



THE ARCHANGEL

St. Michael's School and Parish • Harts Lane • Burghclere • RG20 9JW

No. 9

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God's Gift to Mankind

In his sermon for Corpus Christi, St. Thomas Aquinas writes: "There is no other nation so great as to have its gods so near as our God is present to us."

When two lovers are about to part for a time, they exchange gifts which embody their mutual love, and whereby each may remember and cherish the other.

At the Last Supper, as He made ready to part with His beloved disciples, our Lord gave them a gift, a perfect gift, the only one that was able to express His infinite affection, kindness, tenderness and love for them. Our Lord gave them Himself.

The Blessed Eucharist is God's gift to mankind. No earthly good, no promises of riches or comfort, not even the gift of final perseverance could ever act as a token of our Lord's love for us.

His love is all compelling. It flows from the deepest recesses of His Most Sacred Heart and reaches out to every soul made in His image and likeness. It is a burning furnace, a raging torrent, an impassioned embrace. It seeks to possess what is already His and to share with us the delights of divine friendship and union.

At Holy Communion, we eat and drink of our Lord's flesh and blood, soul and divinity. We come into intimate contact with the Lover of our souls, Who died for us and would do so again and again were it necessary. When our Lord meets a soul that desires to respond to His love, He is overjoyed and draws the soul closer to Him, gently and gradually detaching it from itself in order to become its sole master and delight.

Human love draws two persons together so closely that their hearts beat as one. Thoughts, feelings, and emotions are mutually shared and each is at a loss without the other. And yet each side remains a separate person with its own destiny and its own soul to save.

Maternal love is deeper still. The mother lives in her child. Her blood runs through his veins. Her child is flesh of her flesh, bone of her bone. Her life nour-

ishes his life and he is never at rest more peacefully than when cradled in her arms. In the natural order, there is no union of greater intimacy than that of mother and child. He suffers, she suffers. He is glad, she is glad. And yet each remains a separate person with its own destiny and soul to save.

The natural order is but figure and shadow, dust and ashes, when we measure it up to the eternal truths of the supernatural.

Christ's love draws us to Him in so tight an embrace that we are transformed. Like the single drop of water that falls into the chalice of wine, we are united to our Lord so closely and so intimately that our hearts melt into the furnace of our Lord's love. Our hearts do not beat in unison with His. Rather, His Heart beats inside of us.

Our Lord Jesus Christ instituted the Holy Eucharist in order to unite us to Him. There is, therefore, no greater gift on earth more precious than Holy Communion. And with what prodigality Our Lord shares Himself with us. Every day we are able to receive Him. Every day He is able to take us to Himself and consummate His love, bringing forth in our souls' grace and virtue of indescribable beauty.

The good soul yearns for the Blessed Eucharist. Yet not even Our Lady's desires can compare to the intensity of Christ's longing for our company and our love, be we the most ungrateful of sinners. And when He comes to a generous and hopeful soul, He sets about rearranging it into an abode worthy of Him. We acquire His thoughts, His longings, His desires. We forget ourselves and remember only Him and those He loves, our neighbour.

"O my soul, how can you refrain from plunging yourself ever deeper and deeper into the love of Christ, who did not forget you in life or in death, but who willed to give Himself wholly to you, and to unite you to Himself forever?" (St. Angela of Foligno)

Fr. John Brucciani, Prior

A Saint's Struggle

Rev. Fr. Reid Hennick

The difficulty of living a thoroughly virtuous life confounds many a practising Catholic. In baptism, Holy Mother Church assures him of his transformation in Christ, yet his subsequent manner of life supplies no reassurance. His conformity to the image of the Son is indiscernible. Notwithstanding his best efforts, he is baffled by the delayed metamorphosis.

“Grace builds on nature.” We cannot afford to minimise this maxim of spirituality. Sanctification is a process, and—for human nature—a long, drawn-out process. For us, shortcuts to sanctity are illusory; to cut corners is to commit ourselves to the false spirituality that is “angelism”.

Despite our childhood fancies, we are not angels, nor will we ever be. God created us human, as spiritual animals, and He delights in sanctifying us as such. In actual fact, our very corporality is His means of entry; our body is the medium through which He touches our spirit. His every correspondence with us starts—or started at least—in our primary senses (*viz.*, touch, sight, hearing, smell and taste). Our secondary senses within the brain (*viz.*, synthetic sense, memory, imagination and evaluative sense) then collate the raw data. Our evaluative sense envelops the perception in an aura of desirability or danger: it “evaluates” its object. From here stem our basic drives for pleasure and aggression (*i.e.*, the concupiscible and irascible appetites, respectively), two phenomena exhibited throughout the animal kingdom. These drives lay the groundwork for our attendant emotional life. Our purely spiritual faculties of intellect and will are last in the assembly line: the former extracts meaning from heretofore mere impression, the latter pursues the good found therein. And so continues this ever-flowing exchange between matter and spirit until death.

Man's spiritual activities are embodied, always. Though his thoughts and desires transcend matter, their provenance remains there. We cannot evoke the simplest thought, elicit the slightest volition absent the above infrastructure. Despite its native clumsiness, the body is the soul's indispensable instrument; the two function in tandem. A rigidly dualist understanding of human nature is thereby both erroneous and, in the spiritual life, counterproductive.

Hence angelism: an overeager spirituality that ignores the body for the sake of the spirit. But we are not only a soul, one imprisoned in some random phy-

sique: the two are essential components of our identity. The sanctification of our person, then, is not the soul's private affair: a thoroughly virtuous life also re-ounds to its corporeal counterpart.

Sacred Tradition has canonized not only the three theological but the four cardinal moral virtues as well. While the Greek ethicists knew nothing of the former, they had well understood the latter. Moral virtue, they maintained, must embrace every aspect of our nature in which we remain free; it must absorb areas over which our soul exerts some control.

Presupposing the above outline of human nature, they concluded that virtue can be had in four areas: 1) prudence in the intellect, 2) justice in the will, 3) temperance in the concupiscible appetite and 4) fortitude in the irascible appetite. The first two areas regard the *de facto* powers of the soul itself; the last two areas are “essentially biological and the virtues that control them resemble such bodily skills as are developed in athletes and dancers.” (Ashley, “Spirituality and Counseling”)

Temperance and fortitude, which moderate our drives for pleasure and aggression respectively, are essential to an integral spirituality. Though angelism undervalues them, the human spirit cannot flourish in their absence. Genuine spirituality demands their acquisition and, therefore, a certain amount of asceticism.

“The kingdom of heaven suffereth violence, and the violent bear it away.” (Mt 11:12) Any spirituality promising entry into the supernatural without strict moral discipline is a hazardous fantasy. The personal trainer's mantra “no pain, no gain” is equally valid in the program of sanctity.

Though toilsome, it is possible to channel our drives. And we Catholics are not without help; our struggle for sanctity does not begin at ground zero. Inspired by faith, hope and charity, temperance and fortitude become not only possible but easy. Over time, even a mediocre regimen helps to recondition the evaluative sense, to train it in the fear of God. The more we advance in

these moral virtues, the more we align our instinctual appetites—and resultant emotional life—with the interests of God. At last, the conflict between matter and spirit gradually subsides, because holiness is filtered throughout our entire being. ❁



News and Sundry

As we approach the end of the school year, I think it is useful to present an overview of the school's current challenges. Our parish very much centres around its school. When the school is strong and healthy, the parish prospers. When the school is under strain, the parish experiences a sense of tension and uncertainty.

The past several months have been the busiest of a lifetime. Subsequent to an Ofsted inspection in October, the school has had to undertake a comprehensive overhaul of its management and operations. This has resulted in a veritable firestorm of serious to critical issues that the school has to address within a very short time frame, while at the same time pursuing the normal round of duties incumbent on the everyday running of a school.

It is difficult to summarise the many actions taken to render the school compliant with statutory regulation as detailed through thousands of pages of DfE (Department of Education) documentation. Our main efforts have revolved around revision, compilation and implementation of new policies (medical, fire safety, recruitment, curriculum, behaviour, risk assessment, guardianship of foreign pupils, data protection, etc.) which define the school's *modus operandi*. Consequently, the school must henceforth evidence, through across-the-board reporting and documentation, that it has applied and followed the prescribed practise as detailed in each policy. Although the school is small in pupil numbers, it nevertheless generates the same variety of reporting requirements as any other junior and senior school and sixth form college. The reports must be readily available for further consultation by the school or upon request by a surprise government inspection. Hence the importance of designing new managerial and data systems to perform various information gathering processes, and flag discrepancies or failures.

Staff recruitment has also been reorganised. Job descriptions have been written which give a clear understanding of the role and duties of employer and employees in regard to the tasks that are allocated to them. Staff files now contain additional mandatory paperwork, in particular in regard to child safeguarding legislation. Even the kind souls who clean once a week must submit to a heavy administrative process.

We continue work on the curriculum policy, which is many pages long and must allow for a detailed explanation of all things taught and learned at St. Michael's School. This area is, by far, the most delicate to handle. There is increased government emphasis on the importance of disseminating throughout the curriculum the four core British Values (democracy; the rule of law; individual liberty; mutual respect for and tolerance of those with different faiths and beliefs and for those without faith) and a greater awareness and promotion of sex and gender ideology. A new inspection framework for Independent Schools is planned for 2019, which intends to

oblige schools to teach that same-sex marriage is lawful. We must plan our teaching with prudence, wisdom and clarity, something that has always been difficult with a high staff turnover and weak curriculum oversight.

October's inspection also highlighted the need for better health and safety measures. The recent Fire Inspection brought to light compliance failures in the White House. The basement has been deemed an intolerable fire-risk for lack of fire retardant cladding on the ceilings and in the stairwell. This, in turn, triggered the need to remove all the asbestos in the basement before cladding could begin. £10 000 later, and thanks to two parents who came all the way from Toulouse, the basement is complete. There remain two other areas of critical urgency that we must resolve: the installation of 12-15 new fire doors, complete with frame, and various other repairs and adjustments in areas deemed of high risk. A call to the parish will go out very soon. We need workers with carpentry skills. Our insurance is badgering for a timescale, but it is difficult to organise with so much going on.

The dormitory bathrooms have also been deemed unsafe and in urgent need of replacement. We plan a full installation of new bathrooms in order to bring them up to proper standards as defined by Ofsted. Their present state of decay illustrates the general state of our "new" buildings which are overdue for maintenance. A first quote for the bathrooms comes in at £45 000. Dormitory renovations have been quoted at £7000. We have not yet priced out the A-level block.

Over the summer we will work on drawing up and implementing a full suite of risk assessments which will evidence "due care and diligence" in the school and workplace. There are literally dozens of method statements to assemble, and even more checklists to adjust or redesign and build. We have engaged the services of a Health and Safety consultant to advise us on the mammoth task of leading us through the jungle of hazards, caution and control procedures. We were even asked to show what risk assessment we have implemented for students taking exams.

Suffice to say, life is very busy. Please pray for the school and its staff, and please support us with your prayers and pockets, for we are very much in need. Please also forgive any impression of aloofness or disinterest in your personal or parochial needs. I love parish work, but the school is experiencing a great storm, and both hands are needed to guide it through to calmer waters. An upcoming Operation Philomena newsletter will explain why we place so much trust in St. Philomena's intercession. We will get through this! There are parents who were once children here. God willing, there are children here who will one day be parents to a new generation of pupils.



Liturgical Calendar June 2018		Masses
1	St. Angela Merici, Virgin - 1st Fri - Holy Hour 18:00	8:00 / 19:00
2	Of our Lady - 1st Sat.	7:30 / 12:00
3	Second Sunday after Pentecost	7:30 Low
		9:00 Low
		18:00 Benediction
4	St. Francis Caracciolo, Confessor	7:15
5	St. Boniface, Bishop & Martyr	7:15
6	St. Norbert, Bishop & Confessor	7:15
7	Feria	7:15
8	The Sacred Heart of Jesus - Holy Hour 18:00	7:15 / 19:00
9	Of our Lady	7:30 / 12:00
10	Third Sunday after Pentecost	7:30 Low
		9:00 Sung
		17:30 Vespers/Benediction
11	St. Barnabus, Apostle	7:15
12	St. John of San Fecundo, Confessor	7:15
13	St. Anthony of Padua, Confessor & Doctor	7:15
14	St. Basil the Great, Bishop, Confessor & Doctor	7:15
15	Feria	7:15
16	Of our Lady	7:30 / 12:00
17	Fourth Sunday after Pentecost	7:30 Low
		9:00 Low
		17:30 Vespers/Benediction
18	St. Ephrem of Syria, Deacon, Confessor & Doctor	7:15
19	St. Julia of Falconieri, Virgin	7:15
20	Feria	7:15
21	St. Aloysius Gonzaga, Confessor	7:15
22	St. Paulinus of Nola, Bishop & Confessor	7:15
23	Vigil of the Nativity of St. John the Baptist	7:30 / 12:00
24	Nativity of St. John the Baptist	7:30 Low
		9:00 Sung
		17:30 Vespers/Benediction
25	St. William, Abbot	7:15
26	Ss John & Paul, Martyrs	7:15
27	or: Our Lady of Perpetual Help	7:15
28	Vigil of Ss Peter and Paul	7:15
29	Ss Peter and Paul, Apostles	7:15/9:00/19:00
30	Commemoration of St. Paul, Apostle	7:30 / 12:00



"How do you divide your love among
four children?"
"I don't divide it. I multiply it."

WEEKLY CONFESSIONS

- Saturday: 11:00
- 1st Friday during Holy Hour
- Sunday before Masses

CHAPEL CLEANING

Contact WhatsApp group at 07443 657280. We are looking for volunteers. **Participation is very thin on the ground. Please help keep the Lord's House clean and welcoming.**

BENEDICTION & ROSARY

Sunday 18:00

EUCCHARISTIC CRUSADE

May intention:

That priests may grow in the spirit of sacrifice.

Holy Hour every 1st Friday.
Time may vary.
Check calendar.

ST. MICHAEL'S SCHOOL END OF TERM ACTIVITIES

- 20th June, 2:45 pm
Junior Netball Match with Burghclere Primary
- 4th July, 2:45 pm
Junior School Music Recital
- 6th July, 9:30 am
Junior Sports Day with picnic lunch.
- 6th July, 3:00 pm
Rematch Junior Senior school football.
- 6th July, 7:30 pm - Cadet Concert.
Ticket event (£1). Refreshments provided.
- 7th July - Mass at 10:00 am followed by BBQ picnic. Prizes at 2:00pm.



CHAPEL REPAINT

Many thanks to the painting team for their sterling work.

Holy Mass will be offered for them on Sat. 30th June.

Please pray for Rev. Thomas O'Hart who will be ordained to the priesthood on 22nd June. The future Fr. O'Hart completed his secondary school education at St. Michael's, and will become the first pupil to be ordained to the priesthood. Deo gratias! We remember him well, along with his sister and two brothers!

Fr. Holden is flying out to the USA to attend the ordination ceremony thanks to the generosity of Tesco Clubcard Awards. He will be absent from 20th - 26th June.