

GOD'S UNCONDITIONAL LOVE FOR ALL OF US -

During my Reading this past week, I came across the following, written by an American Priest in his book on prayer. I thought it very powerful. It is basically about God's unconditional love. I share it with you for your reflection. I hope you will find renewed faith, strength and hope from this story.

The Priest writes : Some years ago, a man in his mid-thirties came to see me. He didn't ask for Confession, but he made one. He sat himself down and said simply, "Father, I want to tell you a story. The worst thing that could possibly happen to anyone has happened to me, and the best thing that could ever happen to anybody has happened to me. I have been to hell and back, and being in hell made me believe in heaven.". Tears flowed freely as he told me the story.

He was a married man with 3 children. His marriage was basically a good one, though he had been unfaithful. Unthinking, without prayer in his life, seduced by his own selfishness and the pressure of our culture, he had drifted into a sexual affair with one of his secretaries in his office. Initially he experienced very little guilt and continued on with his family, the Church and his work as before. "It was incredible" he confessed, but I was able to continue this with basically no guilt feelings whatever. In fact, I even believed that this was helping the girl involved and was making me a better husband and father."

Eventually the girl became pregnant. Even then his responsibility did not sink in. He continued as before. But she didn't. Returning from a vacation with his family, he found a letter waiting for him: the girl had written to tell him that she had an abortion, had quit her job, and had moved to another city. It was all over. It was then that the reality of his ways sunk in deeply and painfully. Before that moment he had felt little guilt. Now in an instant, he was overwhelmed by it. His world shattered. Guilt overcame him, and unable to see how he could ever again face his family with truth or trust, or ever again face God, or himself, he decided, though in a vague sort of way, to kill himself. With no particular plan in mind, he sat into his car and drove for hours. Eventually he found himself on a dirt track, someplace he knew not, having run out of gas. He got out of his car, and saw an old building nearby. It was an old, dilapidated church. Its doors were torn off. He walked blindly in the dark into the cold, dreary ruins. He fell asleep and woke as the dawn was breaking. When he looked

around, he saw the only thing left in the Church, a crucifix hanging on the front wall, He said "you know Father, I'm a cradle Catholic. I have seen crucifixes all my life. But before that moment I had never really saw one. I looked at that cross and I understood. I had been to hell and God never stopped loving me, even for one second". Then he added, "I'm not proud of what I have done. That sin will always be part of my past, nothing will ever erase that. But because of what I experienced in seeing that crucifix and knowing what it means, I can now live beyond it. I know now that God loves me, even when I am twisted and sinful.

From that I draw strength to live beyond my sin. I know God. has forgiven me"



Our Lady of Victories

Market Harborough

17th May 2020
Sixth week of Easter
Psalter Week 2

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My dear Parishioners,

Here we are again, another week, another time of Lockdown, another Newsletter. All of us, are I'm sure, wondering how long more! But we have to be realistic and accept the situation we find ourselves in. What we are asked to do, what we are endeavouring to do, is for the wellbeing of all of us. We are all in this together. Of course, I had hoped that we might have been allowed to open our Church doors for private prayer for those who so wish. But that is not so, at least at the time I prepare this Newsletter. I know that many folks are anxious to pop in to the Church for a time of quiet and private prayer. Maybe, better news next week!

Again I want to express my thanks and appreciation to the many, many parishioners who have contacted me in one way or another, enquiring about my wellbeing. I'm fine T.G., just waiting, hoping and praying, that I will be able to visit the sick, the elderly and the housebound soon again. But somehow, I feel it may not be so for sometime to come.

It is obvious from the Media that a lot of people are using different kinds of social media to access some Spiritual celebration, not just for Sundays, but many on a daily basis. Many Churches of every denomination are offering extremely thoughtful, and deeply spiritual reflections and prayers, and acts of worship, including Churches Together here in Harborough. Many Churches are equipped to stream direct from their own Church. This is something, that we as a Church in Harborough, will be considering for the future, making it possible for the sick, elderly and house bound, to be at one with us from their sick bed at home, or when they are no longer able to come to Church because of their age or infirmity, to still feel united with us, and very much still part of our Parish family. More on this in the future.

In our Gospel Reading for this Sunday (John Ch. 14 v. 15 – 21) we are reminded that **to love Christ is to listen to his words, and with the help of the Holy Spirit, to put them into practice in our lives.**

It's amazing how our Society in general, our own local communities in particular, have embraced this command to love in such a lovely, practical and positive way. We hear such wonderful stories of kindness, of reaching out to the vulnerable, of such kind and thoughtful deeds, to and for, so many. And the heroism of those on the front line, and all the many unsung, who are keeping our public services going, in such a heart warming, heart uplifting, heart loving way – surely all such wonderful commitment and dedication, by so many, whether they be people of faith, or doubt, or no faith, are being inspired in their actions by the presence, words and strength of the Lord Himself, and with the prayers of many millions. All must somehow, someway, be connected to, motivated by to-day's Gospel story "to love, to serve, to reach out with big hearts, with brave hearts, with hearts of love". Somehow, someway, Christ is working in and through each and everyone, even if they are not aware, or do not accept a faith dimension. **He did say "As often as you do it to others, you are doing it to me".**

PRAYER FOR TO-DAY: Heavenly Father, Jesus has told us to love one another, and by his words and actions has inspired us to put our love into action. For the times I have failed to love and to respond to love, I am sorry Lord. Lift the darkness of failure from my life. Fill me with love, with joy, with response to people and situations in need. Let me show your love, give your love, see your face, see your need, in all to whom you wish me to respond. Let there be love, Lord, let there be love, and let it begin with me for you, and to you in the faces and lives of others. Amen.

HELEN FRANCIS R.I.P. I have been informed of the death of dear Helen Francis. Although she had not lived in our Parish for approx. the last 8 years or so, many of you will remember her. Helen lived in Marsden Trussell for many years. I can only describe her, during my time of knowing her (approx. 11 years) as a living saint. Although she was well advanced in years, she was so faithful to attending Mass for as long as was possible, often walking from Marsden Trussell to the 10 a.m. Mass on Sunday mornings. Sadly dementia took hold of her, and when she was deemed unable to live on her own, her family moved her to live in Residential Care in Northampton, where her sister who lived in Northampton, could easily visit her. From then on I lost contact with her, but I was privileged to know her, and to share part of her spiritual journey in this life. May you rest in peace dear Helen in the company of the Risen Lord with the angels and the saints.

OUR PRAYERS AND CONDOLENCE are offered to Melanie and Mark McEvoy and their family, and to Melanie's sister and brother and their families, on the death of Melanie's father, God rest his soul. A gentleman, highly respected in his community, but most of all a beloved father, grandfather and great grandfather, will be greatly missed by all who loved him and knew him. Let the certainty of your faith be a comfort and a strength to you at this time, knowing that Dad has gone to join with Mum again, who predeceased him, but now sharing eternal love in their new way of life. May they both rest in peace.

FURTHER CONDOLENCE AND PRAYERS are offered to Sue Otter, to her husband Nick, and to their children and grandchildren, on the death of Sue's mother. Sue, who was a stalwart in our parish for many years, and especially so at the Husband Bosworth end, emigrated with her husband to Australia, at the beginning of 2019, to be near their married son and daughter and their families, who had emigrated and settled in Australia for a number of years. Sue's mother lived in the north of England and was known to me through her attendance at Mass in Husbands Bosworth on her many visits to Sue and family when they lived in North Kilworth. Sue may your dear Mum now rest in peace, and be reunited in eternal love with your Dad, who had predeceased her for many years. God rest their gentle souls.

A PERSONAL THANKS FROM Fr. Owen to the many who have supported him personally with your Easter gifts. I'm fully aware of the difficulty and hardship that you are now in, and for that reason, I am all the more grateful and appreciate to you for your kindness, generosity and care of my wellbeing. Bless you all.

SCAFFOLDING IN THE FRONT OF THE CHURCH : If you have passed by the Church in the last 2 weeks, you will have noticed the scaffolding over the front entrance to the Church. As reported to you in a previous Newsletter, water was seeping into the Church, staining the back wall, and because of the dampness raising the floor boards in that area. Diocesan Consultants were asked to look at the situation, to report to us. The flat roof needed renewing and the coping stones around the flat roof entrance area were not sufficiently wide enough to off leak the rain, thus allowing the rain to seep through the bricks down into the wall, and causing the damage. Because the Church is a listed building, the stones had to be replaced in the same style and design, thus costing a fortune to do what would initially seem a straight forward replacement of stones. But not so. The work, including VAT, will cost approx. £22,000. Hopefully, because of its listed status, we will be able to reclaim the VAT. in time.

UPDATE ON THE PROPOSED LIGHTING IN CHURCH: The latest update is that all going according to plan, it is hoped that work can begin in replacing the lights in Church at the beginning of June. Fingers crossed and hope for the best!!!!!!

FURTHER ACTION: The same team are now busy making **RE-USABLE FACE MASKS**. They can be very easily hand washed and dried after each use. All masks are being made from new material. They are being sold at £1 each, with all profit going to a chosen charity. If you wish to buy some, **please contact Mrs. Maggie Lane on Harborough 461909.**

SINCERE THANKS AND APPRECIATION to the many who are putting their weekly collection envelope through the letter box. Your support is very much appreciated, as is the support of all who contribute to their parish by direct debit or other means. I know how conscientious you all are in support of your Church and parish, and I know too that all of you will continue to do your best in these challenging and testing times for so many. Thank you all so very much.

PROFOUND APOLOGIES: My profound apologies to the many Parishioners who received an email supposedly from me. It most certainly wasn't me. My email address has been hacked yet again. This is the 3rd. time this has happened. My profound apologies for the inconvenience, the annoyance, to those of you who received this fake email. I hope nobody sent a £200 Amazon voucher as requested, for my niece's birthday in Ireland. I would never, ever, send such an email. Please be aware of such fake emails, which many of us are receiving now on a fairly regular basis. Again profound apologies to those who received these fake emails.

THIS AND THAT: Speaking over the phone to a Parishioner during this past week, he remarked to me that in spite of the lockdown, I feel very much part of the Universal Church. He then began to tell me where he had "watched" Mass being celebrated in so many different parts of the world. He then remarked "it was a glimpse into the universality of the Church, seeing the many different Churches, celebrations, different liturgies and so on". I got the impression that he was somewhat exited about the universality of the Church. How right he was. Speaking personally, I too get excited about the universality of the Church, to be part of this great, big family of God throughout the world. I find great comfort in appreciating and realising that Mass is celebrated in so many different languages, with so many different liturgies, with so many and varying congregations. And yet, the Mass is the same wherever, however and in whatever Church it might be celebrated in. **THE MASS IS THE SAME IN FAITH, IN LOVE, IN THE REAL PRESENCE OF THE LORD HIMSELF.** *What a reality, what a truth, what a privilege is the gift, the hope, the joy our faith is for each and all. Thanks be to God for such a precious gift.*

AN ENJOYABLE WALK NEARLY EVERY DAY: Since the lockdown, and trying to manage each day as best I possibly I can, I have been able to enjoy a nice, good distant walk most days. The countryside right now in so wonderful, with the presence of young lambs, young calves, the green shoots of the corn fields, the freshness of green pastures, the beautiful buds, blossoms and colourful leaves that envelop you, as you stand, and stare, and admire the beauty, the wonder of mother nature under the guidance, the "watchful eye", the command of the Almighty, our great big Architect, the maker of heaven and earth. Here I recall, as I will have done elsewhere, the words of psalm 65. *"You care for the earth, you give it water, you fill it with riches, and thus you provide for the earth, you drench its furrows, you level it, soften it with showers, you bless its growth".*

MASS INTS. to be fulfilled this week (in no particular order). The Parishioners; Bogush and Mirek R.I.P.; Stefania, Jozef & Walter Fialkowski R.I.P.; Kay Hirst R.I.P.; Fr. Robert Wright R.I.P.; Personal int; Personal int;