

# Our Faith on Sunday

## GOSPEL REFLECTION



"Gates" play a large part in Scripture, both practically and metaphorically. The gates in ancient cities were strongly built and strongly guarded; they were the vulnerable areas of the city's defences. They were also places of meeting, in particular of the "elders" -

leaders and senior citizens – and therefore places of discussion and decision and of honour. In today's Gospel passage Jesus speaks of himself as "the gate" of a sheepfold. This is metaphor, of course, but as metaphor it is strongly linked to the role of Jerusalem as "the City of God" and its mystical description in the Book of Revelation, as having "twelve gates...over which were written the names of the twelve tribes of Israel", forerunners of the twelve Apostles and the

Church. This Heavenly City has no temple. "The Lord God Almighty and the Lamb were themselves the Temple." Here, the "Lamb" represents Jesus as the Saviour sacrificed for the flock and therefore its head. The Church, one with its Head, is the "gate" to the eternal city, Heaven.



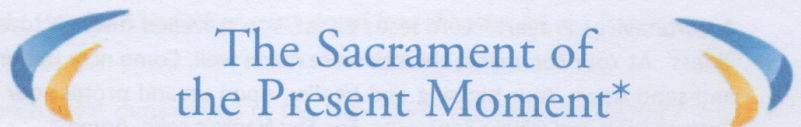
EVANGELII GAUDIUM  
(JOY OF THE GOSPEL)



### THE SOCIAL DIMENSION OF EVANGELIZATION

#### THE WHOLE IS GREATER THAN THE PART

235. The whole is greater than the part, but it is also greater than the sum of its parts. There is no need, then, to be overly obsessed with limited and particular questions. We constantly have to broaden our horizons and see the greater good which will benefit us all. But this has to be done without evasion or uprooting. We need to sink our roots deeper into the fertile soil and history of our native place, which is a gift of God.



The Sacrament of  
the Present Moment\*

### WEAVING THE TAPESTRY OF OUR LIFE

When a tapestry is being stitched the stitches are made on the reverse side of the canvas. The final pattern is only revealed when the stitching is completed and the design seen in all its beauty right side up.

Surrendering ourselves to God moment by moment is like making a stitch on the reverse side of a tapestry. One stitch at a time is one more step towards completing the full design that we shall see only in eternity.

Our tapestry is made moment by moment, stitch by stitch. There is nothing here outside the capacity of anyone.

Fidelity to duty is within the reach of all, and on it is built the most perfect holiness.

\*Jean Pierre de Caussade's Self-Abandonment to Divine Providence for everyone by Elizabeth Ruth Obbard and published by New City ISBN: 978-1-905039-11-1



## The Fourth Sunday of Easter – 3<sup>rd</sup> May 2020 – Acts of the Apostles 2 v 14,36-41

As we continue to pray for a New Pentecost in the life of the Church, our first reading today, following on from the account of St.Peter's first sermon ( 2 v 22-33 ) last Sunday – the first "papal homily" in the history of the Church – records for us the reaction, the response, to St.Peter's preaching on that first Pentecost Sunday. His hearers are "cut to the heart" ( v37 ). It reminds us of that verse from the Letter to the Hebrews with which we began this Year of God's Word, the Year of the God Who Speaks (on Monday 30<sup>th</sup> September, the Feast of St.Jerome) – " The Word of God is living and active , sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing to the division of soul and spirit" ( Hebrews 4 v 12 ).

It is clear that the Holy Spirit was powerfully at work on that first Day of Pentecost. It was the Holy Spirit, and not the Apostles, Who spoke ( with Divine authority ) through their merely human utterances ( 2 v 4 ). The Holy Spirit wields the Word of God like a sword ( Ephesians 6 v 17 ), and unless the Holy Spirit "takes up" and applies the Word of God to our hearts, that Word cannot penetrate us and transform us. If we are to be revived as a Church, it can only be a Work of the Holy Spirit (responding to our earnest prayers – and novenas), cutting us to the heart, convicting our consciences, turning our wills and warming our hearts. Otherwise, our speaking and preaching is no more than "a noisy gong or a clanging cymbal" ( 1 Corinthians 13 v 1 ).

In this Year of the God Who Speaks, we pray that the Holy Spirit will " *heal our wounds, our strength renew, On our dryness pour Thy dew, Wash the stains of guilt away. Bend the stubborn heart and will, Melt the frozen, warm the chill, Guide the steps that go astray*". This is the Work, the Ministry, the Divine Vocation of the Holy Spirit, so let us address our prayers ( and our pleas ) to Him. The Work of Christ is finished, "it is accomplished" ( St.John 19 v 30 ), now we must pray ( earnestly ) that the Holy Spirit ( in this Age - or Dispensation - of the Holy Spirit) will apply powerfully to our souls all the merits and graces purchased for us by the Blood of Jesus. That Sacrifice Jesus offered once for all upon the Cross ( Hebrews 9 v 27 & 28;10 v 12 & 14) and now, in and through the Holy Spirit, " He is able for all time to save those who draw near to God, since He always lives to make intercession for them" (Hebrews 7 v 25 ). We draw near to Jesus through the Holy Spirit, Whom the Risen, Ascended and Glorified Jesus, seated at the Right Hand of the Father, sent down from heaven on the Day of Pentecost.

In the long history of the Church, there have been great outpourings of the Holy Spirit. We read even in the Book of Acts, that after His first coming down on the Day of Pentecost, the Holy Spirit, again and again, came down in power upon the early church. There have been great times of renewal and refreshment through the centuries – the "Golden Age" of the Saints in Wales in the fifth and sixth centuries, the great flourishing of monasticism and the renewal of culture in the thirteenth century, the Spanish mystics of the sixteenth century, the revivals of religion within Protestantism in the eighteenth century, Orthodox Russia in the nineteenth century.

What will be the sign that the Holy Spirit is working more deeply in our hearts and moving us towards a New Pentecost? It will be when the words of William Cowper become our daily prayer - "*O for a closer walk with God! Return, O Holy Dove, return, Sweet Messenger of rest, I hate the sins that made Thee mourn, And drove Thee from my breast*". It will be when we cry out in anguish of spirit, "**what must I do?**" ( 2 v 37), and begin to access and appropriate all the means of grace that God has given to us ( through Word and Sacrament ) with thanksgiving and generosity. It will be when I dare not think that God's people are worshipping together, that Holy Mass is being celebrated (even on week days! ) and divine graces and blessings offered in abundance, and that I shall be absent.

**Prayer of Pope St.John XXIII, " Renew Your wonders in our day, as by a New Pentecost. Grant to Your Church that, being of one mind and steadfast in prayer with Mary, the Mother of Jesus, and following the lead of blessed Peter, she may advance the reign of our Divine Saviour, the reign of truth and justice, the reign of love and peace. Come Holy Spirit, in Your power and might to renew the face of the earth".**

## TO CONTACT THE PARISH/FATHER NEIL

The Presbytery, Hillside Lane, Neath, SA11 1TG. Phone – 01639 643323

(Please note that Father Neil's phone is experiencing intermittent problems)

Parish Website – [www.catholicchurchneath.org.uk](http://www.catholicchurchneath.org.uk)

The Mass is being live-streamed on [www.churchservices.tv](http://www.churchservices.tv) [www.mcnmedia.tv](http://www.mcnmedia.tv) [www.ewtn.com](http://www.ewtn.com)  
[www.youtube/stdavidandstpatrickhaverfordwest](http://www.youtube/stdavidandstpatrickhaverfordwest) [www.walsingham.org](http://www.walsingham.org) and from St Joseph's Cathedral on their facepage.

**The St. Joseph's Community Support Group.** If you need help with shopping, collecting prescriptions etc please contact Fr. Neil or Siobhan (07811931971) **YOU ARE NOT ALONE!** We hope to keep in contact with all parishioners over seventy by post – provided that stamps ( and envelopes ) are still available and the postal service continues to function. Otherwise, the Newsletter will continue to appear ( God willing and health permitting ) on the Parish Website each week. If you are aware of other parishioners who may not otherwise be aware of the help being offered by the St. Joseph's Support Group, please pass this information on to them. **MANY THANKS** to all our volunteers for helping those in need at this difficult and challenging time. Thank you to Siobhan for co-ordinating the Community Support Group, and to our SVP Group and Legion of Mary for keeping in contact with parishioners by phone

**Those on the Frontline** – Please remember in your prayers those in our congregation working in our local Surgeries and Hospitals, including Arnel & Bridget Zambrano, Maria Beesley, Maureen McAteer, Joan Grabczewski, Stacey Palmer, Tomy & Deepa Joseph, Mary, and all those working ( and living ) in our local nursing and residential homes. We pray for God's special blessing and protection for them and pleased to report that, at present, all are doing well despite some having tested positive for coronavirus. Please keep praying!

**A Coronavirus Prayer.** " Lord Jesus Christ, You travelled through towns and villages ' curing every disease and illness'. At Your command, the sick were made well. Come now to our aid, in the midst of this global pandemic, and send down Your blessing and healing upon us and protect our healthcare workers. Bring us through to Resurrection and a New Pentecost. For Thy Name's sake. Amen.

**Gary Derrick (RIP).** Please remember Gary in your prayers and the family at this time. Gary's Funeral Service will take place on Wednesday at Margam Crematorium. *Eternal rest grant unto him O Lord, and let perpetual light shine upon him. May he rest in peace. Amen.*

**CAFOD** ( [www.cafod.org](http://www.cafod.org) ) has a number of useful resources on offer – prayers, home-learning during school closures, virtual children's liturgy each Sunday ( live at 10-30 a.m. or a recording afterwards ), coronavirus response, opportunities to donate on line. At this particular time, CAFOD asks that we join Pope Francis' call for debt forgiveness via the online petition, speaking out against a "globalisation of indifference". The spread of the coronavirus to countries with poor health systems will be devastating. By cancelling debt payments this money can be diverted to the health systems and infrastructure that is desperately needed. " May the Risen Jesus grant hope to all the poor, to those living on the peripheries, to refugees and the homeless. May these, the most vulnerable of our brothers and sisters in every part of the world, not be abandoned" Pope Francis. (Sandra)

**Faith and Fellowship** - those attending the DOMSEC meetings ( and others ) may be interested to know that the recommended Sycamore DVD presentation of the gospel is available for viewing on Youtube and is being live-streamed from Walsingham at 10-30 a.m. and at 4-00 p.m.

**Parish Collections.** **MANY THANKS** to all who have continued to donate to the Church over recent weeks through cash gifts, cheques, parish envelopes and standing orders with the bank. **WE ARE VERY GRATEFUL.** For those who have asked – for donations and Standing Orders – the details of our (St. Joseph's) bank account are – Branch Code 54-10-19 – Account Number 01520296 – ( Diocese of Menevia Neath Parish ) Nat West, 35 Green Street, Neath, SA11 1DB.

**ENTRANCE ANTIPHON**

Cf. Ps 32:5-6

**The merciful love of the Lord fills the earth;  
by the word of the Lord the heavens were  
made, alleluia.**

**THE COLLECT**

Almighty ever-living God,  
lead us to a share in the joys of heaven,  
so that the humble flock may reach  
where the brave Shepherd has gone before.  
Who lives and reigns with you in the unity of the Holy Spirit,  
one God, for ever and ever.

**FIRST READING**

A reading from the Acts of the Apostles

2:14. 36-41

On the day of Pentecost Peter stood up with the Eleven and addressed the crowd with a loud voice: 'The whole House of Israel can be certain that God has made this Jesus whom you crucified both Lord and Christ.'

Hearing this, they were cut to the heart and said to Peter and the apostles, 'What must we do, brothers?' 'You must repent,' Peter answered 'and every one of you must be baptised in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins, and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. The promise that was made is for you and your children, and for all those who are far away, for all those whom the Lord our God will call to himself.' He spoke to them for a long time using many arguments, and he urged them, 'Save yourselves from this perverse generation.' They were convinced by his arguments, and they accepted what he said and were baptised. That very day about three thousand were added to their number.

The word of the Lord.

**Thanks be to God.****PSALM**

Ps 22:1-6.R.v1

**R) The Lord is my shepherd,  
there is nothing I shall want.**

The Lord is my shepherd;  
there is nothing I shall want.  
Fresh and green are the pastures  
where he gives me repose.  
Near restful waters he leads me,  
to revive my drooping spirit. **(R)**

He guides me along the right path;  
he is true to his name.  
If I should walk in the valley of darkness  
no evil would I fear.  
You are there with your crook and your staff;  
with these you give me comfort. **(R)**

You have prepared a banquet for me  
in the sight of my foes.  
My head you have anointed with oil;  
my cup is overflowing. **(R)**

Surely goodness and kindness  
shall follow me all the days of my life.  
In the Lord's own house shall I dwell  
for ever and ever. **(R)**

**SECOND READING**

A reading from the first letter of St Peter

2:20-25

The merit, in the sight of God, is in bearing punishment patiently when you are punished after doing your duty.

This, in fact, is what you were called to do, because Christ suffered for you and left an example for you to follow the way

he took. He had not done anything wrong, and there had been no perjury in his mouth. He was insulted and did not retaliate with insults; when he was tortured he made no threats but he put his trust in the righteous judge. He was bearing our faults in his own body on the cross, so that we might die to our faults and live for holiness; through his wounds you have been healed. You had gone astray like sheep but now you have come back to the shepherd and guardian of your souls.

The word of the Lord.

**Thanks be to God.****GOSPEL ACCLAMATION****Alleluia, alleluia!**

Jn 10:14

**I am the good shepherd, says the Lord;  
I know my own sheep and my own know me.  
Alleluia!**

**GOSPEL**

John 10:1-10

The Lord be with you.

**And with your spirit.**

A reading from the holy Gospel according to John.

**Glory to you, O Lord.**

Jesus said: 'I tell you most solemnly, anyone who does not enter the sheepfold through the gate, but gets in some other way is a thief and a brigand. The one who enters through the gate is the shepherd of the flock; the gatekeeper lets him in, the sheep hear his voice, one by one he calls his own sheep and leads them out. When he has brought out his flock, he goes ahead of them, and the sheep follow because they know his voice. They never follow a stranger but run away from him: they do not recognise the voice of strangers.'

Jesus told them this parable but they failed to understand what he meant by telling it to them.

So Jesus spoke to them again:

'I tell you most solemnly,

I am the gate of the sheepfold.

All others who have come

are thieves and brigands;

but the sheep took no notice of them.

I am the gate.

Anyone who enters through me will be safe:

he will go freely in and out

and be sure of finding pasture.

The thief comes

only to steal and kill and destroy.

I have come

so that they may have life

and have it to the full.'

The Gospel of the Lord.

**Praise to you, Lord Jesus Christ.****PRAYER OVER THE OFFERINGS**

Grant, we pray, O Lord,  
that we may always find delight in these paschal mysteries,  
so that the renewal constantly at work within us  
may be the cause of our unending joy.  
Through Christ our Lord.

**COMMUNION ANTIPHON**

**The Good Shepherd has risen,  
who laid down his life for his sheep  
and willingly died for his flock, alleluia.**

**PRAYER AFTER COMMUNION**

Look upon your flock, kind Shepherd,  
and be pleased to settle in eternal pastures  
the sheep you have redeemed  
by the Precious Blood of your Son.  
Who lives and reigns for ever and ever.