tries to speak what he/she had heard.** The action of speaking, the action of listening and the action of the listener to speak what he /she has heard brings about the development of a language. If a language is wrongly spoken, it will be wrongly learned!*

The other day I returned to my childhood memory as I recalled the days when I attended Sunday school. My teacher taught me how to behave in church; how to stand, how to sit, the position of my hands and so on. I can see in my mind the good example she showed us by her own composure when we were at prayer. All of us have had people who have left lasting memory because of what they did or said.

Persons who deal with children must act carefully and behave properly. I appreciate the work done by Sunday school teachers to teach the children how to pray and

how to behave in church. However I whole heartedly denounce the actions of some parents who accompany their children to the Lady's chapel and instead of praying with the children some of these parents are fully engaged in conversations! While the leader of the children is helping them to say their prayers and to follow the Mass, some parents are so busy chatting, telling how their holiday went. What a despicable bad example they give to the children! What will the child think of the Mass or of prayer when instead of the parent being attentive to the homily or to the prayers of the Mass, she or he is busy talking, laughing etc. This behaviour is not right. Please note that I'm not talking about parents who do their best to pacify a child but about those who come to church thinking that the Lady's chapel is the best place to catch up on news. How will children value the Mass if they see parents who pay no attention to it?

These days people are united in condemning child abuse but they look at it only from some particular angles physical or mental; we rarely hear of them speaking about the "spiritual abuse" of children. Jesus talked about spiritual abuse of children in terms of those who scandalize them, then he added "*it would be better to be drowned in the sea with a great millstone round his neck*" Matthew 18:1-10. A warning to us not damage the spiritual dispositions of the little children.

I greatly thank the parents who bring the children to Sunday Mass and those who sit with them in the main body of the church leading them to a full appreciation of the Mass. What you do as an adult is copied by the young, that is why I encourage you to do the right thing before children because actions speak louder than words"

THE SIGN OF PEACE IS NOT A "GOOD MORNING" GREETING

During my holidays an elderly lady came to me complaining because she had gone to Mass the previous Sunday and the priest did not tell the people to greet each other. "*Ooh Father I was so disappointed she said, "because I had wanted to greet my neighbour who has not greeted me for a long time, she accidentally sat by me during Mass and I thought the priest would tell us as he usually does to say hallo to one another during Mass. When he did not tell us to do so, I felt disappointed because my neighbour left without speaking a word to me."*

Well the lady might not be alone, there might be so many Christians who might look at the 'Sign of peace

we exchange at Mass as an occasion to say 'halo' to the person next to us. It is not.

The spiritual symbolism of the act is found in the Gospel of Matthew, where Jesus said, "If you are offering your gift at the altar, and there remember that your brother has something against you, leave your gift there before the altar and go; first be reconciled to your brother, and then come and offer your gift" (Matthew 5:23-24). The Sign of peace is shared just before Holy Communion. It comes at the breaking of the bread during which "the Lamb of God is implored to give us his peace." The early Christians took to heart the instructions of Jesus and incorporated the action into their celebrations of the Eucharist.

After the resurrection, Jesus greeted the disciples with the words "Peace be with you" During the Sign of Peace we invoke the peace of the risen Lord to come upon our neighbour. Christianity is about challenging our own prejudices and put others first. I find it odd that some worshippers make a big show of sociability at the Sign of peace; some pat on the shoulders, others slap, others hug and some give hot kisses in the middle of the Mass –and then completely ignore each other thereafter. None of these is liturgically correct since the Sign of Peace at Mass is not a liturgical form of "good morning," but a witness to the Christian faith that true peace is a gift of Christ himself through his death and resurrection for our salvation. 'Therefore The Peace of Christ be with you'

The Apostolic Constitutions, a document written in the 4th century, instructs that after the Prayer of the Faithful, "let the bishop salute the church, and say, The peace of God be with you all. And let the people answer, And with your spirit; and let the deacon say to all, Salute one another with the **holy** kiss." Underline the word HOLY

Next time you share the sign of peace with someone during Mass, remember that you are doing the action of Christ himself. Know what you are doing, and do it sincerely in his name. It is a solemn moment of a Christian Assembly celebrating the Mass.

THIS IS A VERY BAD EXAMPLE!

Childhood memories end up shaping our behaviour and developing our character as we grow up. Holding a baby in my arms last week, a small girl standing by asked me: "*Father how do children learn to talk? I answered her that children learn to talk because they have heard us speak.. A Language develops because someone has spoken it, the other person has listened and the listener tries to speak what he/she had heard.* The action of speaking, the action of listening and the action of the listener to

Speak what he /she has heard brings about the development of a language. If a language is wrongly spoken, it will be wrongly learned!

The other day I returned to my childhood memory as I recalled the days when I attended Sunday school. My teacher taught me how to behave in church; how to stand, how to sit, the position of my hands and so on. I can see in my mind the good example she showed us by her own composure when we were at prayer. All of us have had people who have left lasting memory because of what they did or said.

Persons who deal with children must act carefully and behave properly. I appreciate the work done by Sunday school teachers to teach the children how to pray and how to behave in church. However I whole heartedly denounce the actions of some parents who accompany their children to the Lady's chapel and instead of praying with the children some of these parents are fully engaged in conversations! While the leader of the children is helping them to say their prayers and to follow the Mass, some parents are so busy chatting, telling how their holiday went. What a despicable bad example they give to the children! What will the child think of the Mass or of prayer when instead of the parent being attentive to the homily or to the prayers of the Mass, she or he is busy talking, laughing etc. This behaviour is not right. Please note that I'm not talking about parents who do their best to pacify a child but about those who come to church thinking that the Lady's chapel is the best place to catch up on news. How will children value the Mass if they see parents who pay no attention to it?

These days people are united in condemning child abuse but they look at it only from some particular angles physical or mental; we rarely hear of them speaking about the "spiritual abuse" of children. Jesus talked about spiritual abuse of children in terms of those who scandalize them, then he added "*it would be better to be drowned in the sea with a great millstone round his neck*" Matthew 18:1-10. A warning to us not damage the spiritual dispositions of the little children.

I greatly thank the parents who bring the children to Sunday Mass and those who sit with them in the main body of the church leading them to a full appreciation of the Mass. What you do as an adult is copied by the young, that is why I encourage you to do the right thing before children because actions speak louder than words"

ARE FIREWORKS RELEVANT ANY MORE?

I'm sure the bonfire night caused you more disturbance than amusement. The day after the blasts, I remember meeting an elderly couple who were so distressed by the noise that kept them awake all night. In the past, fireworks were meant to celebrate something, an event of victory. There was of course a flavour of triumphalism. But these days, fireworks can be used by undisciplined jobs who simply take it as an occasion to disturb their neighbours. As a result, the balance between those who want to enjoy them and others who want a quiet night is zero. It seems to be getting worse every year. I remember someone from the neighbourhood who was blasting huge explosions over my house as though I was in his/her firing line. Two of these explosions were more annoying than entertaining. One went off at 2:00am and the other one at 4:00am. You can wonder whatever was going on in someone's' head over night to make such isolated blasts at odd hours!

In our city, New Year's Eve, Guy Fawkes night, Diwali and Chinese New Year, tend to be the events that evoke blasts, you can imagine how upsetting it must be for people who might be woken up, animals which must be seriously distressed, and poor birds in the trees which have to fly all night from one place to another in search of some quiet.

We thank God that many people below 60 have not seen war. For some of these people the explosive noise made by the fireworks is like music in their ears; but for some people like myself who have witnessed what explosive devices can do the sound made by fireworks brings about the sad memories. Bombs and grenades make similar sounds as fireworks, the only difference is that one sound is to entertain and the other is to cause fear and death! I'm sure that in places where these explosive devices go off people are fearful of their lives. Children who live in situations of war would be horrified to come across people who entertain themselves on bomb-like explosive fireworks.

Christians who practice the faith need to evaluate the relevance of blasting fireworks. There are those also who are ignorant of the history of these annual blasts. At this time of seeking unity and ecumenical cooperation is it still relevant to blast these devices? Secondly, for the sake of those people who live in war areas where bombs take the lives of their dear ones everyday, would it not be better and a duty of every person to be in solidarity with these people, other than entertaining themselves with explosives whose sound is similar to those devices that take the lives of their dear ones?

Love your neighbour as yourself. A Christian should wish to see his neighbour having a good night sleep.

He should also be pleased that his neighbour's dog is not scared to death because of the noise the fireworks is making. We should think of others first before we indulge ourselves. Christian charity ought to penetrate every aspect of our actions if we who profess it are to make a difference.

WHILE YOU ARE SAVED DON'T SIT BACK AND SAY IT IS COMPLETE

While conversing with someone about faith during the week, he spoke to me of his experience of how he was "ambushed" by a certain gentleman who knocked at his door with a question "*Are you Saved*"? Well there are questions that you would expect from a caller at the door, but when a question of that kind is the first greeting of a stranger, you might not have a straight answer. "*Are you saved*" is a question we often hear from well-meaning Christians who want to help others to know Jesus Christ. I'm sure you have been asked that question or even laughed at by those who claim to have been instantaneously saved. As Catholics whose faith is rooted in and centred on Jesus, we appreciate their good intentions and admire their willingness to talk about God and about Jesus.

Many Catholics may have trouble understanding what the question is really about. Catholic students and pupils might feel isolated and lost not knowing what to say. Some see it as a Pentecostal Evangelical slogan. What do people mean exactly when they talk of being already "saved"?

Christians with this slogan on their lips see salvation as a past event that took place when they made a confession of faith in Jesus at baptism. Many of them take it for granted that this act of faith guarantees them now a place in heaven no matter what they may do for the rest of their lives as long as you confess Jesus as your Lord and Saviour salvation is guaranteed. The consequence is that some of them get involved in activities which Catholics may consider offensive to God.

The Catholic teaching helps us to understand that this is a mistaken notion of salvation. Salvation in the fullest sense is an ongoing process that won't be complete until we come into the presence of God. Yes we are saved but not yet since there is a possibility of turning away from God through mortal sin.

When someone asks you whether you're "saved," perhaps the best short answer is this: "Well, I'm 'working for my salvation day by day'" (see Phil 2:12) our goal is to be counted among the saints in heaven.

Salvation is not just a past event instead it is a daily transformation of oneself into the likeness of God in our life which will reach its fullness when we come into his presence.

We're like the survivors of a shipwreck in a storm out in mid-ocean. We've been rescued from drowning and welcomed on-board the ship we call the Church. That ship is now taking us to a safe harbour — our home in heaven with God. But we're not home yet. Remember to work for your salvation in fear and trembling' Phil. 2:12.

REMEMBER ME!

It evokes a wonderful feeling when you meet someone after so many years of separation who remembers your name. When someone remembers your name, it brings back the good memories, heals wounds of separation and gives you a sense of self worth. I remember somebody who after introducing other people to my superiors, I wanted her to introduce herself as I thought she would do it in style with a grandeur as she usually did. As I hesitated to mention her name, she thought that I had forgotten it. She was very upset.

Today is a Solemnity of Christ the King. We acclaim Jesus as the King of the Universe. I'm sure that none of us will enter that Kingdom as though it were our birth right. Jesus tells us to pass through the narrow door and Paul reminds us to work for our salvation with fear and trembling. Self righteousness leads to blindness. To prove this Jesus challenged the self righteous by telling them, "*if there is one who has not sinned, let him be the first to throw a stone at her*" (Jn. 8:7) nobody did so. They were sinners too. Since we are sinners all we can ask is that Jesus remembers us when we knock at the door of his kingdom. The man dying on the cross beside him told him one thing **REMEMBER**.

Many of us **REMEMBER** to do the less important things but we forget to do the most important ones. People going to take a bus, a train or a flight panic if they notice that they are running late. They feel obliged to go early and to be on time. That is how they value travelling. I admire the punctuality of football fans when their team is going to play. Gosh how do they brave the cold in the stadium as if it is mid summer sunshine! What happens on Sunday is the opposite, long after the Mass has started that is when they come walking into the church casually. "Ooh the church is freezing", they say even when the central heating is running. That is how they value their relationship with God.

I dedicated the month of October to calling some of my parishioners who notoriously come late to church to remind them to go early to work. I was amazed that every time I called, they were already on their way or they had already reported to work. That is the way how they value their job.

How much do you value the Kingdom of Jesus Christ and who would like to be the last to be remembered. How much do you value your relationship with God? How much value has the Sunday Mass in your life? As Christians we need to learn to set our priorities first. *“Seek first the kingdom of God and of his righteousness and all these other things will be given to you”* Matt. 6:33. Yes the Kingdom of God does not admit late comers and absconders. Faith must be learned early, practiced daily and preserved at any cost. *Jesus Remember me when you come into your Kingdom* (Lk. 23:42).

“UNCLE BOB WOULD HAVE BEEN MUCH HAPPIER IF.....”

I'm sure some of us have been following the events that have taken place recently in Zimbabwe. Some people celebrated the departure of 'Uncle Bob' Robert Mugabe others looked back in his long administration of Zimbabwe and picked up the good things he did for the country. When you look at the positive side of things, you don't suffer ulcers or depression. There is no perfect government or a perfect leader, otherwise there would be no parties of opposition. One famous news presenter on Radio 4 called Mr. Mugabe the worst dictator that ever lived. I think this was either ignorance or an exaggeration by the man with the microphone since we know there are dictators on every continent either in the person or in their manifestos. No government in power wants to lose it to the opposition.

As the new president of Zimbabwe was being sworn in, Mr. Mugabe and I stayed at home watching the events from the sofa. My eyes fixed on him, a man not amused because he noticed that he had lost power and joined our group the powerless. The long years of struggle and the success he had achieved had made him to think that without him things would go wrong. He scorned whatever was being shown on the television.

As he ground his teeth, threw few punches in the air in agitation and stood up several times to break the television to pieces, Mr. Mugabe and I came to realise that the bitterness he had was of his own making: **First** of all he had stayed for so long in power. **Secondly** he thought that he was the only one who could fix the

problems of the country, **thirdly** he never prepared others to take on his work when he retire and **fourth** those who criticised his efforts were treated as enemies. Some old friends felt it was time for him to go, but he thought they were simply jealous and ambitious. You see when you take a task to yourself and you never allow other people to share in your failures and success, you end up frustrated!

Well I think some kind of apprenticeship is necessary in the church and in the parishes. It is good and healthy for someone to prepare somebody to take on the work he/she is doing because no worker is permanent, a time comes when someone else has to carry on what we are doing now. If you create within oneself the sense of team work by letting others to participate in what you are doing, you will feel glad to see them taking over what you are doing. The priest should prepare another priest, the altar server should train a younger one, a sacristan should train another one, a church cleaner should recruit a new helper. *Uncle Bob* is not a happy man because he did not prepare a successor. In the church and particularly as a parish let us joyfully work as a team and prepare others who will carry on our work when we are no longer able to do it ourselves.

THEY DO A GREAT SERVICE

On 8th November 2017, and 6th December 2017, our two parishes of St. Marys and of St. Osburgs had diocesan auditors who came to review our book keeping. The main purpose of the auditors is to make sure that transparency and accountability can be established in the way public finances (church money) has been acquired and spent. It is a very hard task to keep an eye on every penny throughout the year. The audit takes place every after five years, so you can imagine how much scrupulosity is required to keep on top of things during those years.

As I wait for the final statement from the auditors, I wish to thank our parish bookkeepers Ms. Mary Dunleavy for St. Marys and Mr John Collins for St. Osburg who spend much of their time, energy and expertise to sort out our receipts and expenditures. I must mention here Sr. Leera SSA who manages Gift Aid Section of Accounts for St. Mary's and Sr. Joan ESM who assists me with the Gift Aid accounts section for St. Osburgs. These two nuns do an excellent service, often invisible to the eyes of the parishioners and in silence. Seminary formation introduces the candidate to priesthood to some knowledge of finance administration, but with the vast demands on the person of the priest, he would not achieve much without the help of others. I'm sure if

the priest leaves no room for other helpers to come on board, he will make lots of blunder.

Parish audit makes so many observations in the area of financial management and comes up with many recommendations. I noticed that on some issues the auditors were busy writing which means that as a parish we are likely to receive a number of beatings on the hand! Nevertheless we are ready to change and to oblige for the good of our parishes.

Our parishes were commended for your generosity and constancy both of which have kept them running. I wish to ask you to consider volunteering your time and expertise to do some work for the parish. I wonder what would have happen if Mary Dunleavy, John Collins, Sr. Leera and Sr. Joan had not offered their time to manage our accounts! Your parish priest would have been caught out. This is something you would not wish to hear about your priest. So come on, roll up the sleeves do something for the parish.

‘LIKE HIM WE SHOULD LOOK BACK AND RETURN’

Luke the evangelist reports a massive healing incident which took place unexpectedly. Jesus was walking with his disciples and they stumbled into a lepers’ colony. In Israel at the time of Jesus leprosy was a dreaded disease without cure. When a person caught leprosy, he was isolated from the family and from the village. To prevent others from catching the disease the sick person was encouraged to have the good will to let others know that he was a patient not to be approached. The Law of Moses directed that:

A man infected with leprosy must wear his clothing torn and his hair disordered; he must shield his upper lip and cry ‘unclean, unclean. As long as the disease lasts, he must be unclean and therefore he must live apart, he must live outside the camp’ Lev13:45 & 46.

So when Jesus and his group were walking towards people who were suffering from leprosy and therefore deemed unclean they started shouting to let him know of the danger. Jesus healed them not in his presence but as they retreated to their colony. The reaction of one of them has something to teach us as we come to the end of the year 2017. *Finding himself cured one of them turned back praising God at the top of his voice, he threw himself at the feet of Jesus and thanked him’ Lk 17:16 & 17.*

As we come to the end of the Year, many people are thinking of making big parties, eat, drink, dance and blast fireworks. Good idea but irrelevant. Is it by your power that you completed the year and welcoming a

new one? Celebrations to mark the end of the year are good but we should not forget by whose favour, by whose power and by whose mercy we have come to such a moment. All the lepers in the colony were cured, nine went home to make party only one man realised that it was not by his power, he ran back to where he had met with God’s favour and thanked him. I hope on Christmas and New Year there will be more people in churches than in shops and pubs

This year let us be like that man. Let us conclude the year reflecting on what we have passed through and how God has guided us. Let us praise him and be thankful through prayer then we can party afterwards. This is the program at St. Mary’s for the Eve of the New Year 2018:

31st Dec 2017 at 10:00pm exposition of the Blessed Sacrament & adoration
11:05 Holy Mass of thanksgiving to God
12:00am singing Thank you for giving me the morning.

Please come and join us in this prayer. I’m sorry that it is not a party but a prayer to recognise what God has done for us be thankful. Remember that Jesus was taken for granted and never thanked. Let us surprise him just as the Samaritan leper did.

HAPPY CHRISTMAS TO ALL OUR PARISHIONERS

We the Apostles of Jesus Missionaries serving you at St. Osburgs, St. Marys and at St. Elizabeth send our greetings and we wish you a Merry Christmas and a Blessed New Year 2018. Thanks to God that most of us have done our duty to one another. God has given us the privilege to serve him in our brothers and sisters something which we should never fail to do because when we do this to others, we do it to Jesus himself (Mt. 25:40)

As a Religious Order working among you, we are thankful to God for sending to us good co-workers namely the Presentation Sisters at St. Osburg, the Sisters of St. Anne of Providence at St. Mary’s and the Evangelizing Sisters of Mary at St. Elizabeth. These co-workers have consecrated their entire life to the service of the Church such that they deserve our greatest respect. We cannot do without them!

The other day I was reflecting on the origins where the priests and religious serving us in the three parishes come from. I noticed that all of them are immigrants from other countries! What would we have done if these Religious had refused to immigrate to our direction? Like the Magi they followed a Star in search

of God and to him they dedicated their life to serve his people. It is the second Christmas for the nuns at St. Elizabeth while it is the first for our two priests at St. Osburgs; for the rest of us it is another Christmas that God has given to us in addition to those we have already celebrated with you in the past.

Let us continue to persevere in the faith together. Please remember to take your faith in God seriously, work for the salvation of your soul. When we fly on an aircraft we are normally given safety instructions. We are told that in case of loss of air pressure in the cabin masks would automatically drop to enable us to breathe. But the most important point in this is this that if you have children with you, you must put the oxygen mask on your face **first** and then put on your **child**. In other words you must think of your own safety first, then the safety of others. People on the aircraft who think of other people's safety first die without either saving themselves or those whom they love.

As Christmas and the New Year are already here with us, let us be concerned first and foremost with the salvation of my Soul. Some people have become so weak in faith others have given up religion and the church all together simply because something happened somewhere or because someone committed a blunder! I'm sure God is not interested in what others do but in what I'm doing. Let us do our best to remain loyal and faithful to Jesus Christ – God among us. We wish you all a Blessed Christmas and a Happy New Year 2018.
