



HOPE IN THE FUTURE



SUNDAY NEWSLETTER INSERTS

1st December (1st Sunday of Advent)

1: AN INTRODUCTION: Preparing for Mass

Back in October the Bishop wrote to us about Stage Three of “Hope in the Future”, inviting us to think and talk and pray about “Living the Sunday Eucharist”. Next week there will be another short Pastoral message from the Bishop, together with a “worksheet” for us to begin our reflection. There will be three more of these in the coming Liturgical Year, so there will be plenty to think about! Every week, from today to the end of August, there will be a short reflection for the newsletter: week by week we will go through the Sunday Mass, offering thoughts and explanations which it is hoped will enhance our celebrations, and allow them to become more and more a real and vibrant encounter with God.

Since today we begin a new liturgical year, this is a good weekend to begin thinking about Sunday Mass! But where do we begin? With the Opening Hymn? The Sign of the Cross? The greeting at the church door? Sunday Mass actually begins during the week before, in our minds and hearts. We should all come to Mass **prepared**. This preparation can take different forms – for some it might be reflecting on the scriptures beforehand, for others practising music or readings or writing intercessions. But every parishioner should begin their Sunday Mass before they get to Church! An easy way is to bring an **intention**. The priest will be offering Mass for a particular intention – either the needs of the parish community or a specific intention he has been asked to offer – and everyone can do the same. Think of your intention before you come to Mass: this week it might be for yourself, or a member of your family or a friend, or for the poor or hungry of the world, or for a particular tragedy you have seen on the news, or a particular joy in your family. Think of what you will offer Mass for – remember your intention, and pray it in the quiet moments of Sunday Mass. You are coming to Mass to meet Jesus – prepare for this meeting by thinking of what you are going to offer Him!

8th December (2nd Sunday of Advent)

Pastoral Message and Worksheet One “Meeting Jesus in our Welcome”

15th December (3rd Sunday of Advent)

2: INTRODUCTORY RITES: Gathering

Two weeks ago we talked about Mass beginning before we leave home, with our own preparation (especially bringing an intention of prayer). What happens when we get to Church? **We gather.**

Jesus said, “Where two or three are gathered in my name, I will be there.” What does “gathering” mean? It means acknowledging Jesus and each other. When we come to church we acknowledge each other by kindness, patience and simple friendliness. As Saint Paul reminded early Christian “Greet each other with a holy kiss.” We should come to church ready to become “one body in the one Lord” – and we cannot do this if we ignore each other! Be prepared to smile, to say a friendly hello, to listen to each other. But be careful where you do this! Because we must also acknowledge Jesus: on entering church there are two things we do – bless ourselves with holy water and genuflect (or bow) to the Tabernacle, the place where the Body and Blood of the Lord is reserved. We acknowledge the gift of baptism, which makes us part of the Body of Christ, and we acknowledge the real presence of Jesus in our church. We should spend some time in quiet prayer before Mass – not ignoring each other, but quietly gathering as a community in faith. It is not “either/or” but “both/and” – we **both** greet each other warmly as friends **and** greet Jesus quietly in prayer.

22nd December (4th Sunday of Advent)

3: INTRODUCTORY RITES: Opening Hymns

Last week we talked about the gathering before Mass begins. However this has been done, we still need to move into the celebration – and we normally do this in song, either with an antiphon or more commonly an **Opening Hymn**. The purpose of this singing is to bind us together more strongly as one body in worship – think of the way in which football chants unite a disparate crowd of spectators into a united (sorry!) band of supporters. Singing in church is not always easy, however. When talking about music in Mass you can seem to be tap dancing in a minefield! Questions of taste, suitability, personal likes and dislikes can abound. There are some who simply dislike music, or any singing at Mass, and will resolutely refuse to join in with anything, be it plainchant or Gospel rock! Sometimes it can feel as though music divides, rather than unites us! To overcome this demands **selflessness**, and a putting aside of personal tastes. Those responsible for choosing music at Mass should be aware of different styles of music, while always striving for music that is suitable for the liturgy, and which aims to bring people together into the celebration. All who attend should do their best to take part, selflessly **sacrificing** their own tastes and prejudices to be part of the one assembly which will very soon be told “The Lord be with you!” Since it will soon be Christmas, listen out for the ways in which familiar carols achieve this, letting people know where we are and what we are doing, and how they bind us into one body, ready to meet the Lord who comes to us!

29th December (The Holy Family of Jesus, Mary and Joseph)

4: INTRODUCTORY RITES: The Sign of the Cross

Last week we talked about the Opening hymn or chant uniting us – getting us ready to worship. The first spoken words of the Mass are what is probably the most common prayer spoken by Catholics: the Sign of the Cross. There are two things going on in this moment – words and gesture. The words “In the name of ...” are a reminder of our purpose and intent. Mass is not done “in the name of money” or “in the name of convenience” or “in the name of entertainment”, but “In the name of God.” We should reflect on these familiar words, and make sure that we apply them to the whole of the following celebration: we sing “in the name of God”, we listen “in the name of God” we offer our gifts and our signs of peace “in the name of God.” At the same time there is a gesture

– marking ourselves with the cross of Jesus. This should be generous and deliberate – not what some schoolteachers in early years refer to as the “Sign of the Squiggle” when little ones are learning! The gesture should prompt thoughts – we make the sign on the front of our bodies, could we carry it on our backs? What are we willing to bear and put up with as we carry our cross? The cross is a sign of Jesus’ personal love for me, frail and sinful as I might be – do I feel this love in this sign? So often the words we use most are the easiest to slip into routine – this Sunday pause to think about the words and gesture with which we begin all our Masses, our prayers and so much else.

5th January 2020 (The Epiphany of the Lord)

5: INTRODUCTORY RITES: The Greeting

Having prepared, gathered, sung and made the Sign of the Cross, we share a dialogue with the priest: “**The Lord be with you. And with your spirit.**” This is a profoundly moving statement, and means much more than a simple “Good morning”! In effect, the priest faces the congregation with arms outstretched and says, “My dear friends, brothers and sisters in the Lord, God is here, right now, in this holy place, as we gather in His name!” We can so often rush through this part of the Mass – it might be good just to stop and realise what exactly we are saying. God is here. Here in our church or chapel this evening or morning, God is here. The God who created all that exists, is here. The God who sent Jesus to save us, is here. The God who is before and after all time, is here. Here and now, in you and me. Look round at the walls of your church and see “*heaven and earth in little space*” (as an old English Christmas carol puts it)! Look at the faces of parishioners young and old and see God present in our midst! Those five words, “The Lord be with you” come up several times in the Mass, and each time they should make us stop and remember Mass is not just about us, but about God-with-Us, Emmanuel! Our response is equally profound: some people still feel an awkwardness in the change from “And also with you” to “And with your spirit”, but there is an important emphasis in these words – our greeting is not just to Father X, an ordinary human being just like everyone else, but to the *priesthood* of Father X: this will be important later, because what happens in Mass is the work of Jesus, not the priest. We begin Mass by acknowledging - or perhaps better reminding Father X - that the Mass is not his work, but that he sacrifices himself so that God’s grace may flow to God’s people. After all, when later he says “This is my Body,” it is not *his* body but Christ’s.

12th January (The Baptism of the Lord)

6: INTRODUCTORY RITES: Sprinkling with Holy Water

At Sunday Mass there is the option of a Sprinkling with Holy Water replacing the Penitential Rite – though it has to be said that this happens very rarely! Perhaps this Sunday (The Baptism of the Lord) and Easter are the only times it is frequently used. This is a shame, because it can give a variety and interest to the Introductory Rites which can sustain our understanding and devotion week by week. Perhaps consider using it more often – especially in the Easter Season, or at celebrations where a large number of children are present, or even just once a month! John the Baptist preached “a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins”, and this is the meaning of this action at this moment of the Mass. There are many symbolisms at work in the waters of baptism, but when that water is sprinkled it is a sign of cleansing and purification – the washing away of sin and guilt and all that hinders us from the joys of life in God’s Kingdom. In some ways

this action is an extension of something we have already done – dipping our fingers in the holy water stoup on the way into church: that was a reminder of baptism, which washed sin away and welcomed us as children of God and sisters and brothers of Jesus. So to, in these “Introductory Rites” whose purpose is to draw us together and prepare us for worship, the Sprinkling with Holy Water can be a powerful moment of repentance and reconciliation. A priest tells a story of a parishioner who collared him after Easter Sunday Mass, where this rite had been used, complaining that “the water never touched me!” As a “sacramental” Church we make ample use of physical symbols, and should be generous in their use: without asking people to bring raincoats, if the Sprinkling with Holy Water is used, everyone should get wet! The chant or hymn that accompanies it should be both penitential and joyful, because Jesus, the author of baptism, has made holy these waters in which we celebrate our reconciliation.

19th January (2nd Sunday in Ordinary Time – A)

7: INTRODUCTORY RITES: Penitential Act

26th January (3rd Sunday in Ordinary Time)

8: INTRODUCTORY RITES: The Gloria

2nd February (The Presentation of the Lord)

9: INTRODUCTORY RITES: The Collect

9th February (5th Sunday in Ordinary Time)

Pastoral Message and Worksheet Two “Meeting Jesus in our Listening”

16th February (6th Sunday in Ordinary Time)

10: LITURGY OF THE WORD: Lectionary v Bible

23rd February (7th Sunday in Ordinary Time)

11: LITURGY OF THE WORD: Structure of the Readings

1st March (1st Sunday of Lent)

12: LITURGY OF THE WORD: The First Reading

8th March (2nd Sunday of Lent)

13: LITURGY OF THE WORD: Responsorial Psalm

15th March (3rd Sunday of Lent)

14: LITURGY OF THE WORD: Second Reading

22nd March (4th Sunday of Lent)

15: LITURGY OF THE WORD: Gospel Acclamation

29th March (5th Sunday of Lent)

16: LITURGY OF THE WORD: The Gospel

5th April (Palm Sunday of the Passion of the Lord)

17: LITURGY OF THE WORD: Silence

19th April (2nd Sunday of Easter or of Divine Mercy)

18: LITURGY OF THE WORD: The Homily

26th April (3rd Sunday of Easter)

19: LITURGY OF THE WORD: The Profession of Faith

3rd May (4th Sunday of Easter)

20: LITURGY OF THE WORD: The Prayer of the Faithful

10th May (5th Sunday of Easter)

21: LITURGY OF THE EUCHARIST: Presentation of Gifts

17th May (6th Sunday of Easter)

22: LITURGY OF THE EUCHARIST: Blessing of Bread and Wine

24th May (7th Sunday or Easter)

23: LITURGY OF THE EUCHARIST: Washing of Hands

31st May (Pentecost Sunday)

24: LITURGY OF THE EUCHARIST: Incense

7th June (The Most Holy Trinity)

25: LITURGY OF THE EUCHARIST: Prayer over the Gifts

14th June (The Most Holy Body and Blood of Christ)

Pastoral Message and Worksheet Three “Meeting Jesus in our Offering”

21st June (12th Sunday in Ordinary Time)

26: LITURGY OF THE EUCHARIST: The Preface and Sanctus

28th June (Saint Peter and Saint Paul, Apostles)

27: LITURGY OF THE EUCHARIST: The Eucharistic Prayers

5th July (14th Sunday in Ordinary Time)

28: COMMUNION RITE: The Lord’s Prayer

12th July (15th Sunday in Ordinary Time)

Pastoral Message and Worksheet Four “Meeting Jesus in our Mission”

19th July (16th Sunday in Ordinary Time)

29: COMMUNION RITE: The Sign of Peace

26th July (17th Sunday in Ordinary Time)

30: COMMUNION RITE: The Breaking of Bread

2nd August (18th Sunday in Ordinary Time)

31: COMMUNION RITE: “Lord, I am not worthy...”

9th August (19th Sunday in Ordinary Time)

32: COMMUNION RITE: Holy Communion

16th August (The Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary)

33: COMMUNION RITE: Silence (again!)

23rd August (21st Sunday in Ordinary Time)

34: THE CONCLUDING RITE: Blessing

30th August (22nd Sunday in Ordinary Time)

35: THE CONCLUDING RITE: Dismissal