



PARISH BULLETIN

St Kieran's, the Catholic Church *in* *Campbeltown and Islay* *Ceann Loch Chille Chiarain*

3rd March 2024

3rd Sunday of Lent

St. Kieran's, Campbeltown, Kintyre

Sunday, 3rd March, *Third Sunday of Lent*, Holy Mass, 10.00am

Monday: holy Mass, 6.00pm

Tuesday, Wednesday and Friday: Holy Mass, 10.00am

Devotions:

Sunday: The Bitter Lamentations, 9.45am

Wednesday: Mid-morning Prayer, 9.50am

Friday: Adoration of the Blessed Sacrament, Mid-morning Prayer, 9.30am

Faith Course: Friday: 10.30am

Saturday, 9th March, *Vigil Mass*, 6.00pm

Sunday, 10th March, *Fourth Sunday of Lent*, Holy Mass, 10.00am

St. Columba's Episcopal Church, Bridgend, Islay

Sunday 3rd March, Holy Mass, 4pm

Sunday 17th March, Holy Mass, 4pm



Hymns/Music

Processional (Sunday only)

716 Jesus Christ is waiting (McLennan) sheet

Offertory

28 All that I am (McLennan) 20

Communion

Досто́йно е́сть (Truly Worthy)

Тебе по́ем (We sing to You)

Post Communion

226 I am the bread of life (McLennan) 209

Recessional

sheet A new commandment (Mayhew[4]) 29

Psalm response

You, Lord, have the message of eternal life.

Gospel acclamation

*Praise to you, O Christ, king of eternal glory!
God loved the world so much that he gave his only Son:
everyone who believes in him has eternal life.
Praise to you, O Christ, king of eternal glory!*

Communion Antiphon

*The sparrow finds a home,
and the swallow a nest for her young:
by your altars, O Lord of hosts, my King and my God.
Blessed are they who dwell in your house,
for ever singing your praise.*

Take Five

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

MONDAY: LENTEN WEEKDAY

4 MARCH 2024

A return to basics

Naaman, a military leader who suffered leprosy, was angry with the prophet Elisha for suggesting something so ordinary as a bath in a river could heal him. He was looking for a more exotic or dramatic cure. But when his attendants prevailed upon him, he followed instructions and found himself healed. We, too, are tempted to hold out for a dramatic moment of spiritual intervention that will suddenly “fix” what needs fixing in our lives. Instead, turn to traditional paths and practices that have worked for generations—prayer, worship, fellowship, spiritual reading, and reflection. Give the tried-and-true a try!

Today’s readings: *2 Kings 5:1-15a; Luke 4:24-30. “I thought that he would surely come out and stand there to invoke the Lord his God.”*

TUESDAY: LENTEN WEEKDAY

5 MARCH 2024

Give what you want

Jesus' entire ministry was grounded in love and forgiveness, yet often enough those who call themselves followers of Jesus fail to offer love and forgiveness to others. Instead, they nurture their grudges, hurts, and resentments, keeping them alive and in the present by retelling themselves the same old stories where it's everybody else's fault. Lent is a very good time to practice abstaining from this habit. When you find yourself wanting to judge and blame others, turn your gaze inward. How often have you refused to give what you so dearly wish to receive?

Today’s readings: *Daniel 3:25, 34-43;*

Matthew 18:21-35. “Moved with compassion the master . . . let him go and forgave him the loan.”

WEDNESDAY: LENTEN WEEKDAY

6 MARCH 2024

Rules of the road

Rules exist for a reason. Yielding the right-of-way in traffic is a good rule to keep cars from colliding in the middle of an intersection. The rule—not always observed—of not interrupting another person allows for conversation and encourages people to listen to each other. Following rules also expresses your connection with the values behind the rules. The “rules” of religion, the signs that a person follows a particular faith, show to others they are in communion with a particular God and the values God represents. Let your actions broadcast your faith to others.

Today’s readings: *Deuteronomy 4:1, 5-9; Matthew 5:17-19. “This will show your wisdom and discernment to the peoples, who . . . will say, ‘Surely this great nation is a wise and discerning people!’ ”*

THURSDAY: LENTEN WEEKDAY

7 MARCH 2024

How to be more prophet-able

Many think of biblical prophets as people whom God gave the mysterious power to see into the future. Prophets, however, were not crystal-ball-gazers who “predicted” what was to come. Most of the time they talked about the present — their present — and sometimes about the past as well. They focused on what the people of God were doing — or not doing — in their relationship with God. In bringing God’s word to a situation, they called people back to God and

showed them that God was still a guiding force in their lives. God summoned a long line of prophets to serve the Israelites, and there have been Christian prophets, too — just read 1 Corinthians 12:28 or Ephesians 4:11. A few prophets might even be around today.

Today's readings: *Jeremiah 7:23-28; Luke 11:14-23.* "I have sent you untiringly all my servants the prophets."

FRIDAY: LENTEN WEEKDAY

8 MARCH 2024

X-treme love

X-treme sports are entering the mainstream sports world—making them less extreme, apparently. There have even been X-Games that feature sports like freestyle motocross, bicycle motocross, skateboarding, snowboarding, and snowmobiling that's way different than what you used to do up at Uncle Ernie's farm on weekends. One thing they have in common is pushing the limits. In the game of Christian love, Jesus calls us to total love of God and neighbour. It's something you have to put your whole self into on a regular basis. So strap on your spiritual monoski and hit the slopes.

Today's readings: *Hosea 14:2-10; Mark 12:28-34.* "You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your mind, and with all your strength."

SATURDAY: LENTEN WEEKDAY

9 MARCH 2024

Go ahead and ask

Overheard in church: "I am not going to the reconciliation service this week because I haven't sinned since the last one four months ago." While most of us do not commit obviously grievous sins, we still "miss the mark" regularly in subtle ways, for example, by being angry or self-righteous. Although it is not easy or comfortable to admit that we are not perfect, our spiritual well-being depends upon it. May our prayer today be that we are made aware of the times and ways we have sinned so that we can ask for God's mercy. For although God doesn't wait to be asked before forgiving us, we cannot receive that forgiveness if we haven't acknowledged our need for it.

Today's readings: *Hosea 6:1-6; Luke 18:9-14.* "The tax collector prayed, 'O God, be merciful to me a sinner.'"

Readings for the 3rd Sunday of Lent

Exodus 20:1-17

The honour due to God and the divine sabbath are the lion's share of the Law.

Psalms 19:8, 9, 10, 11

God's law is both perfect and perfectly clear.

1 Corinthians 1:22-25

The truth of Christianity is not in evidence or reason; it requires faith.

John 2:13-25

Jesus replaces the authority of the Temple with himself.

Words on the Word

A Temple or a Marketplace

Looking at the history of Christianity, I must say that Christians undoubtedly lacked heart. When I look at this whole history of wars, including religious wars, or any page of the history of the Church I open, I must confess: we lacked heart. If all kinds of political and social opinions are coming at us now, it is because we did not want to acknowledge the human misery, the workers' misery of those times, the current misery of the Third World. Why have so many Christians failed the love test throughout history? Why aren't we passing the exam today? Why are Christians' hearts so often very hard? (Cardinal L.J. Suenens, July 1981, Congress of theologians in Toulouse).

The Gospel of Jesus Christ is intended for me. Especially during Lent, it is intended to open my eyes to God's love and my ingratitude. We easily get used to evil.

In the times of Jesus, trade became common in temples, just like many shrines today. Since Roman coins with the emperor's image were not allowed on the temple grounds in Jerusalem, all buyers had to exchange money. The income from this activity went to the high priestly family. Everyone got used to that.

This is also the nature of evil and sin in humanity – when we get used to it, it seems normal. The Prophet Ezekiel calls for a kind of spiritual heart transplant. *I will take the stony heart out of their flesh and give them a heart of flesh* (Ez 11:19). However, this is done by God himself if we see our mistake and desire change.

To be a marketplace or to be a temple of God – these are the alternatives. Each of these symbols expresses a different understanding of humanity. The symbol of the marketplace brings to mind uproar and futile attempts to curb the chaos. The marketplace is crowded, everything is uneasy. The marketplace symbolises people who are tense inside, their soul is in disorder. We are often ruled by our noisy thoughts, our attention is often occupied by the question of how we are treated in this public marketplace, what is our "exchange value"? Human life has turned into a marketplace with noisy traders, where the most important things are oxen, lambs and pigeons. We are dealing here with symbols. There are oxen inside us – a symbol of vitality and sensuality that dominates us. There are lambs inside us – a symbol of our enslavement. There are pigeons inside us – a symbol of racing thoughts that do not give us a moment of peace.

We will become the temple of God again if we allow the Lord Jesus to drive out from us everything that pollutes and enslaves us, i.e., a constant feeling of guilt, animal drives, lust for possessions, and the tendency to compare ourselves with others. We need to grow in our sense that we are God's dwelling place, His temple. Christ calls us today to look back and ask ourselves how accustomed we have become to evil. The one present primarily in ourselves. He can free us and purify us if we so desire.

* * *

*Yesterday was Good Friday again in my life
Dry and black. Suddenly I met him
And as always happens, I didn't recognise him
Even though he had the marks of bloody scars on his hands
He didn't need to talk
Where I pigged out, drooled, choked
Wake up, he whispered, I suddenly woke up
If you want, (Bryll) – tomorrow will be the Resurrection
(E. Bryll)*

The Martyrs of our Times (part 2)

By John Gaspars

A woman who was found with a Bible was publicly shot. An elderly priest was kidnapped and never heard from again. Three buses full of students and teachers from a Christian school hit a land mine. . . These are just a few of the huge number of examples of extremely brutal and unrestrained contemporary attacks on Christians.



A shocking picture of modern persecution

"The current situation of persecuted Christians and other minorities is catastrophic and disturbing," says Markus Rode, director of the German agency of the international organization 'Open Doors'.

"Freedom of religion is massively suppressed. If millions of affected people do not have the opportunity to draw attention to their situation, then politicians and we as Christians must do much more than we have done so far. Persecuted Christians ask for our prayers so that they can be strengthened in their faith.

The top ten countries where Christians are most persecuted include: North Korea, Afghanistan, Somalia, Libya, Pakistan, Sudan, Eritrea, Yemen, Iran and India [...].

The organization mentions China as a shameful example of the deterioration of living conditions for Christians. This country [...] is a perfect example of the increasing restriction of religious freedom by an increasingly repressive regime. Last year, more Christians were imprisoned there than in any other country.

'Open Doors' also points to the growing persecution by Islamic extremism, especially in Asia and Sub-Saharan Africa, e.g., in Libya and Egypt.

In Nigeria, 3,731 Christians were murdered for their faith, more than in all other countries combined" (also see <https://christianpersecution.com>).

In Nigeria itself, many villages were burned, a number of churches were destroyed, and a lot of damage was done. High-profile murders that occurred during Christmas 2015 are remembered.

Christians living in India are in an equally difficult situation. Being a disciple of Christ in this country means exposing oneself to daily persecution both at home, on the street and in the workplace. Christians are also murdered there.

In February 2019, Anant Rama Gand was murdered in the state of Orissa, eastern India. He was 40 years old and the father of five children.

"He converted to Christianity a year ago. He received the sacrament of baptism two months ago. His conversion caused great outrage in the village, inhabited mostly by radical Hindus.

Both he and his family were discriminated against, they were not allowed to take water from the common well, and they were thrown out of the village. On the day of the murder, Anant was alone at home with his six-year-old son, from where his executioners kidnapped him. His

body, with his head cut off, was found on the road outside the village” (Markus Rode).

Iraqi Christians pray in their homes, not knowing whether their children will return safely from school. Patriarch of the Chaldean Church, Cardinal Louis Raphaël I Sako gave the example of a family from Baghdad from which a little girl was kidnapped. After some time, the parents received a phone call from the kidnapers, who confirmed that they were holding their daughter. The mother cursed them by all that is sacred and asked them to give her the child back. She promised to collect any amount needed for the ransom.

However, she heard on the phone: "We don't want your money. We want your heart to break." After a few days, a raped, bloody and profaned body of a child was found in the street (W. Cislo, *Immigrants at the gates. Refugee crisis and Christian martyrdom of the 21st century*).

“One of the bishops from Homs [Syria] said that a bomb was planted under his episcopal throne. The bombers said it would have a better effect if he was blown up this way. Islamists deliberately shot at icons, smashed holy figures, and destroyed churches, sometimes recently renovated. All this just to humiliate Christians” (ibid.).

There are also numerous murders of clergy. Priests or fathers who have served in this land for decades are murdered or kidnapped.

“However, it should be noted that in Syria most of the clergy and nuns remained with the faithful. It is also interesting that when the priest or sisters stay in place, the faithful also stay” (ibid.).

Fear, a constant sense of threat and uncertainty of tomorrow are everyday life for Christian inhabitants of parts of Africa and the Middle East.

“Another problem is the kidnapping of young Coptic women and forcibly marrying them off to Muslims. To dissuade them from running away, humiliating photos are often taken of them and then threatened that if any of them want to return home, these photos will be made public.

These are human tragedies. These women are enslaved, they are imprisoned, they are afraid to return home, and even if they did, their family may not accept them because they think that such a girl is already disgraced. So, she must live with the one she was married to – without her consent, without any questions” (ibid.).

Very often, Christian women are treated as spoils of war. Islamic terrorists thus allow rape, sexual slavery and trafficking in women.

A few years ago, terrorists from the notorious Islamic militant group Boko Haram kidnapped 350 Nigerian girls to forcibly marry them off to Muslims. This dangerous organization treats women as "commodities" that can be sold at the market. The practice of women's slave markets was until recently used by the Islamic State in Iraq and Syria. Prices for the "merchandise" ranged from \$150 to \$500.

"Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do" (Luke 23:34)

In this vast amount of cruelty towards Christians, however, there are numerous examples of the heroic faith of Christ's followers and their loving attitude not only towards their suffering brethren, but also towards their persecutors.

On February 15, 2015, on the beach in Tripoli (Libya), jihadists from the Islamic State brutally beheaded 21 Copts, i.e., Egyptian Christians. Their deaths became famous because their executioners recorded the execution.

The film, which circulated around the world, became a great testimony to the faith of the martyrs. Brought to their knees by their executioners, the martyrs knelt down and the murderers cut their throats and cut off their heads. However, there was an extraordinary peace in the faces and behaviour of the martyrs. In the video they can be heard loudly shouting: "My Lord, Jesus Christ!"

At the moment of death, the martyrs asked God to strengthen them in their faith and to forgive their murderers! The murdered Copts were young men – husbands and fathers. To support their families despite the danger, they went to work in Libya. They had a lot to lose. **They could have denied their faith, and they would have lived. But they chose Christ!**

A few years ago, the Christian inhabitants of the capital of Jordan – Amman, also gave an extraordinary testimony of unwavering faith. They were wealthy, had good jobs, expensive houses and cars. When the Islamists gave them an ultimatum: "Either convert to Islam or you will be exiled" – then, **without hesitation, they decided to leave everything and leave the city, just not to deny their faith in Christ!**

Brotherly love even to martyrdom

On April 30, 1997, 36 Catholic seminarians and eight of their guardians were killed in a minor seminary in the city of Buta (Burundi). The young men were between 15 and 20 years old. Their killers were rebels from the Hutu tribe, belonging to the so-called National Council for the Defence of Democracy.

The rebels broke into the seminary building and dragged the boys straight from their beds. Armed with knives, rifles, pistols and grenades, the attackers ordered them to divide into two groups – Tutsis and Hutus. All Tutsi boys were to be killed. However, the seminarians refused to divide. As a result, everyone died – both Tutsis and Hutus. . . Created on the basis of Holy Baptism, brotherhood turned out to be more important than ethnic origin.

Just before this massacre, seminarians participated in an Easter retreat. The rector of the local sanctuary – Fr. Nicolas Niyun-geko wrote this about his pupils: "At the end of the retreat, the students were animated by a new kind of inspiration that seemed to prepare these innocents for holy death. They were very joyful and kept repeating: 'God is good and we have met Him.' They spoke of heaven as if they had just returned, and of the priesthood as if they had just been ordained. [...]"

It was obvious that they had had a very strong experience that changed their hearts, although they did not fully realise what it was. From that day on, they prayed and sang in the church and danced on the way to it. They were happy to discover the treasure of heaven. The murderers who surprised them in their beds ordered the young men to divide into two groups [...]. One of the groups was to be killed, but **the seminarians preferred to die all together.**

When the evil plan failed, the killers attacked the boys to murder them with rifles and grenades. **At this point, some of the seminarians could be heard singing psalms of praise to God, while others were saying: 'Forgive them, Lord, for they know not what they do' [cf. Luke 23:34]. Still others, instead of fighting or fleeing, comforted their brothers, knowing full well what fate awaited them.**

Their death was like a soft and luminous path that led straight [...] to a place where there is no pain, noise and fear. They died like martyrs of brotherhood [...].

Forty days after the massacre, the seminary dedicated its small church to Mary Queen of Peace.

From then on [...] it became a place of pilgrimage. Burundians come there to pray for the reconciliation of peoples, peace, conversion and hope for all.

Let this testimony of faith, unity and brotherhood be a message to humanity. Let the blood of the martyrs be a seed of peace in our country and around the world" (quoted in: J. L. Allen Jr., *Global War on Christians. A shocking picture of contemporary persecution*, p. 262).

One of the seminarians who survived this pogrom says this about the executioners: "**I pray that the sacrifice of the murdered students and our suffering will lead these soldiers, the perpetrators of suffering, to their conversion**" (quoted in: *ibid.*, pp. 262-263).

Martyrdom of the spirit

In view of the enormous persecution of our brothers and sisters in faith, it is worth realising how great a grace we have in being able to profess our faith in peace and relative safety in our country. It is worth realizing what a great gift it is to be able to participate in the Eucharist and sacramental life every day. Let's give thanks for priests who can perform their ministry without major restrictions and be ministers of the sacraments instituted by Christ.

However, it is worth realising that the public profession of faith, even in our country, is gradually becoming more and more stigmatised and criticised. Persecution for faith does not have to take the form of direct physical extermination. It may be the silent and hidden suffering of a person who, due to his or her Catholic faith, values and worldview, experiences various unpleasant situations at work, in their environment or even among their loved ones.

The Lord Jesus said: "Blessed are you when men revile you and persecute you and utter all kinds of evil against you falsely on my account. Rejoice and be glad, for your reward is great in heaven, for so men persecuted the prophets who were before you" (Mt 5:11,12).

God requires us to clearly define whether we want to belong to His kingdom of love, goodness, truth, honesty, purity or to the kingdom of selfishness, indifference, evil, lies, dishonesty and impurity.

"I know your works: you are neither cold nor hot. Would that you were cold or hot! So, because you are lukewarm, and neither cold nor hot, I will spew you out of my mouth" (Rev 3:15-16).

This "lukewarmness", indifference or contempt for God's graces, spiritual coldness and neglect of prayer should have no place in our lives. Let's remember that we are also called to give heroic witness to our faith. Let the area of our "martyrdom" be daily systematic prayer and faithful adherence to Christ and God's commandments!

Questions Catholics ask

Why did God create imperfect beings such as us



To put it bluntly: It's hard to understand we were created to exist for a certain period on a timeline corporeally (from birth to death) in order to run the gauntlet of sin which is life as we know it – only to be damned if we didn't run it well enough.

Doesn't it seem weird that He create potential failure, especially if He could have created us perfect? If we were created in the image of God shouldn't this also reflect His perfection? What use is free will, if it can potentially lead to damnation? If He just made us

pure spirit wouldn't all this "hell business" be avoided?

Basically, these questions relate to the point of our existence. And so, it is probably one of the most profound sources of existential angst.

Whatever God creates is perfect but as creatures then cannot be as perfect as God himself, since He is the perfect, uncreated being. Seven times in Genesis 1 God states that what He created was good. When He created Adam and Eve, they were created in His image and announced that they were "very good". Therefore, at first glance at least, humans were not created as, or to be, "imperfect beings". They were beings reflecting God's image: goodness, beauty and truth. Each one of these has a theological alternative, because God is a free spirit. Therefore, evil, ugliness and lies are evidently possible, even if non-existent in God. God cannot be evil, ugly or untrue as He is uncreated perfection, and to choose any of these would be against His nature of goodness, beauty and truth.

In the creation narrative, Adam and Eve represent humanity. And as the story unfolds it describes how human beings failed morally (Gen 3). It is this that raises the main questions asked above: how is it that an uncreated, morally perfect being like God could create beings who fail morally, that is, sin? It can't be expected that a morally perfect being will only create beings that will behave perfectly? In fact, if a being reflects the very image of God, doesn't it suggest that they should behave perfectly?

Well, it may surprise you to know, it's not inevitable. Why not?! Consider God creating a being that will behave perfectly. Let's pick one attribute: to love perfectly.

What does it mean to be "loving"? The first thing to clarify is that Divine Love is not an emotional reaction or attachment to someone else, which often needs to be reciprocated in order to last. I'll strive to put Divine Love into words: it is the greatest desire to want what is good, not for one other human being, but for all who have lived, are living and will ever live. And the greatest good is to have eternity in the fullness of God's infinite love and blessedness. Therefore, the second thing is to recognise that love in this way has to be a decision, a *free* act of the will. You can force people to do many things, but you can't force a person to love. Consequently, the essence of free will is determined by the concept of love. It inevitably follows that not even God can *make* someone do something *freely*. It's a contradiction, incongruous, illogical. To create beings capable of loving, then beings had to be created with the *capacity* to love – that is they *can* act *freely*. Yet, God cannot guarantee that they *will* or *must* act lovingly. So, you could say there is a downside to this *ability* to love. Created as moral agents, human beings who, because they are created in the image of God, are able to distinguish between good and evil, between right and wrong. The point is, however, that how these moral beings act or choose between good and evil, or between right and wrong, is totally up to them and at the same time this is absolutely necessary, if God wanted to create beings that are not merely programmed to behave in a certain way, but who could choose to love and to choose the good. In short then when God asked Adam and Eve to obey Him (Gen 2), and they chose to disobey Him (Gen 3), it wasn't because they were created imperfectly, but precisely because they were created as moral beings in the image of God.

But, you ask, why create beings with free will if that free will may lead to their damnation? Of course, having free will doesn't lead to damnation *unavoidably*. God actively pursues a relationship with people even if they then reject it freely and deliberately. It also seems there is a logical reason for why God cannot just create those He knows will accept Him. Let's have a

little logic diversion. Since human life is so intricately woven, it seems to be the case that if God prevented certain people from being born whom He knew would not accept Him, that would at the same time prevent other people to be born that would have accepted Him. Why? Because it may be that they would have been born from ancestors that rejected God and so wouldn't have been born themselves. But then why should people who would freely reject God, be 'allowed' (by saying that God has some sort of obligation not to create them) to prevent other people from knowing and enjoying God?

In the meantime, when so many thousands of the multitude had gathered together that they trod upon one another, he began to say to his disciples first, "Beware of the leaven of the Pharisees, which is hypocrisy. Nothing is covered up that will not be revealed or hidden that will not be known. Whatever you have said in the dark shall be heard in the light, and what you have whispered in private rooms shall be proclaimed upon the housetops. I tell you, my friends, do not fear those who kill the body, and after that have no more that they can do. But I will warn you whom to fear: fear him who, after he has killed, has power to cast into hell; yes, I tell you, fear him! Are not five sparrows sold for two pennies? And not one of them is forgotten before God. Why, even the hairs of your head are all numbered. Fear not; you are of more value than many sparrows. And I tell you, everyone who acknowledges me before men, the Son of man also will acknowledge before the angels of God; but he who denies me before men will be denied before the angels of Gods" (Luke 12:1–9).

The First Episode: TO BE CLOSE

When you are so close to the Messiah, you can trample not only others, but also your own conscience. Everyone wants to be as close to great events as possible, so that they can later frame a photo of their own image, with a broad smile as if there was a kilogram of chewing gum in the mouth, against the background of a famous, universally known personality. Everyone wants to watch with pride the reactions of those who say with admiration: "Oh! You are so close to this famous person! Do you know him personally?" People flock to places and people who give them a sense of self-esteem and social recognition, but there is rarely an honest atmosphere in such places or with such people. It's easy to be hypocritical. That's why Jesus says: "Beware of the leaven of the Pharisees." The hungriest for true friends are those who are gorged on fame! They strive to be closest, so as to be close to what is important, remarkable, to participate in someone's authority. Someone's importance is then shared with me. Nobody wants to be a nobody, nobody wants to be the rubbish of history, the wrapper of a sweet, an inkless biro, and yet in this crowd some surely fell down, were trampled on, felt discredited, ashamed because they were unable to defend themselves when others pushed them into the mud. The embarrassment of some is the price of elevating others.

What do we see here in this Gospel that is so important for our lives, perhaps even most important? WHO DOES JESUS VALUE AS HIS MOST IMPORTANT FRIENDS? Does He value me? What does Jesus think about me or you anyway? Where should I be in life so that He notices me and I am important to Him . . . *most important*? In the RSV Bible, the Greek phrase HOSTE KATAPATEIN ALLELOUS is translated quite gently as:

"When so many thousands of the multitude had gathered together that **they trod upon one**

**That
which
is most
import
ant**

Part one

For a hair . . .

another, he began to say to his disciples first, “Beware of the leaven of the Pharisees, which is hypocrisy.”

However, in the ESV Bible we have a much more literal translation:

“When so many thousands of the people had gathered together that **they were trampling one another**, he began to say to his disciples first, “Beware of the leaven of the Pharisees, which is hypocrisy.”

The Greek verb KATAPATEO means the act of trampling something or someone, e.g. in the writings of Herodotus: “to let the pigs trample the grain after sowing; in the metonymic¹, figurative sense: to despise”!

In the Book of Isaiah (Is 10:6) this word means: “to trample down as mud in the streets” – to destroy with contempt and death.

And please imagine – so close to Jesus, and some people trample on others like pigs on grain. So close to holiness!

People blinded by the desire to be noticed, to be important, did not care about anyone, they trampled on each other. They wanted to be noticed so much that they did not notice others. They wanted to appear in the eyes of others so much that they paid no attention to anyone. They pulled their hair, trampled on those who stumbled and fell, pressed forward, as close as possible . . . not out of love, but to be considered important, the most important.

Being closest to God sometimes means neglecting Him, even to slight Him. Sometimes someone is close to Him, but not to be with Him, but to use Him, e.g. for their own prestige. Anything can serve aggrandisement – both atheism and religion. I am thinking about my priesthood now, because thanks to it I am so close to Jesus. You can be close and trample on someone – either your own dignity or theirs. Think about yourself too. What has motivated your life so far? . . . To be the most important? . . . To be important? I think about my priesthood. Am I serving the Lord or am I using the priesthood for my own prestige? It’s not the best, safest place at all. Let’s just think for a moment: who among the participants of the Eucharist has the greatest chance to trample the Host? The one who is closest, that is me!

Once, a certain priest, who was quite a modest and quiet man, who didn’t attract anyone’s attention, had his consecrated hosts scattered on the floor while distributing Holy Communion. We watched as he picked them up with the greatest tenderness, on his knees, shocked, almost as if he had fallen and hurt himself painfully. He was very afraid not to trample even one Host with his shoes. Looking at this, we could learn from him compassion, fear and respect for Jesus, but on the other hand, we were surprised, because in this one gesture the entire respect of this priest for Jesus was revealed, like never before in any of his sermons. It was clear to the naked eye that he was shocked by the fact that the Lord’s Body had spilled out, and not by the fact that he had shown clumsiness in his movements in front of people and was trying to fix it on all fours.

No motivation, even the most secret, is so hidden that it won’t reveal itself someday, sooner or later. Jesus says: “everything will come to light”, “what you have whispered in private rooms shall be proclaimed upon the housetops”. Every desire that a person has in his heart comes out of it through gestures, movements, glances and words. What is most important to you is betrayed in every gesture.

¹ a figure of speech consisting of the use of the name of one thing for that of another of which it is an attribute or with which it is associated (such as "crown" in "lands belonging to the crown")

You can deny Jesus without becoming an atheist at all, you just need to strive to be noticed by people, even using your position in the religious community. In fact, you can only trample on someone when you are closest to that person, but this closeness is not born out of love, but serves to use that person to emphasize your own uniqueness. Wounds inflicted by loved ones are the most painful. When the enemy hits you, at most you feel the pain of humiliation or physical pain, but when a friend hurts you, you feel pain in the soul, the deepest kind of suffering. During one of the papal visits, I saw a group of people who almost had a fight, fighting for the closest place to John Paul II – they were pushing and pulling each other's clothes, tugging and calling names. How many proudly took photos with the Holy Father and then hung these photos on the walls of their apartments, like a hunter with deer antlers!

There were also those who really wanted to be closest to the Holy Father, because they could watch with satisfaction the crowd who looked at them with envy, thinking: "He must be someone important if he is standing so close to the Pope." This is participation in someone else's authority to build up your own!

I remember that during one of the Holy Father's visits, a seminarian learned that the Pope would pray in the monastery chapel at night to gain some silent peace. This monk had never prayed in the chapel at night, but this time he spent many hours kneeling with a rosary in his hand, in an almost mystical position, probably looking at the clock and the door from time to time. Unfortunately, the pope did not visit the chapel. So, in the morning, the disappointed cleric went out and, passing by the gate where an attendant was on duty, he said discouraged: "The pope wasn't there, I'm going to bed." There was no pope, but Jesus was in the tabernacle. After a few years, he left the order because he felt disappointed that no one was charmed by him. In our desire to get what is important, it is easy to miss what is most important. Perhaps a future question to consider: **Why Did God Create People He Knew Would Reject Him?**

Prayer



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

Please remember in your prayers William Robertson (2019), Thomas Finn and all whose anniversaries occur at this time.

News and Events

Tea and coffee in the hall after Sunday Mass. Our visitors are most welcome to join us. Please do come.

Church heating: there is a 'second collection' box in the church porch specifically for energy costs.

Book and puzzles sale: donations still welcome as well as helpers. 16th March.

Next Sunday is the 4th of Lent also known as *Gaudete Sunday* and is also **Mothers' Day**.

Prayer intentions for Lourdes: Paul Woodbury will be going to work in Lourdes. If anyone has intentions to be taken to and left at the Grotto, just write it on a piece of paper and leave it with Fr. Tony. Anyone wishing to make an offering, Paul asks that it be donated to the parish.



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