



THE ARCHANGEL

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

No. 44

November 2021

Dear Parishioners,

November is dedicated to prayers for our departed brethren. Saint Thomas Aquinas explains the principle of the doctrine relating to prayers and Masses for the deceased: "All the faithful in a state of grace are united by charity and are members of one body, that of the Church. However, in an organization, each member is helped by others, and therefore each Christian can be helped by the merits of others."

Charity compels us to love God above all things and to love our neighbour as ourselves. The order of charity would have us to first pray for our most helpless brethren, namely the suffering souls in Purgatory. The Holy Trinity dwells in them. Jesus lives in them intimately through the divine life of grace they share with Him. We must, therefore, love them as our neighbour, especially since some are from our earthly family, and we have special duties of charity towards the souls of our deceased family members.

We should not forget that the souls in Purgatory can do nothing for themselves. They rely on us for their eventual release from their toil and pain. It takes but a single prayer to allay their sufferings. God is impatient to bring them to Himself, and yet He relies in great measure on our prayers to speed their entrance to heaven.

Father Faber notes also that by working for these suffering souls we do not work in vain, because we know our prayers will be heard. The Holy Souls will indeed enter heaven, as we request. What we do for them is never lost.

During the month of November, we must rekindle in our hearts real compassion for the souls of Purgatory; we must help them by praying for them, by having Masses celebrated for them, by accepting for them our daily cross. As our Lord taught us: "Blessed are the merciful, for they too will obtain mercy".

Now for some reading on matrimony.

Fr John Brucciani, Prior

The Holy State of Matrimony

One aspect of St Paul's genius was his clarity of vision and tenacity of purpose. Although graced with visions, ecstasies and supernatural powers, these in no way alleviated his apostolic burden but rather added to it. St Paul carried a great cross throughout his apostolic life, one he would have shared with his fellow apostles. The weight and sorrow of that cross permeates his epistles. St Paul is often in painful earnest to bring his converts to a proper understanding of their baptismal status. They must no longer live as before, they have put on Christ (Rom.13:14); they have put on the new man who according to God is created in justice and holiness of truth (Eph. 4:24); they must walk by the Spirit (Gal. 5:16) as the elect of God, holy and beloved, clothed with hearts of compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness, and patience. (Col.3:12) Have they not, through baptism, died with Christ to sin and risen with Christ to the life of the Spirit whereby the charity of God is poured forth in our hearts, by the Holy Ghost? (Rom. 5:5)

For one who had been caught up to the third heaven, the dullness and lethargy of the flock must have been an exasperating burden and source of deep disappointment and sadness. Yet, thanks to the slowness and waywardness of the church communities in Corinth, Ephesus and Colossus, we are able to hear Paul's preaching in his own words and with our own ears. The Pauline epistles contain key elements of the Divine Revelation as spoken by the apostle himself, with the words and images he thought best suited to illustrate and describe the « physics of grace » that he was tasked to reveal to the world.

Divine grace does not destroy, but elevates and transforms human nature so that our mind and will are made wholly subject to Christ and His Revelation. The process of transformation is a slow and painful one because human nature suffers from concupiscence, but eventually we will see and understand as God sees and understands and conform to God's will in all things. It is a journey of faith that Cardinal Newman summarised in his famous epitaph: « Ex ombris et imaginibus in veritatem - From shadows and images unto truth »

St Paul's teaching on marriage offers a startling example of this supernatural transformation. In his epistle to the Ephesians, St Paul develops the doctrine of the Mystical Body of Christ (the union of members in Christ and to Christ) and applies it to a specific area of the Mystical Body: married couples. In doing

so, he reveals to us the essential grace and holiness of the matrimonial state. It is a feature that is often forgotten or ignored, even by Catholic couples. What, then, does St Paul teach us about marriage?

Sign, Symbol and Sacrament

St Paul compares the union of man and wife to that of Christ and the Church. The wife is subject to her husband, as the Church is to Christ, and the husband must love his wife as Christ loves the Church and delivers Himself up for it, « that he might sanctify it ... and present it to Himself a glorious church not having spot or wrinkle ... holy, and without blemish. » (Eph. 5:26-27)

St Paul here reveals something about Christian marriage that is more than mere metaphor or analogy. He calls Catholic marriage a « great sacrament », a sacred sign that points to and illustrates a supernatural reality. Through St Paul, the Holy Ghost reveals to us that the sacramental union of man and wife is the concrete realisation of Christ's union with the Church, called the bride of Christ. Through baptism we have been made partakers of Christ's divine nature. We are united to Him more readily and closely than mother to child, and the bond of union (sanctifying grace) deepens as we grow in holiness and oneness with Him.

St Paul tells us, therefore, that God's plan for Catholic couples is that their relationship reflect and illustrate His own relationship with us as members of His Mystical Body. He is our head, we are His members. As our head, He loves and cares for us. As His members, we are lovingly subject to Him.

One-ness

Let us explore further the implications of St Paul's teaching on the supernatural realities of sacramental marriage.

Having compared the union of husband and wife to that of Christ and the Church, St Paul reveals how this sacred symbolism elevates and transforms spousal obligations and expectations. If husbands and wives are united as Christ is united with the Church, then husbands should see themselves in their wives as Christ sees Himself in the members of His Mystical Body. Christ nourishes and cherishes Himself by nourishing and cherishing us. So do husbands look after themselves when they look after their wives.

St Paul here reveals the depth of union and oneness that exists in sacramental marriage. Catholic marriage creates a new being made of the donation of two beings to each other: « For this cause shall a man leave his father and mother, and shall cleave to his wife, and they shall be two in one flesh. »

We rarely go beyond the carnal understanding of this quotation from Genesis. St John Chrysostom digs deeper and marvels at God's wise counsel: « They come, about to be made one body. See again a mystery of love! If the two become not one, so long as they continue two, they make not many, but when they are come into oneness, they then make many. » The great Patriarch explains that God first created Adam and then divided him into two when he fashioned Eve from his side. Eve comes from Adam, but to become many (through procreation), man and woman must become one again, as when Adam was first alone. And thus matrimony returns Eve to Adam's side and they live as two halves of the same self. He explains that this illustrates the mystery of Christ and the Church. The Church was also formed from the side of Christ, the new Adam, when Christ's side was opened on Calvary and the blood of redemption and the waters of divine grace poured forth. Like the old Adam before, Christ is able to say of those who have received the laver of baptism: « This is bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh. » (Gen. 2:23) The Church was thus formed from the side of Christ. Then, by spiritual espousals, Christ united His new bride to Himself in a spiritual intercourse and She is made fruitful in one Mystical Body.

St Ambrose and St Augustine, to name but these Church Fathers, speak of the sacrament of marriage in similar fashion. We must not misunderstand the nature of the spouses' union. It is not merely a special kind of friendship, nor a simple contract to found and raise a family. For the baptised, marriage is a sacred sign that radiates Christ's loving relationship with the Church. And, each time a child is brought to the baptismal font, Christ's own bride is enriched and made fruitful.

Unity continued

The oneness of the marital union, as exemplified in the union of Christ and the Church, helps us to better understand the obligations of Christian marriage. Christian marriage carries added importance and solemnity. Although the laws of marriage (unity, indissolubility) are based on natural law and bind both believers and non-believers alike, Catholic marriage takes its cue from that of which it is the type and symbol. It is, therefore, regulated by an even higher law, that of divine grace.

Catholic marriage is indissoluble not merely by virtue of natural law but more importantly by virtue of its supernatural significance. It is an image of Christ's union with the Church, His bride. Christ can never abandon His bride. Between Christ and the soul there is a union reminiscent of the union of the three Divine Persons in the Holy Trinity, distinct and yet one God. Sacramental marriage can never be broken, save by death.

St John Chrysostom describes the nature of Christian marriage and the obligation incumbent on each spouse.

Just as there is order in the Mystical Body Christ, so too in marriage. « Let us take as our fundamental position that the husband occupies the place of the head, and the wife the place of the body. » Thus the husband is the head of the wife and the wife is obedient to her husband.

Yet, mindful that he was preaching to an audience all too unfamiliar with the laws of chivalry, Chrysostom continues:

« Thou hast seen the measure of obedience, hear also the measure of love. Wouldest thou have thy wife obedient unto thee, as the Church is to Christ? Take then thyself the same provident care for her, as Christ takes for the Church. Yea, even if it shall be needful for thee to give thy life for her, yea, and to be cut into pieces ten thousand times, yea, and to endure and undergo any suffering whatever, refuse it not. »

And follows a long admonition to husbands to love and care for their wives as closely and surely as they wish Christ to care for them. It is a beautiful piece!

Application

It can be disconcerting to read about the beauty and nobility of marriage. Many couples do not experience the vitality of mutual love that endures and strengthens. Marriage can be a matter of disappointment. And even when the marriage is a happy one, there is much fatigue, anxiety and drudgery. One can wonder, then, how the common experience of marriage is able to reflect and resonate the sublime union of Christ and His Church.

We should not forget that Christ's nuptials with His bride, the Church, came by way of Calvary. His Mystical Body, the Church, cost Him much fatigue, tension and pain. One need only read the Gospels to discover what it cost our Lord to woo and wed His bride, the Church.

The union of Christ and the Church has many similarities with the married life of many couples. It is one that requires infinite patience on Christ's part, as we ever spurn or doubt His loving commands and care. Sometimes we are close to Him, sometimes we drift away from Him. Sometimes, in time of trial, we mutter and murmur, and sometimes we accuse Him of not caring. Sometimes, even, we betray him by acting against our vows and fornicating with the world. Our infidelity is all the more odious because Christ is a good and faithful spouse Who loves us beyond measure.

Christ's union with His bride is not an easy one. And yet we know that His love will never fail. « The gifts and the calling of God are without repentance. » (Rom. 11:29) No matter how wayward His bride, He will ever pursue, nourish and care for her. « Can a woman forget her in-

fant, so as not to have pity on the son of her womb? and if she should forget, yet will not I forget thee. » (Is. 49:15)

Conclusion

Our Lord was certainly aware of the challenges and difficulties of marriage. Perhaps this is why He wished to raise it to the rank of sacrament, thereby transforming those difficulties into a source of divine grace. He wished to establish the marital union as an active type and symbol of His own union with the Church. It is as if a newlywed king granted noble status and special privileges to all spouses throughout his kingdom, in celebration of his own nuptials.

Couples should therefore reflect on the divine union of which theirs is, or should be, a constant reminder and illustration to others. Marriage is the illustration, expression and concrete means of the invisible and unbreakable bond that joins the redeemed to Christ. It is a supernatural state that binds each spouse as closely and solemnly as the obligations of the priesthood bind the priest, or those of religious vows bind a consecrated soul. Woe to the priest or religious who, because they experience hardship, decide to release themselves from the obligations of their state.

When difficulties arise, every spouse should recall the words of St John Chrysostom:

« But what, one may say, if a wife reverence me not? Never mind, thou art to love, fulfil thine own duty. St Paul tells us to submit ourselves one to another in the fear of Christ. And what then if another submit not himself? Still obey thou the law of God. Let the wife at least, though she be not loved, still reverence notwithstanding, that nothing may lie at her door; and let the husband, though his wife reverence him not, still show her love notwithstanding, that he himself be not wanting in any point. For each has received his own. This, then, is marriage when it takes place according to Christ. »

« Never speak in a mundane fashion, but with compliments, with respect, and with much love. Respect her, and she won't feel it necessary to seek respect from others. Prefer her above all others for all things, for beauty, for her temperance, and compliment her. Make it clear to her that you like her company and that you prefer to stay at home with her, to be with her, than to go out to the marketplace. Prefer her company above that of all of your friends, and the children that she gifted you with, love them out of love for her. » ❀

St John Chrysostom quotations taken from his Commentaries and Homilies on the Epistles of St Paul

A plenary indulgence for the poor souls in purgatory may be obtained each day from Nov. 1-8. Plenary indulgence means the complete remission of the debt due to sin. To obtain a plenary indulgence for the holy souls, one must:

1. Between Nov. 1-8 : visit a cemetery and pray for the poor souls.
2. Receive communion on the day of the visit.
3. Go to confession 20 days before or after.
4. Offer the Our Father, Hail Mary and Apostles' creed for the Pope's intentions.
5. Have no attachment to sin, even venial. Partial indulgences obtained otherwise.

Online Christmas Raffle



Restaurant vouchers, cash prize, champagne & treats!

Tickets also available from school office or on request

01635 278137

Xmas Raffle

SATURDAY



11TH DEC.

ST MICHAEL'S SCHOOL ADVENT FAIR

PORTAL HALL - BURGHCLERE

Open 12:00

Close 3 pm

To set up a weekly standing order in lieu of Sunday and Holy Day collections:

Account name: BURGHCLERE PRIORY

Sort Code: 16-26-18

Account number: 10191331

INCREASE YOUR DONATIONS BY 25%

SIGN UP ON DISTRICT WEBSITE



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Liturgical Calendar and Mass Times - November

Confessions before Saturday and Sunday Masses & during 1st Friday Holy Hour.

1	All Saints (Holy Day of Obligation)	7:15, 9:00, 19:00
2	All Souls	06:30, 7:30, 19:00
3	Feria (Mass of 23rd Sunday after Pentecost)	7:15
4	St. Charles Borromeo, Bishop & Confessor	7:15
5	Feria 1st Fri - Holy Hour 6:00 PM	7:15 / 19:00
6	Saturday of Our Lady - 1st Sat.	7:30 / 12:00
7	Resumed Fifth Sunday after Epiphany	7:30, 9:00
	<i>2nd Collection for District seminarians</i>	18:00 Benediction
8	Feria	7:15
9	Dedication of the Archbasilica of The Holy Saviour	7:15
10	St. Andrew Avellino, Confessor	7:15
11	St. Martin of Tours, Bishop & Confessor	7:15
12	St. Martin I, Pope & Martyr	7:15
13	St. Didacus, Confessor	7:30 / 12:00
14	Resumed Sixth Sunday after Epiphany	7:30, 9:00
		18:00 Benediction
15	St. Albert the Great, Bishop, Conf. & Doct.	7:15
16	St. Gertrude the Great, Virgin	7:15
17	St. Gregory the Wonderworker, Bp & Conf.	7:15
18	Dedication of the Basilicas of Ss Peter & Paul	7:15
19	St. Elizabeth of Hungary, Widow	7:15
20	St. Felix of Valois, Confessor	7:30 / 12:00
21	XXIVth or Last Sunday after Pentecost	7:30, 9:00
		18:00 Benediction
22	St. Cecilia, Virgin & Martyr	7:15
23	St. Clement I, Pope & Martyr	7:15
24	St. John of the Cross, Confessor & Doctor	7:15
25	St. Catherine of Alexandria, Virgin & Martyr	7:15
26	St. Sylvester, Abbot	7:15
27	Our Lady of the Miraculous Medal	7:30 / 12:00
28	First Sunday of Advent	7:30, 9:00
		18:00 Benediction
29	Feria of Advent	7:15
30	St. Andrew, Apostle	7:15

November Poor Souls Envelops

These are available at the back of the Church. Write the names of your deceased inside the envelop and place it in the collection basket or mail box at the back of the church.

All envelops will be placed on the Church altar and remembered at each mass during the month of November in the *Memento pro defunctis*. No stipend is required for this act of charity. If you wish to include an offering, these will help towards priory expenses.