

THE ORATORY—dedicated to THE IMMACULATE CONCEPTION

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Registered as a Charity

Parish Weekly Newsletter

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This newsletter is available in large-print format. Ask at the Sacristy.

September 16th 2007: The Twenty-fourth Sunday of the Year

THE PRODIGAL SON?

Our Holy Father Pope Benedict XVI, in his wonderful new book "Jesus of Nazareth", explores profoundly this much-loved parable of Our Lord. He begins by pointing out that the name by which we know it, "The Prodigal Son", (Our Lord did not so name it, of course), gives a very incomplete picture of what the parable is really about. Hence two other names proposed by Scripture Scholars: "The Good Father" and "The Two Brothers". The Pope prefers "The Two Brothers", since, as he goes on to explain, the parable is about them both *equally*.

The story begins, as we remember, with the younger or "prodigal" son asking his father for the share of the inheritance that would come to him on his father's death, so much does he want to be free from his father's house. His father, although he must be deeply wounded by this request, and probably knowing what his ungrateful son will do with his newfound wealth, nevertheless lets him have his way. The young son goes into a far country and squanders everything. The Gospel says: "He spent all his substance", implying that he dissipates not just his property, *but his very self*. He reaches rock-bottom when he is made to feed pigs. "For the Jews", says the Pope, "the pig is an unclean animal, which means that the swineherd is the expression of man's most extreme alienation and destitution."

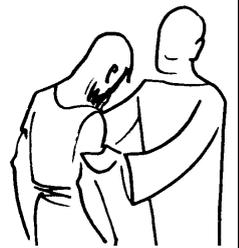


At this point his 'conversion' takes place. The Gospel says that the young son "went into himself". He sees that he has become alienated from his very self and at last, as the Pope so wonderfully puts it, "he finds in himself...the compass pointing toward the father, toward the true freedom of a "son". He resolves to go to his father, to go "home" again, confessing

the truth he has come to realise, that he has sinned against heaven and against his loving father.

His father, of course, "sees him coming from afar". In the greatness of his love he cannot wait for his son to tread every weary step but, old as he is, he runs to meet him. He does not even allow his son to finish his speech but embraces him. The Gospel says that he orders his servants to put "the first robe" upon him, that is, the original robe of a son, not a servant. For the Church Fathers, the Pope says that "this 'first robe' is a reference to the lost robe of grace with which man had originally been clothed, but which he forfeited by sin". The father also gives orders for a feast for sheer joy at his son's safe return. Again, the Pope explains that the Church Fathers read this "as an image of the feast of faith, the festive eucharist, in which the eternal festal banquet is anticipated." Yet even so, there is more to be said about this aspect of the story. For the Pope sees in this the fulfilment of God's love for His People in the Old Testament, when He constantly forgave them for their rejection of Him, and takes them back again. "Because God is God, He acts as no man could act. God has a heart, and this heart turns, so to speak, against God Himself...God's heart transforms wrath and turns punishment into forgiveness."

It is at this precise moment, of course, that the elder son dramatically makes his appearance and discovers the celebrations in progress and the reason for them. He is angry because his sense of justice has been contradicted by his father's appalling reaction to his brother's return. Yet note how his father also comes out to meet his elder son, just as he had come out to meet his younger son. As the Pope brilliantly explains, the bitterness of the elder son's reproach seems to betray "the fact that he too had secretly dreamed of a freedom without limits, that his obedience has made him inwardly bitter, and that he has no awareness of the grace of being at home, of the true freedom that he enjoys as a son". In short, "There is an unspoken envy of what others have been able to get away with". His father explains to him the great value of sonship, saying: "Son, you are always with me, and all that is mine is yours."



In the end we see how the elder son is as central to the meaning of the parable as the younger. His is the peculiar temptation of the righteous. "For them," says the Pope, "more than anything else God is Law...But God is greater, the God of love. This will not mean giving up their obedience, but rather that this obedience will flow from deeper wellsprings and will therefore be bigger, more open and purer, but above all more humble" The Pope explains the apparent incompleteness of the final scene of this parable, since we do not hear the elder son's reply: "In this parable, then, the Father through Christ is addressing us, the ones who never left home, encouraging us too to convert truly and to find joy in our faith."

Sunday September 16th: The 24th Sunday of Ordinary Time (Green)

Year 3 or C of the Lectionary at Mass

- 8.30 a.m. Low Mass
- 10.30 a.m. High Mass
- 12.00 p.m. (Families with young children)
- 12.45 p.m. Tridentine Mass (in the Cloister Chapel)
- 5.30 p.m. Sung Congregational Mass
- Vespers and Benediction at 7.30 p.m.

The TWENTY-FOURTH WEEK OF THE YEAR: Liturgical Calendar

Monday to Friday: (See overleaf for additional Devotions)

Masses at 7.30 a.m., 12.45 p.m. and 5.45 p.m. Rosary at 7.45 p.m.

Confessions are heard from 12.30 p.m. and from 5.30 p.m. until the end of Mass

Monday September 17th: Feria (Green) or Optional memoria of St Robert Bellarmine, Bishop and Doctor of the Church. (White)

- **Blessing with St Philip's relic at 8 p.m.**

St Robert Bellarmine (1542-1621) from Tuscany, was educated by the Jesuits and joined them in 1560. He greatly improved the standard of "apologetics", i.e. arguments in defence of the Faith against the Protestant Reformers. Several of his students who had trained at the English College in Rome were among the Forty Martyrs. He was also a close friend of Galileo, who, out of stubbornness nevertheless ignored St. Robert's advice to him on the true relation between Scripture and Science. As their Oratorian contemporary Cardinal Baronio (d.1607) put it: "The Scriptures tell us how to go to heaven, not how the heavens go".

Tuesday September 18th: Feria. (Green)

- **Benediction at 8 p.m. Brothers of the Little Oratory meet after Benediction**

Wednesday September 19th: Feria. (Green) or Optional memorias of St Januarius, Bishop and Martyr. (Red); or of St Theodore of Canterbury, Bishop. (Green)

St Januarius (d.304) was Bishop of Benevento in Southern Italy who was martyred for the faith under Diocletian at Naples, of which city he is the Patron Saint. A phial of his blood kept at the Cathedral miraculously liquefies every year on this, his feast day.

St Theodore (d.690) From Tarsus, St. Paul's native city, he became Archbishop of Canterbury. It was Theodore who was so impressed by St. Chad that he had him appointed first Bishop of Mercia, (the Midland kingdom of Anglo-Saxon England) based at Lichfield.

Thursday September 20th: St. Andrew Kim Taegon and Companions, Martyrs. Memoria. (Red)

St Andrew Kim Taegon & Companions are 103 Korean priests and laity who died for the faith between 1839 and 1867. St. Andrew (d. 1846) was the first native Korean priest.

Friday September 21st: Feria. St Matthew, Apostle. Feast (Red)

St Andrew the tax-collector, also known in St. Luke's Gospel as Levi, was one of the Twelve Apostles and the author of the first Gospel, probably written in Aramaic.

Saturday September 22nd: Our Lady on Saturday. (White), or Feria. (Green)

- **Mass at 8 a.m. and 11 a.m.**
- **Exposition of the Blessed Sacrament from 8.30 to 10.45 a.m.**
- **Benediction at 10.45 a.m.**
- **Confessions from 10.55 a.m. to 12 noon and from 5.30 p.m. until the end of Mass**
- **Vigil Mass of the TWENTY-FIFTH SUNDAY OF THE YEAR at 5.45 p.m. (Green)**

Sunday September 23rd: The TWENTY-FIFTH SUNDAY OF THE YEAR (Green)

Mass Times:

- **8.30 a.m. Low Mass**
- **10.30 a.m. High Mass**
- **12.00 p.m. (Families with young children)**
- **12.45 p.m. In the Tridentine Rite (In the Cloister Chapel)**
- **5.30 p.m. Low Mass**
- **Vespers and Benediction: 7.30**

Please pray for the sick: Fr. Richard Dinnis, Jacqueline Griffiths, Ann Windsor, Desmond Williams, Carole Halls, Barbara Carey, Elizabeth Snape, Edward Snape, Mary Mackay, John McCann, John Murphy, Frank McGuinness, Karen Scragg, Kerry Mooney, Margaret Corbett, Ann Stokes, Emma Wilson and Emily Nugent.

Of your charity please pray for the repose of the souls of those who have died recently: Edith Geary; & Edward Hill **and of the souls of those whose anniversaries occur about now:** Martha Drinkwater, Frank & Helen Gardiner, Philip Taylor and Philippa Reid.

The following are requested to read next weekend, September 22nd/23rd, the Twenty-fifth Sunday

Saturday 5.45 p.m.: Tracy Butler
Sunday 8.30 a.m.: Margaret Hawkins
12.00 p.m.: Eamon Grant
5.30 p.m.: Joseph Bowen

Collections:

Twenty-third Sunday, 9th September:
Offertory: £1,385

Second: Aid to the Church in Need: £1,205
Many thanks

The Second Collection today will be for Fr. Hudson's Society

Next week's Second Collection will be for the DDF

TODAY

HAGLEY ROAD: There will be a Marathon run from 9.30 to 12 noon. During this time it will be possible to cross over at Five Ways Traffic Island, so that access to the Oratory can be made via Ladywood Middleway, Monument Road and Plough & Harrow Road. Exiting Plough & Harrow Rd will be possible via Beaufort Rd.

TODAY IS HOME MISSION SUNDAY: please remember to pray for the work of bringing the lapsed back to the practice of the Faith, and those who do not know Christ to find Him in His Body, the Catholic Church.

TODAY'S SECOND COLLECTION will be for Fr Hudson's Society, the social care agency for our Archdiocese.

CANDLES FOR FORTY HOURS : Candles which will be used to adorn the High Altar during our Forty Hours Devotion, 2nd 3rd and 4th October, can be bought today in the cloisters. Please also remember the Altar Society box (by St Charles' Chapel at the front of the church) as those donations will go towards the cost of the flowers for the altar.

THIS WEEK

AFTERNOON OF ADORATION AND PRAYER AT REDNAL will take place on **Monday** commencing with Holy Mass at 2.30 p.m. followed by Exposition, and ending with Benediction at about 5 p.m..

OSCOTT LECTURES: a lecture will be given by Lord David Alton on "**Christian Citizenship: the Duty to get involved**" at St. Mary's College, Chester Road, this Tuesday at 8 p.m. Free admission.

THE NEWMAN ASSOCIATION is holding an Open Meeting on Saturday from 11.45 a.m. to 3.15 p.m. in the Lower Cloister Hall. Br. Frank McGrath will speak on "Volume 32 of Cardinal Newman's Letters and Diaries", and Br. Lewis Berry will speak on "Christian Witness and Social Action in Cardinal Newman and Pope Benedict XVI". The afternoon will conclude with Benediction at 3 p.m. in Church. Booking forms for lunch at the Plough & Harrow Hotel are available at the Church doors.

FORTHCOMING EVENTS

ORATORY PATRICIANS DISCUSSION GROUP, open to all, meets next Sunday, 23rd, at 3.15 p.m. in the Oratory House. The Subject will be "The Role of Women in the Church".
MASS & PROCESSION IN HONOUR OF OUR LADY OF WALSHINGHAM takes place on Monday 24th September at 7.30 p.m. The Walsingham Association will serve light refreshments in the Lower Cloister Hall after Mass.

The ANNUAL PILGRIMAGE TO LITTLEMORE, Oxford, to celebrate the Conversion of the Venerable John Henry Cardinal Newman, takes place on Saturday 6th October. Mass will be celebrated by Bishop Pargeter at the Church of Blessed Dominic Barberi and there will be Benediction at the Church of St Mary Immaculate in Warwick. The trip will also include a tour of the college at Littlemore and a talk. Cost £20. Booking forms are available at the doors of church.

NOTICES

APF MISSIONS: HOLDERS OF RED BOXES & SUBSCRIBERS: The APF financial year ends on 30th September so those who already hold boxes will be contacted shortly so that all boxes will be collected (and replaced!)

PIETY STALL: For those who have been waiting, "The Call to Fatima" double DVD is now back in stock. Still available is "The Kindly Light" the LIFE OF CARDINAL NEWMAN in 3 Audio CD's and the new book 'John Henry Newman In His Time' which includes a chapter by Fr Paul Chavasse. It is also available from the Friends of Cardinal Newman.

ST. PHILIP'S CHAPEL is once again available on Sundays for parents who wish to take their children out of the Church for a little while. Prayer and Picture Books are provided.