

THE ASSUMPTION OF OUR LADY

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BULLETIN 35

My dear Brothers and Sisters,

I hope you have all seen the Statement given by Cardinal Nicolls on behalf of the Conference of Bishop of England and Wales. The link was sent to those with email addresses that we know. In that statement as well lamenting the forbidding of public worship and beseeching the government to reconsider, the Cardinal asks us to pray for an end of this virus, He writes:

“At this difficult moment, we ask that, as a Catholic community, we make full use of our churches as places of individual prayer and sources of solace and help. We must sustain each other in our patterns of prayer, joining a national shared moment of prayer each day at 6pm, and observing the Vigil of Christ the King (21st November) as a day of prayer for the ending of this pandemic. And we encourage you all in your practical service and support of each other and those around you in need.”

At the very least we could all stop whatever we are doing at 6.00pm each evening and say the Angelus. What we do to observe the Vigil of Christ the King, I don't know yet, but if any of you have ideas please let me know, you can email me or phone contact details as above. Do please stay safe and pray for each other,

God Bless you all

Fr. John

MASSES AND OPENING TIMES THIS WEEK

Sun	8 th	32 of the year	10:00 Mass	People of the Parish
			10:40 Adoration	(Church Open)
Tue	10 th	St. Leo the Great	19:00 Mass	Gerald & Mary Birchall (RIP)
Wed	11 th	St. Martin of Tours	10:00 Mass	William Coull (RIP)
			10:20 Adoration	(Church Open)
Thu	12 th	St. Josaphat	10:00 Mass	Guiseppe Mella (RIP)
			10:20 Adoration	(Church Open)
Fri	13 th	feria	10:00 Mass	Fr. Michael Butler (Birthday Ints)
Sun	15 th	33 of the year	10:00 Mass	People of the Parish
			10:40 Adoration	(Church Open)

GOSPEL REFLECTION

The Boxing Day tsunami of 2004 was a devastating tragedy which took thousands of lives, with whole communities destroyed. There are many stories of animals behaving strangely before the tsunami struck. Elephants, dogs and cats, even flamingos are said to have given signs of alarm and gone into hiding, or onto higher ground in order to save themselves. Scientists deny that animals have any kind of “sixth sense”, but agree that the more finely tuned senses of sight, hearing and scent in many animals may alert them to changes in the atmosphere long before humans become aware that danger threatens.

While humans don't have more than five senses either, and those are often far more blunt than animal senses, the Bible teaches that we are made in the image and likeness of God, and thus have a built-in capacity for intuiting the things of faith and God's presence in our lives. This is what the first reading describes as wisdom. It is part of our spiritual DNA, as it were, but unlike the heightened sense of animals, it isn't just an automatic reaction on the part of humans when faced with the divine. It will stay dormant unless we are open to the possibility of there being a God who wants to be in a

mutually loving relationship with us. There are people who go through life never apparently feeling a need for or interest in God. There are others who are brought up in a faith community and learn all about God, but as a distant notion, without much relevance to their daily lives. There are also those who have an active faith, but see it as confined to matters they consider religious. Human life, from this perspective, is divided into the sacred and the secular spheres. God inhabits the holy sphere and it is there that we must look for and pay attention to God. The rest is just “the world”, and not worth bothering about.

But in joining the human race as one like us in all things but sin, Jesus inhabited every aspect of human life. There is no part of our experience, good or bad, where Jesus is absent. So the main message of the parable of the foolish and wise bridesmaids is not just about being alert to the coming of Christ on judgement day, or even on the day of our own death. It's about having the senses of our soul finely tuned in order to detect God's presence in all aspects of our human living. In that sense any and every moment is the one in which the bridegroom announces his arrival to those awake and alert enough to notice and recognise him.

This also means that God's presence around us requires a response on our part. Matthew's Gospel tells us that when Christ demands an account of our lives on judgement day, we will not be asked about our liturgical correctness or our enthusiasm for religious observance. We will be asked if we fed those who were hungry, clothed those who were naked, were compassionate with those sick and in prison and welcomed the stranger. Our capacity to “touch the suffering flesh of Christ in others”, as Pope Francis has said, is the proof of our wisdom.

Christ is present to us in the sacraments, which are signs that make real what they signify. They do so by enabling us to embody in the way we live what they carry within them. We receive sacraments of healing and restoring, sacraments of loving union, of a call to relationship with God and transformative service of our world. These sacramental signs bear fruit through our own compassion, our willingness, as Pope Francis has said, to be “revolutionaries of tenderness”. This is the oil that keeps the lamp of faith alight in the world.

There is a need for prayer, for mature thinking and for worship in our lives. These are the signs of living faith. There is also a need for compassion. We cannot rely on others to do our loving for us. God's grace gives each of us the capacity to grow and live in love. The more we exercise our capacity for detecting and responding to Christ's daily invitations, the more alert we will be to the “still, small voice” that calls us. God's amazing grace makes it possible for us not only to have our lamps ready, but ourselves to become the light of the world. That's certainly worth staying awake for.

BIDDING PRAYERS

As members of Christ's body, called to be salt for the earth and light of the world, we bring before our loving Creator the needs of the Church and of God's suffering people.

- We pray for all who are pastors in the Church. That they may minister to God's people in a spirit of wisdom, humility and loving service.
- We pray for our brothers and sisters suffering throughout the world. That they may know the closeness of God's loving presence.
- We pray for all the world's leaders, and those who bear responsibility for decisions that impact on society. May they work with minds and hearts open to God's Spirit of wisdom for the common good.
- We pray for those facing death. May their lives end in a spirit of peace and reconciliation without fear or regret.
- We pray that all baptised people may experience the graces they have received in lives of love and compassion, filled with the joy of Christ.

Loving Father, you sent your Son into our world as the human face of your love. Receive the prayers of those who call on you in his holy name. Amen.