

Our Faith on Sunday

GOSPEL REFLECTION

On that day you
will understand...

It may be surprising to us to find that the longest psalm in the Book of Psalms, 118 or 9 – and it is a very long psalm – is a cry of love for and devotion to God’s commandments. “*Oh how I love your law!*” the psalmist cries. “*Your word is a lamp for my feet and a light on*

my path.” And again, “*Fury grips me when I see the wicked who abandon your Law... At midnight I rise to praise you for your upright judgements.*” The writer – or singer – is deeply aware that God’s commandments are for the well-being and flourishing of His people; they are accompanied by promises of God’s loving care for them. “*I shall live in all freedom because of your precepts*” and “*their recompense is eternal.*” How truly the psalmist spoke! Yet he

could not know how truly. It needed the Son of God to come as man to reveal to us the full wonder and glory of that “recompense”. If we keep his commandments, which are those of his Father, Our Lord says, “*You will know that I am in the Father and you in me and I in you.*”



EVANGELII GAUDIUM
(JOY OF THE GOSPEL)



THE SOCIAL DIMENSION OF EVANGELIZATION

THE WHOLE IS GREATER THAN THE PART

236. ... Pastoral and political activity alike seek to gather ... the best of each. There is a place for the poor and their culture, their aspirations and their potential. Even people who can be considered dubious on account of their errors have something to offer which must not be overlooked. It is the convergence of peoples who, within the universal order, maintain their own individuality; it is the sum total of persons within a society which pursues the common good, which truly has a place for everyone.

The Sacrament of the Present Moment*

GOD IS AT WORK

God is weaving the tapestry of our lives, or in another metaphor, working like a painter one brushstroke at a time, or a carver one chisel mark at a time.

We must let God be God for us without being overly concerned about the finished product.

Doing God’s will takes effort.

We can’t just lie back and expect God to do everything for us. We must do our part too. If God inspires us to act then we must act. If not then we must be content to accept peacefully whatever God sends. Either we weave our tapestry or let God work on us with the divine chisel or paintbrush.

What we actually do doesn’t count as much as the love with which we do it. Doing great and wonderful things isn’t the nub of the matter. If we act as God wills then we attain perfection, whether great deeds are asked of us or not.

*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



TO CONTACT THE PARISH/FATHER NEIL

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

Parish Website – www.catholicchurchneath.org.uk

The Mass is being live-streamed on www.churchservices.tv www.mcnmedia.tv www.ewtn.com www.youtube/stdavidandpatrickhaverfordwest www.walsingham.org and from St Joseph's Cathedral on their facepage, and from the Sacred Heart, Morriston.

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.

Mary Rees (RIP). Please remember Mary in your prayers and the family at this time. Mary's funeral will take place at Llantwit Cemetery this Thursday 21st May (Ascension Day). *Eternal rest grant unto her O Lord, and let perpetual light shine upon her. May she rest in peace. Amen.*

ASCENSION DAY – this Thursday (21st May). After forty glorious days of Resurrection appearances the Risen Jesus is taken up into heaven and the Apostles "together with the women and Mary the Mother of Jesus, and with the brethren" (Acts 1 v 14) devote themselves to prayer – for how long? For nine days – the first novena of prayer in the history of the Church – praying and waiting for the promised Holy Spirit, "before many days you shall be baptised in the Holy Spirit" (Acts 1 v 5). Then, on the tenth day, on the new (Sunday) Christian Sabbath fifty days after the first Christian Sabbath – the Day of Resurrection, "they were all gathered together in one place" (Acts 2 v 1) – and the Holy Spirit came down! I invite you all to join with me in the novena of prayer to the Holy Spirit – which was sent out in the last posting (and can still be accessed on the parish website) – as we pray for a New Pentecost. Remember(!) – from the Day of the Ascension, **Mary and the Apostles were in lockdown** in the Upper Room! Let us therefore follow their example, at this unprecedented time in the history of the Church, and pray that, in the hidden providence of God, He may bring great blessings and showers of heavenly grace upon us, demonstrating that we shall be changed "not by might, nor by power, but by my Spirit says the Lord" (Zech. 4 v 6). Please pray with me (and with your family) the Novena to the Holy Spirit from Ascension Day to the Day of Pentecost. "Come, Holy Spirit! And renew the face of the earth!"

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. Please also see other items of interest on Fr. Michael's website www.ourladystaroftheseamumbles.org.uk or on YouTube.

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.

The Sixth Sunday of Easter – 17th May 2020 - The Gospel of John 14 v 15 – 21

In our Gospel today, Jesus (on the night of the Last Supper) promises the Gift of the Holy Spirit to His Disciples. "I shall ask the Father and He will give you another Advocate to be with you for ever, the Spirit of Truth". Although the Holy Spirit had been at work in Creation (Gen.1 v 2), and worked powerfully in the life of Israel under the Old Covenant (of Moses) – (1Sam. 10 v 10-13; Num.11 v 17; 2Kings 2 v 9; Ps.139 v 7) –nevertheless (in a way, and a manner, that we do not understand) the Holy Spirit was sent down from heaven upon the Church (on the Day of Pentecost) in a new dispensation of the Holy Spirit which depended upon, and directly resulted from, the Death and Resurrection of Jesus, so that Jesus said to His Disciples, "it is to your advantage that I go away for if I do not go, the Comforter will not come to you, but if I go, I will send Him to you" (John 16 v 7).

Again in a way that stretches our understanding, Jesus did not enter into heaven when He died but descended into Sheol - the realm of the departed - and "preached to the spirits in prison" (1Peter3 v 1). Neither did He enter heaven on the day of His Resurrection, but for forty days remained "earth-bound" (in a way we do not understand) continuing His *earthly* Ministry of teaching the disciples and preaching the Good News (Luke 24 v 13 – 35; John 21 v 4-23).

There can be no doubt that the disciples and followers of Jesus thought that the End of the World had come upon them for, indeed, the End of the World had come upon them. Death was destroyed and overthrown! The end of death! The End had come! The Kingdom of God, to which the earlier generations of the prophets and the people of God had so earnestly looked forward, had indeed broken into the world in and through the Person and the Ministry of Jesus (Luke 10 v 23/24; 11 v 20) and yet, after forty days, Jesus was taken up from them into heaven. This Thursday (21 May) we shall celebrate the Glorious Ascension of Christ into heaven. He Who descended from heaven in the Womb of the Blessed Virgin Mary now returns to heaven, to pour out the Gift of the Holy Spirit and His gifts of grace upon the Church (Ephesians 4 v 7-10), to unite us and build us up together in Him. Jesus now makes Himself known to us precisely through the Ministry and Person of the Holy Spirit. Thus it is to our advantage (!) that Jesus has ascended into heaven (John 16 v 7) because now, through new birth and the Holy Spirit, He is able to live in the heart of every believer –"I will not leave you desolate, I will come to you" (John 14 v 18), "I in them and Thou in Me, that they may become one, even as We are one" (John 17 v 23).

In the Ascension of Jesus, the End of the World has been delayed, and we have been living in the Last Days since that Fortieth Day, and the coming down of the Holy Spirit on the Day of Pentecost. We are living in the Age (or Dispensation) of the Holy Spirit but that Dispensation is going to end with the Return of Jesus ("men of Galilee, why do you stand looking up into heaven? This Jesus, Who was taken up from you into heaven, will come in the same way as you saw Him go into heaven" Acts 1 v11). There will be "signs in sun and moon and stars, and upon the earth distress of nations in perplexity at the roaring of the sea and the waves, men fainting with fear and foreboding of what is coming on the world, for the powers of the heavens will be shaken. And then they will see the Son of Man coming in a cloud – (as you saw Him go into heaven!) – with power and great glory. Now, when you see these things **begin to take place**, look up and raise your heads, for your redemption is drawing near" (Luke 21 v 25-28). When that will be, no one knows (Mark 13 v 32) but these events are pre-ordained and "fixed" (Acts 1 v 7) by God's own authority. Perhaps we are living at the beginning of those days? Who knows? "Take heed, watch and pray, for you do not know when the time will come – lest He come suddenly and find you asleep. And what I say to you I say to all. WATCH!" (Mark 13 v 33 & 36).

We live in challenging times. In August 1914 it was widely believed that the war would be over by Christmas. How wrong they were! The casualties and the devastation were far beyond what they could have imagined. Many hope that our present crisis may be over by Christmas. We must wait and see. I think of the words of Gandalf to Frodo - (in *The Lord of the Rings*, when Frodo began to despair of the challenges and the difficulties which threatened to overwhelm them, " I wish none of this had happened") - "so do all who live to see such times, but that's not for them to decide, all we have to decide, is what to do with the time that is given to us".

Let us pray that in the challenges and difficulties which may still lie ahead of us, and relying on the gifts of grace endowed upon the Church by the Ascended and Glorified Jesus, and continuing to pray for the coming down of the Holy Spirit in a New Pentecost, we may dedicate to the Risen Jesus, and consecrate to His Sacred Heart, "**the time that is given to us**" – to Whom be glory now, and unto the Ages of the Ages! Amen.

ENTRANCE ANTIPHON

Proclaim a joyful sound and let it be heard;
proclaim to the ends of the earth:
The Lord has freed his people, alleluia.

Cf. Is 48:20

THE COLLECT

Grant, almighty God,
that we may celebrate with heartfelt devotion
these days of joy,
which we keep in honour of the risen Lord,
and that what we relive in remembrance
we may always hold to in what we do.
Through our Lord Jesus Christ, your Son,
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. 8:5-8.14-17

Philip went to a Samaritan town and proclaimed the Christ to them. The people united in welcoming the message Philip preached, either because they had heard of the miracles he worked or because they saw them for themselves. There were, for example, unclean spirits that came shrieking out of many who were possessed, and several paralytics and cripples were cured. As a result there was great rejoicing in that town.

When the apostles in Jerusalem heard that Samaria had accepted the word of God, they sent Peter and John to them, and they went down there, and prayed for the Samaritans to receive the Holy Spirit, for as yet he had not come down on any of them: they had only been baptised in the name of the Lord Jesus. Then they laid hands on them, and they received the Holy Spirit.

The word of the Lord.
Thanks be to God.

PSALM

Ps 65:1-7.16.20. R.v1

R) Cry out with joy to God all the earth.

Cry out with joy to God all the earth,
O sing to the glory of his name.
O render him glorious praise.
Say to God: 'How tremendous your deeds! **(R)**

'Before you all the earth shall bow;
shall sing to you, sing to your name!
Come and see the works of God,
tremendous his deeds among men. **(R)**

He turned the sea into dry land,
they passed through the river dry-shod.
Let our joy then be in him;
he rules for ever by his might. **(R)**

Come and hear, all who fear God.
I will tell what he did for my soul:
Blessed be God who did not reject my prayer
nor withhold his love from me. **(R)**

SECOND READING

A reading from the first letter of St Peter. 3:15-18

Reverence the Lord Christ in your hearts, and always have your answer ready for people who ask you the reason for the hope that you all have. But give it with courtesy and respect and with a clear conscience, so that those who slander you when you are living a good life in Christ may be proved wrong in the accusations that they bring. And if it is the will of God that you should suffer, it is better to suffer for doing right than doing wrong.

Why, Christ himself, innocent though he was, had died once for sins, died for the guilty, to lead us to God. In the body he was put to death, in the spirit he was raised to life.

The word of the Lord.
Thanks be to God.

GOSPEL ACCLAMATION

Alleluia, alleluia!

Jn 14:23

Jesus said: 'If anyone loves me he will keep my word,
and my Father will love him, and we shall come to him.'
Alleluia!

GOSPEL

John 14:15-21

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 to his disciples:

'If you love me you will keep my commandments.

I shall ask the Father,
and he will give you another Advocate
to be with you for ever,
that Spirit of truth
whom the world can never receive
since it neither sees nor knows him;
but you know him,
because he is with you, he is in you.

I will not leave you orphans;

I will come back to you.

In a short time the world will no longer see me;

but you will see me,

because I live and you will live.

On that day

you will understand that I am in my Father

and you in me and I in you.

Anybody who receives my commandments and keeps them
will be one who loves me;

and anybody who loves me will be loved by my Father,

and I shall love him and show myself to him.'

The Gospel of the Lord.

Praise to you, Lord Jesus Christ.

PRAYER OVER THE OFFERINGS

May our prayers rise up to you, O Lord,
together with the sacrificial offerings,
so that, purified by your graciousness,
we may be conformed to the mysteries of your mighty love.
Through Christ our Lord.

COMMUNION ANTIPHON

Jn 14:15-16

**If you love me, keep my commandments,
says the Lord,
and I will ask the Father and he will send
you another Paraclete,
to abide with you for ever, alleluia.**

PRAYER AFTER COMMUNION

Almighty ever-living God,
who restore us to eternal life in the Resurrection of Christ,
increase in us, we pray, the fruits of this paschal Sacrament
and pour into our hearts the strength of this
saving food.
Through Christ our Lord.