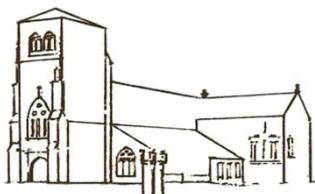


Newsletter for the parish of St. Anne & St. Bernard.



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Sixteenth Sunday of the Year

23.07.17

Revolution in kindness. Thought for this week

“Give him/her a happy day” – a prayer to counter our anger when someone crosses us

Remember the documentary about Jean Vanier and L'Arche, on at FACT next Thursday on July 27th. at 6.30 p.m.

Do please pass in or email your own suggestions, in just one sentence, to help us live out this revolution in kindness

Today's Scripture readings. This section of Matthew's Gospel proclaims that the *Kingdom of Heaven* is here and tells us what we must do to become part of it. Jesus uses parables to try and impress upon us that the reign of God embraces all creation. While it is already established it has still to reach its fulfillment. Its coming is God's work, though the co-operation of all God's people is essential. While there is a strong element of the future it is very much taking place at the present time.

Parables were a very common teaching tool at the time of Jesus. The teacher takes an image from nature, drawn from everyday life, which is used to throw light on a human situation. Its vividness and strangeness gain the listeners' attention, but demand further reflection regarding its precise meaning. The teacher does not normally explain the parable. The hearers are meant to draw out the meaning themselves.

The image of the seed is one Jesus uses a great deal. Understandably it is about growth and harvest. "Harvest" is often used in the Bible as referring to the Last Judgment. The parable of the grain and the weeds uses agricultural images familiar to Jesus' hearers, and Matthew is happy to use it to explain the lack of universal acceptance of both the preaching of Jesus and later that of the apostles. Jesus sowed the good seed but the evil one sowed another seed, a weed, at first confusing with the real seed. The parable is about the proper response towards the mixed reception given to Jesus. His advice is patience and tolerance until the time comes for God to sort things out.

The tiny mustard seed and its growth are used to illustrate the presence of God's Spirit in the preaching of Jesus. God is active throughout the ministry of Jesus, and the full growth of the seed reflects the wonderful growth which God is achieving. Matthew is witnessing this growth in his Church, asserting that the Spirit is present in the Church as in Jesus' teaching, and the believing preachers must have the faith to believe that the Spirit is present as they prepare for their preaching, and in the minds and hearts of their listeners as they receive the preached Word

There will be **Exposition of the Blessed Sacrament** on Saturday 4.15-5.15 p.m. and on Sunday 9.15-10.15 a.m.

Confessions are heard during the times of Exposition – and any other time you need

Feast of S. Anne (& St. Joachim), our patron saint, falls on Wednesday. Mass is at 12.00.

Mass this week is as follows -

Saturday	5.30 p.m.	Wally Quinn
Sunday	10.30 a.m.	Alan McDaid
Tuesday	12.00 noon	Michael Maxwell (ill)
Wednesday	12.00	Parishioners (parish feast day)
Thursday	12.00	John & Mary Beacher
Friday	12.00	Dorothy McCorish
Saturday	5.30 p.m.	Parishioners

The Annual Archdiocesan **Pilgrimage to Lourdes** is underway. It is a time for praying for the wellbeing of the Archdiocese and for the sick of our parish. We are specially united with **Adhanon** and **Kusquam** who this year are part of the Youth branch of the pilgrimage.

The next **Co-Ordination meeting** will be on 23rd. September

Prayer Group every Friday at 7.30 p.m. in the Sion Room

The **Fair Trade stall** is open every Sunday after 10.30 a.m. Mass

Tea, coffee and biscuits served after Mass every Sunday. Volunteers needed for August

Money Report. The collection last weekend was **£470.71**. Add on £624.80 from standing orders and tax returns to make a total of **£1,095.51** **Thank you**

This Sunday's **Children's Liturgy** will be the last until September 3rd.

Caring for our common world – this week's tip. Cutting down to 60 mph on the motor way for those with cars – saves us money but more importantly reduces harmful emissions.

August is normally a month when everything closes down in parishes. Some people may be away but many aren't. I'd be very happy to be available on some evenings for talks on Scripture themes or any other topics which you may suggest.

Thank you new members of our 50/50. We are now up to scratch.

Little Mick's Spot (paws for thought). . You know, I am conscious that I am growing up and no longer a pup. Nothing scares me. I am very strong, lots of muscles. No fat on me. I think TD is scared I will get into a rabbit hole and be trapped. I am daft enough to do it. My field has just started yielding blackberries – and TD loves them with ice cream. Really sweet, he said. He is glad to get the berries



before the building begins He expected me to keep him company picking them – I had too many little creatures to chase after. Blackberries are not my thing. Now a bit of chicken, that would entice me to stay. I remember last year he went to the Technology Park. There are loads of berries there. They should be ripe now. Have a go. TD's two great nephews are coming shortly. They live in Pontypridd. Finn especially will make a fuss of me. It is their Mum's birthday today. I'm still trying to get those pigeons perched on the upper windows. They ignore my barking but I can now jump up to the ground floor window. I'll get them.

What has happened to the Church in the USA? It is very puzzling. The Tablet reflects on an article in a Vatican journal and asks its own questions.

The Holy See is deeply puzzled by the United States of America. That could explain why it sanctioned the publication of a speculative piece of sociology in the international Jesuit magazine *La Civiltà Cattolica* which has raised a storm of controversy. Written by the journal's editor in chief, Antonio Spadaro SJ, and Marcelo Figueroa, a Presbyterian layman and editor of the Argentine edition of *L'Osservatore Romano*, it offers a critical interpretation of major currents on the right of American culture and religion. Representatives of such tendencies have replied – and with some justice – that they do not recognise themselves as described. Though the Vatican's Secretary of State approved the piece before publication, and though Pope Francis is known to be close to both authors, this does not amount to an endorsement. It is more likely that the Vatican felt it was not in a position to know whether this analysis was accurate or not, and that its publication might start a worthwhile debate. The article argues that right-wing American Catholics and right-wing American Protestants – nowadays called conservative evangelicals – have formed a loose alliance to bolster and promote a sort of “Christian America” that defends traditional moral standards and right-wing economic principles. Since they believe this is evidently the America God wants, those who oppose it – liberals, broadly speaking – are judged bad people. Despite the constitutional separation of Church and state in the US, the authors refer to this position as “Constantinianism”. They describe the partnership between conservative Catholics and evangelical Protestants as “the ecumenism of hate,” and label its sharp division of the world into good and evil as Manichaeism. It is particularly because of what it says about American Catholicism – and because it is reasonable to assume that Pope Francis is sympathetic to its general line – that the article has generated such heat. A more telling criticism would be that it has missed the wood for the trees. The real problem with Catholicism in the United States is the extent to which it has become deeply divided, almost to the point of schism. The group the authors call “Integralist Catholics” – followers of websites such as *Church Militant*, mentioned in the article – are a minor part of this overall scene. The real lines of division are plainly visible, among the bishops and between parishes. The two sides could be typified as “pro-life” on the one hand and “pro-social justice” on the other.

Many bishops have led the American Church into the scenario known as the “culture wars” – fighting obsessively over state and federal legislation on abortion, on homosexuality – including gay marriage – and so on. These bishops and church leaders have formed alliances with conservative Protestants, mainly evangelicals, who regard such legislation with equal horror, because it represents a departure from Scripture. Many from each side hailed Donald Trump as a deliverer. It is no coincidence that the Catholic closest to Mr Trump's way of thinking is Stephen Bannon, head of strategy at the White House, and the evangelical closest to the White House is Paula White, a Pentecostal tele-evangelist. She delivered the invocation at Mr Trump's inauguration, and chairs his Evangelical Advisory Board. Mr Bannon promotes an

almost apocalyptic view of America's place in the world, that chimes with the strand in Evangelicalism that sees America as a country with a divine mission. The real question the Vatican must face is why it allowed this division in the Catholic Church in America to fester for many years, why, in particular it appointed a slew of “safe” conservative bishops, eager culture warriors, to replace faithful bishops who saw their mission as including the promotion of social justice and equal rights. This happened largely under Pope St John Paul II, and is all the more mystifying given his strong leadership in the area of Catholic Social Teaching. Typical of this transformation of episcopal style was the appointment of Cardinal Francis George in 1997 to replace Cardinal Joseph Bernardin as Archbishop of Chicago, after he died in office. This change fitted in with the “wedge issue” strategy advanced by President George W. Bush's strategy adviser, Karl Rove, designed to draw Catholic voters away from their traditional Democratic allegiance. The *Civiltà Cattolica* authors raise concerns about the intermingling of politics and religion in US public life, but miss the big picture.

They also miss it on the Protestant side. It is not just fringe evangelicals who believe America has a divine destiny. The American journalist Brenda Maddox wrote shortly after the 9/11 terrorist attacks: “One of the strongest lessons of my Massachusetts childhood was the purposefulness of the United States. All human history seemed to have been leading to the creation of God's Own Country, with liberty and justice for all ...” This understanding of American destiny goes back to the first Puritan settlers in New England. They saw themselves as an elect, having God's blessing. American exceptionalism still exists on both sides of the political divide. And it means, essentially, “America can do whatever it likes.” Nor is it just Pentecostals like Paula White who promote a “Gospel of Prosperity” – the belief that God materially rewards those who are faithful to Him – as the *Civiltà Cattolica* article suggests. It is implicit in the ideology behind US capitalism, and explains why many Americans approve of Donald Trump precisely because he is successful in business. And the ethic of Protestant individualism – which has to an extent crept into the Catholic soul too – may explain some of the right-wing opposition to Barack Obama's healthcare reform. Among such people solidarity is not regarded as a strong American virtue, though, paradoxically, neighbourliness usually is. The Catholic hierarchy's failure to put its full weight behind healthcare reform is deeply troubling, given that those who suffer most from lack of healthcare are the poor. So the question the *Civiltà Cattolica* authors duck is this: what has seduced Catholic voters away from their traditional concern with social justice issues? Have they, from throne, pulpit and classroom, been fed less than the full Gospel? That would be a useful topic for *La Civiltà Cattolica* to turn to next.

New research indicates that the **Shroud of Turin**, the linen cloth believed to have been used to wrap the body of Jesus after his Crucifixion, shows signs of blood from a victim of torture. Very small particles attached to the linen fibres of the shroud “have recorded a scenario of great suffering, whose victim was wrapped up in the funeral cloth”, said Elvio Carlino, a researcher at the Institute of Crystallography in Bari, Italy. These “nanoparticles” had a “peculiar structure, size and distribution,” said University of Padua professor, Giulio Fanti. They show high levels of creatinine and ferritin, found in patients who suffer forceful multiple traumas like torture, he explained. “Hence, the presence of these biological nanoparticles found during our experiments points to a violent death for the man wrapped in the Turin Shroud,” he said. A US scientific journal, *Plus One*, published the findings in an article in June titled “New Biological Evidence from Atomic Resolution Studies on the Turin Shroud.”

You will remember that **Naguleswaran** was deported to Sri Lanka last November. Nagule, you will remember, lived in St. Bernard’s for a while, and helped make the entrance to our church so attractive. Things have been very difficult for him and he has suffered severe depression. Medication is very expensive. His most recent problem has been a broken arm. There is no work and he has been dependent on us, his friends, for everything. However, he has the chance of purchasing a very productive 3 acre piece of land with a little house, with water and electricity, growing tea, black pepper, with chickens, cows. This is over 200 miles away from Colombo, in his own Tamil territory. It costs a lot of money which I am trying to raise. If anyone would like to contribute to this I would be very grateful. He is a very handy man, able to mend phones and all sorts of things as well as farming. Once established in a base I am sure he will do well.

Pakistani Christian girls, mostly from poor families, are being abducted, raped and forced to marry their attackers, according to human rights lawyers who try to rescue these women from their captors. Fr Thomas Reese reported these findings in the US-based *National Catholic Reporter*, for which he writes, after visiting Lahore, Pakistan as a member of the US Commission on International Religious Freedom. The girls are forced to convert to Islam, which makes their marriages legal under Pakistani law.

IT might have been a turbulent and testing few weeks for the Pope, but he’s not one to complain, nor does he want to hear the gripes of others. Francis is so anti-grumbling that he’s stuck up a sign on his office door, on which is printed *Vietato Lamentarsi* in red letters. Translation: “**Complaining is not allowed**”. The small print of the sign, a gift to Francis from Italian psychologist Salvo Noè, reads: “To get the best out of yourself, concentrate on your potential and not on your limitations.” Being cheerful is a key element in the Pope’s desire for a Church that is ready to face the world with confidence; he stresses that people with “long faces” cannot spread the Gospel. In *Evangelii Gaudium*—the manifesto of his papacy—Francis reminds us that an “occasionally unwelcoming atmosphere” in a parish turns people away. And the first remedy is to stop complaining.

The teaching of the Church is our indispensable map; not our destination. Its precepts are not electric fences to prevent us from straying into wickedness but springboards to propel us towards happiness and flourishing. We need the rules; we need the referee with his whistle, but it’s the game that matters. The genius of Catholicism is precisely that is not seeking to find rest in one register or settlement. It lives in the flashes of movement between them. This is the exuberance and profligacy of God. Whatever sort of Catholic we are, or think we are, we need the other sort. As Charles Péguy pointed out, if we arrive at heaven alone, God may look at us and ask, “But where are the others?” (From the new editor of the *Tablet*)