

BULLETIN B 3 – 13TH DECEMBER 2020 THE THIRD SUNDAY OF ADVENT

My dear Brothers and Sisters,

I am delighted to announce that Pope Francis has inaugurated A Year of St Joseph- 8th December 2020-8th December 2021, in honour of the 150th anniversary of the saint's proclamation as patron of the Universal Church. I say delighted because I have always had a devotion to St. Joseph. I remember as a young boy going into a church and seeing a row of seven stained glass windows, all depicting St. Joseph and each also showing one of the sacraments. For example, St. Joseph holding Jesus and in the bottom panel a priest giving Holy Communion at Mass. Much later, my first parish as an Anglican priest was at St. Joseph the Worker, in Northolt. Indeed throughout my ministry both Anglican and Catholic Joseph has been a guide and inspiration.

St. Joseph is a man of great humility, even at Christmas he takes a back seat, deferring to his wife and foster son, yet neither could have done without his strength and love. Like all fathers his job is to protect and provide for his family. He is a model of fatherhood, and those of us who are called fathers have in him a wonderful patron to inspire us. To quote the Holy Father:

“Even through Joseph’s fears, God’s will, his history and his plan were at work. Joseph, then, teaches us that faith in God includes believing that he can work even through our fears, our frailties and our weaknesses. He also teaches us that amid the tempests of life, we must never be afraid to let the Lord steer our course. At times, we want to be in complete control, yet God always sees the bigger picture.”

“Just as God told Joseph: “Son of David, do not be afraid!” (*Mt 1:20*), so he seems to tell us: “Do not be afraid!” We need to set aside all anger and disappointment, and to embrace the way things are, even when they do not turn out as we wish. Not with mere resignation but with hope and courage. In this way, we become open to a deeper meaning. Our lives can be miraculously reborn if we find the courage to live them in accordance with the Gospel. It does not matter if everything seems to have gone wrong or some things can no longer be fixed. God can make flowers spring up from stony ground.”

The Pope’s Apostolic Letter *Patris Corde* (with a father’s heart) is reproduced on our website and I commend it for your study. God bless you all and may Our Lady and St. Joseph pray for you.

Fr. John

<http://www.catholicchurchoftheassumption.co.uk/apostolic-letter-from-pope-francis.html>

PS. If you have not pre-booked your place at one of the Christmas Masses – please do so this week. Be advised that the 6.00pm Mass is now fully booked. The 9.00am Mass is almost ¾ full, but more places at 11.00am.

TIMES OF MASS AND ADORATION THIS WEEK

Sun	13	3 rd of Advent	1000 Mass 1800 Mass	People of the Parish Theresa Field
Tue	15	feria	1900 Mass	John & Elizabeth Hasledon (RIP)
Wed	16	feria	1000 Mass 1020 Adoration	Tess Hogan (RIP)
Thu	17	feria	1000 Mass 1020 Adoration	Nora Green (RIP)
Fri	18	feria	1000 Mass	Catherine Glover (RIP)
Sun	20	4 th of Advent	1000 Mass 1800 Mass	People of the Parish Connie Smith (RIP)

Confessions can be heard during Times of Adoration or by Appointment.

GOSPEL REFLECTION

In a discussion in a studio chat show, some years ago, the question raised was this: why didn't Christ come now, when there are so many more mass media technologies? Couldn't he have spread his message more efficiently now? The implied supposition was that the world would be exactly the same, if he had not come, as it is now. In fact we don't even know if technology would have developed without Christ. The history of the world would have been different if it hadn't been for the spread of the Christian faith; we cannot know what the world would be like now.

It is still a good question. Could Christ make himself better known in a TV studio, or on the Internet? Probably not. John the Baptist was waiting to meet the Messiah. When he did meet him, it was a personal meeting. One human being meets another human being, but the second human being was God the Son. So it was with all meetings between Christ and those who were to believe in him. These meetings are not recorded by cameras, but are held in the memory of the Church, and given their form in scripture. When John meets Jesus, he sees not just Jesus, but Jesus the Christ.

There is always an element of surprise in the meetings between Jesus and new disciples. Usually they are surprised by Jesus, but sometimes it is Jesus who is surprised. Jesus is amazed at the centurion's faith, but he is also amazed at the fact that only one of the ten lepers, a Samaritan, should come back to thank him. Perhaps this is why Jesus did not come in an age of mass media. We do not meet the Christ as these people did, but we can pray, and we can be amazed by his presence in our life. We understand that he is present in our own meetings with other people, particularly people we might not trust, people such as the Romans and the Samaritans in his day.

If we meet anyone in faith then Christ is there, and the meetings of Christ with John the Baptist and so many other figures in the New Testament are models for our own encounters with other people. John the Baptist at this moment thinks he knows what his encounter with the Messiah will be like. He is wrong, as the Christ asks to be baptised, showing humility rather than power. Yet there is one piece of wisdom that John has, even before he meets Christ. He knows what he is not. In fact, he does not say what he is. Only Jesus says, "I am", in the Gospel of John. In one context this is what God alone can say, but it also means that the divine identity of Christ is the root of his human identity. Through this, the divine identity becomes the foundation of our human identity. John is merely a voice, but what he says becomes what he is, when he meets Jesus, just as we too become who we truly are by proclaiming Christ.

In prayer, we can begin to find out who we truly are. Who are we in the eyes of God and of humanity? To discover the answer to this question, we need to be in God's presence. It is from God that we come, it is to God that we return. The answer to the question, "Who am I?" must always include God. We are children of God, the redeemed of God, we are people who ran from God and people who are found by God. John the Baptist, therefore, can only answer in the negative to those who ask him who he is. He is still waiting for the Lord to truly come into his life.

Prayer, as the second reading tells us, is to make us ready to meet Jesus. Even John the Baptist, despite his lifetime of prayer, was not yet ready to meet the real Christ. We have neglected him, we have not prayed constantly, we have not given thanks to God, yet Christ is among us and at the end of our lives, and at the end of human history, we will meet him. The more we pray, the more we live a life of thanksgiving, the more joyful that meeting will be.