

Render to Caesar
the things that are Caesar's,



Matthew 22:21

And to God
the things that are God's.

PARISH BULLETIN

St Kieran's, the Catholic Church *in*

Campbeltown and Islay

Ceann Loch Chille Chiarain

22nd October 2023

29th Sunday of Ordinary Time

St. Kieran's, Campbeltown, Kintyre

Sunday, 22nd October, 29th in Ordinary Time Holy Mass, **10.00am.**

Monday: Holy Mass, **6.00pm**

Tuesday, Wednesday and Friday: Holy Mass, **10.00am**

Devotions

Wednesday: Mid-Morning Prayer, 9.50am

Friday: Adoration, Mid-Morning Prayer, 9.30am

Scripture discussion: Friday at 10.30am

Saturday, 28st October, Vigil Mass, 6.00pm

Sunday, 29th October, 30th in Ordinary Time, Holy Mass, **10.00am**

St. Columba's Episcopal Church, Bridgend, Islay.

5th November, Holy Mass, 4.00pm

Hymns/Music

Processional (Sunday Mass only)

449 Praise my soul the king of heaven (Keys)

Offertory

28 All that I am (McLennan)

Post Communion

528 The king of love my shepherd is (Keys)

Final

147 Forth in the peace of Christ we go (Mayhew)



Psalm response

Give the Lord glory and power.

Gospel acclamation

Alleluia, alleluia!

*Your word is truth, O Lord:
consecrate us in the truth.*

Alleluia!

Communion Antiphon

*Behold, the eyes of the Lord are on those who fear him,
who hope in his merciful love,
to rescue their souls from death, to keep them alive in famine.*

Take Five

Invest just five minutes a day, and your faith will deepen and grow—a day at a time.

Monday, Oct 23, 2023

OPTIONAL MEMORIAL OF JOHN OF CAPISTRANO, PRIEST

Break new ground

What causes disputes and what's the best means for settling them? In Jesus' time it was customary for people to take their disputes to the rabbis for settlement. Jesus refuses such a case and instead gives the disputant a parable to "mull over". How would you react if Jesus refused to settle your dispute, but gave you a parable instead? What is the point of Jesus' story about a wealthy landowner and why does he call him a fool? Jesus does not fault him for his industriousness, but for his egoism and selfishness. Like the rich man and Lazarus, he had lost the capacity to be concerned for others. His life was consumed with his possessions and his only interests were in himself. His death was the final loss of his soul! In the parable of the rich fool Jesus gives a lesson on using material possessions. His lesson contains a warning to beware of all covetousness. To covet is to wish to get wrongfully what another possesses or to begrudge what God gave him. Jesus restates the commandment do not covet, but he also states that a person's life does not consist in the abundance of his possessions. In this little parable Jesus probes the heart – where is your treasure?

TODAY'S READINGS: *Romans 4:20-25; Luke 12:13-21. "Take care to guard against all greed, for though one may be rich, one's life does not consist of possessions."*

Tuesday, Oct 24, 2023

OPTIONAL MEMORIAL OF ANTHONY MARY CLARET, BISHOP

Live your vocation inspired by Mary

When Saint Anthony Mary Claret was appointed archbishop to Cuba in 1849, he initiated practical changes to help the working poor: He taught effective farming methods so families could feed themselves while making a living, began credit unions, and set up vocational training for disadvantaged youth. All of this angered wealthy landowners, who expected cheap labour to help them plunder the land for sugar as a lucrative cash crop. Remember Anthony during this month of October as we honour Mary. His prayer: "O Heart of Mary, furnace and instrument of love,

enkindle me with love of God and my neighbour."

TODAY'S READINGS: *Romans 5:12, 15b, 17-19, 20b-21; Luke 12:35-38. "Be like servants who await their master's return from a wedding, ready to open immediately when he comes and knocks."*

Wednesday, Oct 25, 2023

Stay a while

Chapter 1 of the Book of Ruth recaps the tragic decade that Naomi endured: A famine chased her from her home; her husband died; her sons died. She was alone — or so it seemed, until her daughter-in-law Ruth promises to stay with her. Little by little, with Ruth at her side, Naomi can dig out of what must have felt like a living hell. Who has been like Ruth for you? When have you been like Ruth for someone? We give thanks for the people who provide spiritual care to those struggling with grief, trauma, and other difficult situations.

TODAY'S READINGS: *Romans 6:12-18; Luke 12:39-48. "Much will be required of the person entrusted with much."*

Thursday, Oct 26, 2023

All creation divinely sings

The essence of Christianity is loyalty to Jesus Christ, a loyalty that takes precedence over every other relationship. When Jesus spoke about division He likely had in mind the prophecy of Micah: a man's enemies are the men of his *own household* (Micah 7:6). The love of God compels us to choose who will be first in our lives. To place any relationship (or anything else) above God is a form of idolatry. Jesus challenges His disciples to examine who they love first and foremost. A true disciple loves God above all else and is willing to forsake all for Jesus Christ. Jesus insists that His disciples give Him the loyalty which is only due to God, a loyalty which is higher than spouse or kin. It is possible that family and friends can become our enemies, if the thought of them keeps us from doing what we know God wants us to do. Does the love of Jesus Christ compel you to put God first in all you do (2 Corinthians 5:14)?

TODAY'S READINGS: *Romans 6:19-23; Luke 12:49-53. "Jesus said to his disciples: 'I have come to set the earth on fire, and how I wish it were already blazing!'"*

Friday, Oct 27, 2023

Breathe in the blessing

Being human is a gift, but sometimes it can feel like a curse. As humans, we are *imago dei*, made in the image and likeness of God. This includes having free will, which oddly enough, we can use to hide or deny our *imago dei*.

When we struggle, we might pause and pray with Saint Augustine: "Breathe in me, O Holy Spirit, that my thoughts may all be holy. Act in me, O Holy Spirit, that my work, too, may be holy. Draw my heart, O Holy Spirit, that I love but what is holy."

TODAY'S READINGS: *Romans 7:18-25a; Luke 12:54-59*. "For I do not do the good I want, but I do the evil I do not want."

Saturday, Oct 28, 2023

FEAST OF SIMON AND JUDE, APOSTLES

Help is at hand

The Gospels do not elaborate on the life of Saint Jude, but he must have had a reputation for a sunny disposition to later come to be known as the saint of hopeless causes and desperate situations. Which, in a sense, makes him the saint of us all. The human condition, prone to illness, aging, and death, would be fairly desperate if it were not for redemption. Saint Jude is worthy of a daily "thank you" for being there when the chips are down.

TODAY'S READINGS: *Ephesians 2:19-22; Luke 6:12-16*. "He called his disciples to himself, and from them he chose Twelve."

Prayer to Saint Jude – Patron of Desperate Situations

Most holy Apostle, St. Jude, faithful servant and friend of Jesus, the Church honours and invokes you universally, as the patron of difficult cases, of things almost despaired of, pray for me, I am so helpless and alone.

Intercede with God for me that He bring visible and speedy help where help is almost despaired of. Come to my assistance in this great need that I may receive the consolation and help of heaven in all my necessities, tribulations, and sufferings, particularly –

(make your request here)

– and that I may praise God with you and all the saints forever. I promise, O Blessed St. Jude, to be ever mindful of this great favour granted me by God and to always honour you as my special and powerful patron, and to gratefully encourage devotion to you.

Amen

Readings for the 29th Sunday

Isaiah 45:1, 4-6

Cyrus, the pagan Persian king, is shown to be a friend of God.

Psalms 96:1, 3, 4-5, 7-8, 9-10

The family of nations together gives praise and honour to God.

1 Thessalonians 1:1-5b

Paul and his team continue to spread the gospel to the world at large.

Matthew 22:15-21

Jesus didn't see Caesar as the problem: His own people were!!

Words on the Word

Crafty Jesus - and crafty Christians?

Before I read the fragment of the Gospel according to Saint Matthew reserved for this Sunday, I asked one short question: what features of Jesus come to your mind spontaneously? What adjectives could be used to describe Him?

Gracious, merciful, kind Jesus? Healing, suffering Jesus? Or the brave, scandal-rousing Jesus? I am almost certain that the adjective that today's Gospel tells us about will not be on this list . .

Gospel (Mt 22:15-21)

The crafty Jesus meets hassle in a short episode: thanks to His wise retort and ambiguous answer, He avoids the trap into which the Pharisees want to draw Him. If He had given a clear answer to the clear question whether one should pay taxes to the Roman Caesar, He would have been lost. In the case of a clear "no", He would be denounced to the Roman governor, and in the case of a clear "yes", He would lose all his friends among the people who were hostile to the occupier.

The crafty Jesus also meets us in many other parables, for example:

- When He tells the story of a worker who found treasure in his employer's field and instead of reporting the find, he quickly bought the field as his own (cf. Mt 13:44);
- Or when he sets up as an example a clever steward who is about to be dismissed by his employer and quickly buys himself a few friends with the help of forged bills of exchange so as not to find himself in trouble later (cf. Lk 16:1-9).

The cunning Jesus also meets us in some of His counsels:

- "If someone invites you to a banquet, do not take the first place (...). "Go and sit in the last seat," – He says. – And when the one who invited you comes, he will say to you, "Friend, move to a higher place." And you will be honoured in the presence of all your guests" (Luke 14:8-10);
- "So be wise as serpents and innocent as doves!" (Mt 10:16b) – by saying this sentence, the Teacher sends His disciples on missionary journeys and thus orders them to be cunning in the good sense of the word.

The cunning Jesus finally meets us in some polemics with the Pharisees and the scribes.

- When they brought an adulteress to Him and wanted to know what His opinion was about the stoning ordered by the Mosaic Law in this case, Jesus was silent for a long time, leaned down and wrote something in the sand. He answers their persistent questions concisely: "Let anyone among you who is without sin be the first to throw a stone at her" (John 8:7).
- To many other, often tricky questions – as in the case of this Sunday's Gospel – the Master of Nazareth responds with another cunning question that exposes His opponents and tells them to be silent.

These examples show that craftiness plays an important role in Jesus' life and that it could even be included as one of His fundamental attitudes.

Why then was the image of the crafty Jesus always "unexposed"? Why do we so rarely associate this feature with Him? Maybe that's because the word "crafty" has a negative connotation for us, because we always associate this concept with trickery, fraud or cunning, and therefore clever deception.

Meanwhile, the Germanic word "listig" (crafty/cunning) originally meant knowledge and skill, while in Chinese the graphic sign associated with this word also means wisdom.

This is completely consistent with the understanding we encounter in everyday life and in Jesus' parables:

- Knowing how to avoid pressure from the powerful of this world without having to use force, and how to resist them;
- The proficiency with which one can get out of existential traps or difficult situations;

- The wisdom with which one can meet the "representatives of presumption": those who do not accept a disputable reality and allow only their own opinion to exist; those who are always right and know best; to those who are blind to the colours of life and force everything into their pattern of good and evil.

The crafty Jesus saves the world from deadly certitude and opens new possibilities of action and living spaces. It frees you from the mania of recognising and organising everything. It helps us not to take ourselves so seriously and recognise God as the Creator of an uncertain and diverse world.

And we – His followers, His communities, His Church? Would it occur to us to attribute the quality of “craftiness” to ourselves? Do we make ourselves known as those who defend ourselves with imagination against "representatives of presumption"; who have ideas for getting out of the beaten track; who set an example of how to live a liberated and free life?

Perhaps, paraphrasing Nietzsche's famous saying, we should say: “His followers should seem more crafty to me so that I can believe in their Saviour.

- We Christians would have to be more cunning, because then we would be able to feel something of the joy that faith gives us; then we could feel something of the spirit of freedom that Jesus brought into the world.
- We, Christians, would have to be more crafty, because then we could open others' eyes to the vision of God's new world, which Jesus showed us and which Jesus gave us an example with his life; then the "representatives of presumption" would not have the final say in our world.
- We Christians would have to be more crafty, because then we could say to others: do not let yourself be discouraged by what seems to limit your life so clearly and unambiguously – even what is small has strength and can grow like a mustard seed. Even a small handful of mustard seeds, which fall on good soil, will bring a rich harvest.

When we, Christians, are talked about, epithets such as good-natured or backward appear most often.

I wouldn't mind if they were replaced with another term . . .

Jesus and Muhammad



"You are my God. You're supposed to take care of me. How can you leave me in these evil hands? I don't know what these people are trying to do to me, but I know that You will be with me and one day I will see and meet You".

“Carrying” the Quran

More than two billion people in the world have never heard the truth about Jesus Christ. Mustafa was one such person, whose childhood took place in the religious atmosphere of a Muslim home in southern Egypt.

At the age of five, the boy began his education under the guidance of his uncle. It involved reading and memorising the entire Quran in classical Arabic. Previously, Mustafa had heard this book read many times in the mosque or on the radio. Moreover, his parents sometimes invited people who specialized in reciting the Quran to their house, paying them handsomely for it.

Mustafa was a gifted student, even though the language he used on a daily basis was very different from the one he encountered in the Quran, and it took him seven years to learn the entire book by heart. Thanks to this, when Mustafa was 12 years old, he began to be called hafiz – "carrying" the Quran, although until he graduated from high school, as he admits, he didn't know the meanings of many words of this book. The career of a Muslim scholar was open to him, and in this area, he began to be called a little sheikh (a Muslim cleric).

When the boy was 13, something happened that significantly influenced his later spiritual life. As Mustafa admits in one of his interviews, at that time he felt a lot of anger towards Christians and Jews, which was born within him under the influence of the teaching he received at school. He heard many times, especially from religious teachers, that the source of all the problems Egyptians face are Jews and Christians. The young boy began to boil. The opportunity to repay the "wrongs" suffered at the hands of Christians came very quickly. There was a Coptic priest in the area where he lived. Every day he walked along the road from his house to the church. Mustafa decided to take advantage of this. One day he started throwing stones at him. The priest was taken to hospital with a bloody head. After leaving the hospital, he came to his house – because he knew his family – to talk to the boy. For Mustafa, this meeting was a surprise: for the first time he saw that the Christians did not seek revenge, nor did they want to treat him in the same way as he treated them. The priest came to Mustafa to say that he forgives him. "There is a fire inside you," he said to the boy, "that must first consume you before it burns others." This meeting made a huge impression on Mustafa.

Intellectual honesty

In high school, Mustafa continued to learn about the Muslim tradition by learning the hadith by heart – shorter or longer sayings or stories from the life of Muhammad and his companions. During this period, he memorized several thousand of them. It was therefore not surprising that after high school he enrolled at Al-Azhar, the university with the greatest authority in the Islamic world.

The first day of classes at the university was a great surprise for Mustafa: “The Shaikh who was giving the lecture (...) told us: 'What I tell you should be considered the truth. I do not allow any form of discussion in class. What I don't tell you is not worth knowing. Listen and obey and ask no questions.' The lecturer's arrogant attitude really affected the newly admitted student. Mustafa came forward and asked, "Shaikh, how can you learn without asking questions?" Instead of an answer, he heard an offensive retort. The student complained to the dean of the

university, who skilfully resolved the conflict. From then on, he writes, he entered on "the path of silence and subordination required at the university." The method of study was based on reading the works of Muslim scholars, from which key points were then drawn up to be memorised. No criticism or discussion was allowed.

However, soon there were further misunderstandings between Mustafa and the lecturers. One of them was Omar 'Abd Ar-Rahman, the organizer of the bombing of the World Trade Centre in 1993, who dealt with issues of Koran interpretation at Al-Azhar University. Surprisingly, it gave students the opportunity to ask questions. Mustafa stood in front of five hundred others and asked, "Why do you keep teaching us about jihad? What about other verses in the Quran that speak of peace, love and forgiveness?" In response, he heard: "Jihad and killing are the basis of Islam. (...) There is a surah in the Quran called Booty (the spoils of war), but there is no surah called Peace." This terrifying, categorical answer gave the student no peace. . .

After four years, Mustafa graduated second in the course among six thousand students. When he started working at the university, he decided that from now on he would look for answers to the questions that bothered him, noticing the increasing dissonance between what true Islam offered him and what his own conscience told him. . .

His master's thesis concerned issues related to the history and culture of Islam. While collecting materials and researching the topic of Muslim rule, Mustafa was faced with the undeniable fact "that Muslim history is a story of violence and bloodshed from the time of Muhammad to the present." Despite this, he decided not to openly question Islam, about which he had increasing doubts. His research attracted the interest of the Egyptian government, which wanted to broadcast a live coverage of his defence of the thesis on a radio station.

Success and spiritual emptiness

In his religious environment, Mustafa undoubtedly achieved great success. He began writing his doctorate and giving lectures at Al-Azhar and other universities in the Middle East. However, he decided to allow his students to have discussions, wanting to open them to critical thinking without fear of reprisals. Soon, radical students reported him to the university authorities. They felt offended that, based on generally known Muslim sources, he demonstrated the cruelty and inconsistency of Islam as a religious ideology.

Mustafa was summoned to a meeting with the University's Curriculum Implementation Committee. He told the audience about his doubts about the divine origin of the Quran. He mentioned that he began to see more human ideas than God's words. It didn't take long for a reaction: one of the committee members got up from his chair and spat in his face, saying: "You blasphemer!".

Several hours later, in the middle of the night, an Egyptian commando broke into Mustafa's house and took him for interrogation. The young Muslim was imprisoned on suspicion of "betraying Islam" and becoming a Christian. Such a "crime" in Egypt is punishable by death. The torture he experienced was, as he later wrote, "the final trigger, the nail in the coffin that separated me from Islam, a religion I had questioned for many years before my imprisonment. My questions were not based on the deeds of Muslims, but on the deeds of Muhammad and his successors and the teachings of the Quran."

In prison, they tried to cause Mustafa's "natural" death by locking him in a tank full of

hungry rats. The policemen were very polite. "This guy is a Muslim thinker," they said, "so let the rats eat his head." But when by morning not a single rat had even bitten Mustafa, he was locked in a cell with a huge wild dog. Filled with despair, Mustafa prayed: "You are my God. You're supposed to take care of me. How can you leave me in these evil hands? I don't know what these people are trying to do to me, but I know that You will be with me and one day I will see and meet You".

The next day, astonished policemen saw Mustafa praying and a dog sitting next to him. They said with horror: "This man is protected by an invisible power. But whose power is this? After all, he is an apostate, an infidel!" Definitely Allah could not be the one who protects the apostate.

Thanks to his uncle's strong connections, after two weeks in prison and many painful tortures, Mustafa was released and cleared of all charges. For him, freedom was not a simple return to normal life. His life was in ruins. For a resident of the Middle East, the lack of religion and the denial of one's heritage is a terrible blow. Islam – starting with its founder and ending with university lecturers - has completely discredited itself in the eyes of this man seeking truth. Therefore, he began to research other religions, primarily Hinduism and Buddhism, but he did not find the answer to his search in them. Mustafa was going through a period of real struggle and darkness, worse than an Egyptian prison. At the same time, his heart grew hungry to know the God who did not abandon him but allowed him to miraculously survive mental and physical torture in prison and thus showed that he cared for him. "I would sit on my bed or at my desk, praying that the true God who saved me while I was in prison, whoever he was, would reveal himself to me. Sometimes I couldn't say a word, I just sat there and cried."

Headaches

During this time, Mustafa's recurring headaches also became more severe. The nightmares of prison life were coming back to him. During the day, the pain was unbearable, and Mustafa was able to work in his father's company, but in the evenings and at night he could not sleep because of it. So, he began to visit a certain pharmacy run, as is often the case in his country, by Christians. One day, the owner, seeing his inner conflict, started talking to him about faith. Knowing him as a religious Muslim, she was astonished to hear his story about his search for God. She understood that he had discovered a void in his previous religion that he wanted to fill. So, she decided to give him her Bible. "Before you take your pills this evening, try reading a passage and see how you feel," she said to her patient.

It was a breakthrough evening in Mustafa's life. This is how he remembers that day: 'It was a summer night, around 10 p.m. I had an intense headache, but I didn't take any pills. I placed them on the desk and looked at the Bible. I didn't know where to read, so I just opened it at random. It was the pharmacist's personal Bible; with notes she had made in the margins of the pages. I opened it to the fifth chapter of the Gospel according to St. Matthew, Sermon on the Mount. I started reading. I saw an image: Jesus teaching the crowds gathered around Him on the mountain. (. . .) My brain started working like a computer. I saw an image of Jesus in a book on the desk across from me. I saw an image of Muhammad in my mind. I compared these two characters all the time. I knew the Quran and the life story of Muhammad so well that I did not have to make any effort to recall these things from my memory. They were just there.'

Up to this point, for Mustafa, Jesus was only one of the prophets described by the Koran who never interested him. Reading the Holy Scriptures that evening, he understood that Jesus

Christ was the true God whom he had been looking for all his life. The most shocking discovery for him were Jesus' words: "Love your enemies." Until now, Mustafa was convinced that enemies should be killed. Jesus touched his heart with the power of His forgiving love that nothing could stop. Reading the Gospel, Mustafa discovered the powerful love of the Son of God towards sinners whom Jesus did not order to be stoned, but whom He welcomed, accepting their tears of conversion.

New life and new identity

Mustafa was so absorbed in reading the Gospel that he read it through to dawn. He became so fascinated by the person of Christ that he entrusted his entire life to Him, knowing that he might pay a high price for it. However, he knew that Jesus would never disappoint Him – he had already seen this in prison, and this confidence grew in Him as he read the Holy Scriptures. He read the words of Psalm 91 as God's response to him: "For he will deliver you from the snare of the fowler and from the deadly pestilence; he will cover you with his pinions, and under his wings you will find refuge; his faithfulness is a shield and buckler. You will not fear the terror of the night, nor the arrow that flies by day, nor the pestilence that stalks in darkness, nor the destruction that wastes at noonday". A thousand may fall at your side, ten thousand at your right hand; but it will not come near you."

Over the next year, Mustafa tried to join one of the Christian communities in his region. However, he was bitterly disappointed when subsequent clergy refused him, out of fear for his life and that of his community. As a former Al-Azhar lecturer, he was a recognisable figure in many circles. Finally, someone trusted him and allowed him to attend their church. Taking care of his own safety and that of the Christian community that took him in, Mustafa had to take extreme precautions. While traveling, he changed means of transport. He also avoided places where someone might recognise him. However, it is impossible to "hide the light" (see Mt 5:15). . .

He recalls: "It was only a matter of time before my family found out about everything. One day, completely unplanned, I revealed everything to my father. He immediately pulled his revolver from its holster and fired five bullets at me." However, none of the bullets hit Mustafa. God protected him once again.

Mustafa had to leave his country in a quickly organized escape, traveling across Africa from Egypt to South Africa in three months. But he was also pursued there by paid killers. Mustafa once again experienced the extraordinary protection of Jesus Christ, who led him to salvation, according to His own promise: "Whoever believes and is baptised will be saved" (Mark 16:16). Only now, in one of the churches in Johannesburg, could he be baptised. In honour of Saint Mark the Evangelist he took the name "Mark", and because of a friend who helped him in South Africa – the surname "Gabriel". Thus, immersed in the death of Christ, he was born into new life by His Resurrection. Becoming a new man, he took on a new identity to serve only Jesus with his entire life.

The harvest is great

As he came to know Jesus Christ, Mustafa continued to compare Him with the well-known Prophet Muhammad, until ultimately the loving and forgiving Son of God won unequivocal victory in the life of the Muslim academic. It was He who conquered death and said: "Do not fear those who kill the body but cannot kill the soul" (Mt 10:28). That's why Dr. Mark A. Gabriel chose the difficult path of faith in Christ. Aware of the fact that he is subject to a fatwa

(death sentence for abandoning Islam), he boldly shares his testimony of faith to attract as many of his Muslim brothers and sisters to the Saviour as possible.

Mark confesses: “For 34 years I lived in fear of Allah's punishment. By giving my life to Jesus, I was redeemed by His Blood”. Meeting Jesus for the first time in his life, he felt great relief because he was freed from the burden of guilt that weighed on him despite his adherence to the principles of Islam. While researching Muslim tradition, Mark discovered that Muhammad himself was unsure whether he would be saved and accepted into paradise. So, if the prophet of Islam did not have this certainty, what should an ordinary Muslim say?

Mark A. Gabriel addresses all people: “Brother and Sister! (...) Only Jesus Christ can give you peace and forgive your sins. Consider the poor conditions Muslims live in all over the world: hatred, bloodshed, killings, conflict and terrorism. The only way out of this chaos is to accept Jesus Christ as your Lord and Saviour”.

The greatest misfortune of humanity is sin, from which only the sinless Son of God could redeem us. Jesus Christ is the solution to every problem: individuals and all people. Let us trust Him, be reconciled with Him and proclaim to others salvation through His redemptive death and resurrection. We have a great responsibility for the salvation of all those who have not had the opportunity to hear the Gospel. Yet we don't have to pay such a high price as Mark A. Gabriel.

Part One of the Rosary



Pray the rosary

Sometimes we have to, like Mary giving birth, surrender to the Creator who wants to give birth to new life in us; surrender to it, like Joseph, helpless in this situation, to experience the great power of God's action.

The Joyful mysteries

The Annunciation

The angel came to her and said, "Hail, full of grace, the Lord is with you!" But she was greatly troubled at the saying, and considered in her mind what sort of greeting this might be.

This is not a very fortunate translation. The expression "troubled" in the original translation can be explained better – as "terror". The Greek source says that Mary was "shocked." And it was not the sight of the Angel that had such an effect on her, but what he had to tell her – the meaning and consequences of the message he carried for her from God.

We have become accustomed to the image of Mary of Nazareth as a silent and humble Servant, accepting everything that comes to her. However, God chose a woman of flesh and blood – of will and emotions – to be the Mother of His Son. She, like us, also understood reality with human senses and had to go from the human to God's perspective.

The Visitation

The Almighty has done great things for me. Holy is His name.

Why now? Why didn't Mary start praising God the moment the door closed behind Gabriel? Perhaps she needed a sign, a confirmation that everything that had happened – the meeting with the Archangel, the incredible promise of the conception of the Son of God – were true; that it would happen. And God respected Mary's feminine need. "Behold, your relative Elizabeth has conceived a son in her old age, and she who was considered barren is now in her sixth month." With what haste Mary ran to Elizabeth! How she was in a hurry to see with her own eyes that the promise given to her was not an illusion. And God, in His goodness, gave Mary one more proof that He chose her to be the mother of His Son. It is Elizabeth herself who recognises her as a great Mystery, exclaiming, "And why is it that the Mother of my Lord comes to me?!" How good is God who respects our human condition, our doubts and our needs, always giving us more than we ask and expect.

The Nativity

And while they were there, the time came for her to be delivered. And she gave birth to her first-born[a] son and wrapped him in swaddling cloths, and laid him in a manger, because there was no place for them in the inn.

What did Mary feel while giving birth to the Son of God in a cold and stinking cave? Is this what the fulfilment of God's promise was supposed to look like? Was the King of the Universe born in such conditions? What might Joseph have felt? God chose him to be the guardian of His Son and His Mother, and yet he failed, was late, did not secure their fate as needed. . . God has His own ways leading to the implementation of His plans and His promises, which we often do not understand. We get lost, frustrated, and blamed. Meanwhile, sometimes we have to, like Mary giving birth, surrender to the Creator who wants to give birth to new life in us; surrender to it, like Joseph, helpless in this situation, to experience the great power of God's action.

The Presentation

Then when the days of their purification according to the Law of Moses were completed, they brought Him to Jerusalem to present Him to the Lord.

From the beginning, Jesus belonged to His Father in Heaven – not to His earthly parents. The act of presenting the Son in the Jerusalem temple, although consistent with the Mosaic Law, had another dimension. Mary, who has been experiencing the joy of motherhood for forty days, comes to the Most High and presents her Son to Him, giving Him His possession. Caressing the sweet Fruit of her "yes to God" in her arms, she can now consciously renew her and her family's dependence on the Father's will. Our children are not our property either. They belong to God, they have been "loaned" to us, so that we can experience the miracle of love and happiness in them, so that we can also surround them with love and lead them to the greatest Love. This is what the words we say during Baptism mean, when we declare that we will raise our children in the Catholic way. This means that we will show them how to enter into a living relationship with the Father. Are we aware of this?

The Finding in the Temple

Only after three days did they find Him in the temple, sitting among the teachers, listening to them and asking questions. And all who heard Him were astonished at His intelligence and His answers.

How great the fear must have been in Mary's heart when she realized that Jesus was not with them on their way back from Jerusalem. Did she start to panic? Did Joseph have to use all his manly sobriety and self-control to calm her down? The Mother gives vent to her pain when, finding her Son in the temple, she reproaches Him. And Jesus? How great must have been His longing for God, for His home, that He lost track of time; He forgot Himself in His search for the things that belong to the Father. He probably then wanted to joyfully share with Mary and Joseph what He had discovered, learned and found out while sitting among the scribes. And that's probably why He reacted to His Mother's reproof like a typical teenager who hit a wall of misunderstanding from His parents. He probably didn't want to upset Mary, but to draw her attention to the fact that there are things in life that are more important than others, but the relationship with the Father is the most important thing.

Prayer



Please pray for those who are sick, in need or have asked for our prayers: Connie Graham, Lilian Cox, Sarah Carmichael, Ailsa Stewart, Meg Douglas (Mull), Doleen Durnin, and Russell Carroll.

Please remember in your prayers all whose anniversaries occur at this time

News and Events

Tea and coffee in the hall after Sunday Mass. Our visitors are most welcome, please come along.

The clocks change next Saturday/Sunday. They go back.



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www.stkieranscampbeltown.org



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