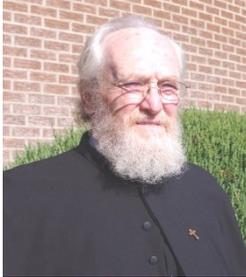


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Fr. Robert's Remarks



FR. ROBERT MANSFIELD, SSC
VICAR GENERAL

Greetings! The Lord be with you!

Just the other day, I listened to an interview with Dr Jordan Peterson and Randall Wallace, the writer of the 1995 movie *Braveheart* a story of a 13th century Scottish warrior. .

During the course of the interview, Wallace commented, "I've been asked why I make war movies.

And I always say I don't, I make love stories. I want to know what you love enough to sacrifice your life for.'

He told a story about the movie, *Braveheart*. He was asked to participate in a charity showing of *Braveheart*. It was in a theatre and the movie had just ended. Wallace was to take part in a Q&A. Wallace ascended the stage and a young woman went to the microphone. (Wallace commented that she had been born somewhat after the movie had been made.) She did not have a question, she had a brief story to tell. The young woman spoke of her fiancé who had died six months previously and she went on to say that as he was approaching his death, her fiancé asked her to see the movie *Braveheart* and that for a reason. He wanted her to see how much he had loved her. Wallace acknowledged that her statement left him standing on stage in tears unable to proceed for some time because of the emotion generated by what he had just heard.

As I write this column, it is St. Valentine's Day. Valentine's Day has unquestionably filled a cultural need in our society as a symbol of courtly love. Not a lot seems to be known of St. Valentine other than that he was martyred. He was killed for his love of Jesus and I would have to say that that is of itself enough.

(Continued on page 9)

Fr. David Marriott, SSC: A Sermon for Septuagesima



FR. DAVID MARRIOTT, SSC

From the Collect: 'O LORD, we beseech thee favourably to hear the prayers of thy people; that we, who are justly punished for our offences, may be mercifully delivered by thy goodness, for the glory of thy Name;'

From the Epistle of St. Paul to the Corinthians: 'And every man that striveth for the mastery is temperate in all things: now they do it to obtain a corruptible crown, but we an incorruptible.'

Do you think, do you feel, do you believe, not just that you are 'punished for your offences', but rather, whether you have committed any 'offences'? I believe that were we to debate this among ourselves, we, as devout Christian folk, who, after all make their confession each and every week, do fully understand that in our human frailty, we cannot help but make silly mistakes and petty offences, probably every day of our life. Just like ancient Israel and Judah, where many people came to realize that they simply could not live their lives bound by so many of the rules and regulations which had

INSIDE THIS ISSUE

<i>Bonnie's Reflections</i>	3
<i>Canon Charles C. Bell, MA: Ash Wednesday & Early Lent</i>	5
<i>From the Parishes</i>	11
<i>The Mouse</i>	12

Fr. David Marriott, SSC: A Sermon for Septuagesima

gradually developed over time, in the Jewish law.

It is in that time that we can read in the books of the prophets, so many ‘calls to repent’, like those in the Book of Jeremiah: ‘Thine own wickedness shall correct thee, and thy backslidings shall reprove thee: know therefore and see that it is an evil thing and bitter, that thou hast forsaken the LORD thy God, and that my fear is not in thee, saith the Lord GOD of hosts. For of old time, I have broken thy yoke, and burst thy bands; and thou saidst, I will not transgress; when upon every high hill and under every green tree thou wanderest, playing the harlot. Yet I had planted thee a noble vine, wholly a right seed: how then art thou turned into the degenerate plant of a strange vine unto me? For though thou wash thee with nitre, and take thee much soap, yet thine iniquity is marked before me, saith the Lord GOD.’ (Jeremiah 3.19-22)

‘FOR NOW THEY
DO IT TO OBTAIN
A CORRUPTIBLE
CROWN,
BUT WE AN
INCORRUPTIBLE.’

This speaks to those who openly gathered amongst the wood groves on the hilltops, rather like those who went astray at the time when Moses was high above on Mount Sinai, receiving from God the tablets with the ten commandments, when Aaron was tempted and sinned: ‘And Aaron said unto them, Break off the golden earrings, which are in the ears of your wives, of your sons, and of your daughters, and bring them unto me. And all the people brake off the golden earrings which were in their ears and brought them unto Aaron. And he received them at their hand, and fashioned it with a graving tool, after he had made it a molten calf: and they said, ‘These be thy gods, O Israel, which brought thee up out of the land of Egypt.’ And when Aaron saw it, he built an altar before it; and Aaron made proclamation, and said, Tomorrow is a feast to the LORD.’ (Exodus 32.2-5)

In Exodus, we read that ‘the people sat down to eat and to drink, and rose up to play.’ – a euphemism for people who cast aside their inhibitions, their beliefs, and embraced all that they had previously abhorred. At the times of the prophets, things got even worse, when we read of King Ahaz, son of David, in 2 Chronicles 28: ‘For he walked in the ways of the kings of Israel and made also molten images for Baalim. Moreover, he burnt incense in the valley of the son of Hinnom, and burnt his children in the fire, after the abominations of the heathen whom the LORD had cast out before the children of Israel. He sacrificed also and burnt incense in the high places, and on the hills, and under every green tree.’ (2 Chron. 28.2-4)

When we consider the words of St. Paul, ‘And every man that striveth for the mastery is temperate in all things:’, we can see a colossal difference in what was a very violent and cruel world, far different from how civil society of that time, as the newly baptized rejected their former habits and behaviours. And St. Paul’s next words confirm why ‘for now they do it to obtain a corruptible crown, but we an incorruptible.’ It is the promise of eternal salvation for those who confess Jesus Christ as Saviour which separates us, just as it was in the times of Our Lord, and the Apostles: nothing has changed.



Bonnie's Reflections: Hardened



BONNIE IVEY (& LAD)

speak with us.

Elizabeth Goudge (1900-1984) had that skill of bringing characters to life. In her many novels she depicted people who show us their inner motivations and longings, including moments when a person realizes that something they have been doing needs to be put right. Elizabeth Goudge was not afraid to write about repentance, with the growth and healing it brings. Her treatment of it is not sentimental but realistic and refreshing. She remarked that in her writing she loved her invented characters too much to let them suffer too long in their difficulties. A few of them go a long way before acknowledging their fault, but then move on in a better direction. But one character is different. Mrs. Belling.

Mrs. Belling was a spoiled society darling who married for money and prestige. She enjoyed being beautiful and fashionably dressed, the focus of attention at the lavish parties she planned. She valued her husband for the powerful connections he brought her way. When he died, her first reaction was anger. Widowhood, a diminished fortune, and the second world war's uncertainties stirred her to reinvent herself. She converted her home into a private day school for girls. Using her social connections, she made herself known as "That sweet Mrs. Belling" who would educate little girls not yet old enough to go away to boarding school.

She cut corners on everything except her own comfort. The head teacher was not fully qualified, so her pay rate was low. The second teacher was Mrs. Belling's niece. A single housekeeper was hired to do all the cooking and cleaning. Building maintenance was neglected. Food for the staff and the children was cheap and unappealing. Meanwhile Mrs. Belling enjoyed appetizing meals in her overly lavish private quarters. She distanced herself from all responsibility, yet clung to authority. No-one but herself could act or make decisions. She bullied the children, and bullied the staff into doubting their own judgment. And still she projected that "sweet" persona to all outsiders. Yet John, an Anglican priest, was not deceived. He saw the results of exposure to Mrs. Belling in his three daughters; fears, bad attitude, depression. He befriended the two teachers. They confirmed his suspicions.

Mrs. Belling spent all her time in her room, asserting absolute control over everything from her satin-decked bed. She issued orders while idly petting her grossly fat old Pekingese dog and feeding him chocolate creams. She didn't care that his ears were infected and hot. Her pedigreed lap dog was only an accessory to her vision of luxury. When she discovered her niece had treated his ears with medicine from the vet, she snatched the ointment from her and threw it into the fireplace.

SOME OF US
JUST LOVE
TO READ.

Bonnie's Reflections: Hardened

One day the housekeeper rushes to inform the teachers that Mrs. Belling seems very ill. She is weak, especially her right arm. Her speech is garbled. There are urgent bills and wages to be paid, but she roars with rage when the teachers ask permission to deal with finances. Her solicitor is called. She refuses to sign the paper he brings that would give her niece power of attorney. The solicitor leaves, frustrated, and the school staff are left helpless.

Upstairs in the overheated bedroom, Mrs. Belling drifts between sleep and waking. The little dog creeps close to her side to lick her hand. Enraged, the woman slaps him hard in the face, knocking him off the bed. Her heavily-jewelled ring has cut his eyelid, and in his fall he has injured his leg. In pain and confusion, he crawls under the bed and lies whimpering.

"I TELL YOU TRULY,"
HE ANSWERS,
"TODAY
YOU SHALL BE
WITH ME
IN PARADISE."

She feels a momentary stirring of remorse. She experiences an inner voice. "Won't you call the little dog from under the bed? Will you not call him?" like a gentle question put to a child. She thinks about "the obese unpleasant little dog who loved her and tried to lick her hand. But it was too much trouble. 'No,' she said."

Called in by the two teachers, John goes up to try to reason with Mrs. Belling. "There was nothing he could do to bridge the gulf because there was nothing here to appeal to. There was nothing here but anger and fear. He had never felt such evil... Nothingness was a bottomless pit and it was that she feared... To sign that paper was to part with the one possession that she still had in this world. Power. While she refused to sign she had power to paralyze the life of the house." John offers to hold the paper steady so she can sign it "as an act of kindness" enabling her niece to transact business, "just until you are better." Mrs. Belling seizes the paper, tears it up, then surges forward in the bed in an attempt to throw the pieces in the fire. She falls back, dead.

"John tried to call for help but his throat was parched and dry. He fell on his knees, but the familiar prayers would not come." Perhaps most pastors have had experience with a hardened, completely unrepentant person facing death. What a distressing situation! But can we believe, as Elizabeth Goudge portrays in these scenes, that the Lord would continue to try to call a person back from the edge of a decision to cling to self-will and destruction? When has the hardening process gone too far?

When we read Luke's gospel, chapter 23, verses 39-43, we see Jesus in his last hours of earthly life. He is crucified between two hardened criminals. One reviles him, mocking his status as a supposed messiah. "Save yourself and us!" But the other man replies, "Do you not fear God? We are indeed suffering justly for we are receiving what we deserve for our deeds, but this man has done nothing wrong." This is his admission of responsibility for his wrongdoing, his confession. Then he turns to Jesus. "Remember me when you come into your kingdom," and this is his statement of faith. On the cross, dying from blood loss and suffocation, Jesus is alert to this call for mercy.

"I tell you truly," he answers, "Today you shall be with me in paradise."



Canon Charles C. Bell, MA: Ash Wednesday & Early Lent

The following talks are excerpted from The Children's Round of Fast and Feast written by Canon Charles Bell of York in 1900 and a second edition in 1907. These are drawn from the 1907 edition. This short series will be continued next month.

Ash Wednesday

THIS is the first day of Lent. It is called Ash Wednesday, because on this day, in old times, the priest used to sprinkle the people with ashes, to remind them that the body is, after all, only dust, and will, when we die, return to dust. We must try to keep this day very seriously and very carefully, and so make a good beginning of our Lenten Fast. First of all, I will try to tell you what fasting means. It really means going without food. Our dear LORD fasted in the wilderness for forty days and forty nights. During that time he neither ate nor drank. He did this in order to prepare for the temptation which came at the end of His fast.

Now, my dear child, you too have to get ready to meet temptation, and so you too must fast. Of course it is quite plain that you cannot go without food altogether. You know that you would die if you were to go without food for even a week, and I am sure that GOD does not want you to go without your proper food. He gave you your body, and He wants it to grow up strong and healthy. When you are older you will be able to keep Lent by taking less food, but for the present you must keep the fast in another way.

I expect that there are some things which you like much better than other things. For example, you like one kind of pudding much better than another, and perhaps you like least the one which is really best for you. Now, would it not be a very good thing if you were to ask mother to give you that wholesome pudding which is not so very nice, several times in each week of Lent? Again, do you not sometimes spend some money on sweets? There is nothing wrong in doing so if we do not allow ourselves to get into the way of spending all our money on things to eat: that would be very greedy. But in Lent we can very well do without sweets, and save up the money which we usually spend in that way, and give it to GOD for some good work. There is one other little thing which we can do: whenever we have a choice between two things we can choose the thing which we like the least.

Now, dear child, I expect you will want me to tell you why you should do these things. First of all, because our LORD has taught us by His word and by His example that we ought to fast. Secondly, because the Holy Church bids us to fast in Lent. Thirdly, because self-denial will make us better servants of CHRIST.

There is a thing called self-control, which we all need; it means being able to rule ourselves. When we read stories about kings and queens, perhaps we sometimes think how nice it would be to be a king or a queen. GOD means us to be kings and



"Angels came and ministered unto Him."—S. MATT. IV. 11.

Canon Charles C. Bell, MA: Ash Wednesday & Early Lent

queens, and He has given you a kingdom over which He means you to rule: that kingdom is yourself. Dear child, can you rule over yourself? When you know that a thing is wrong, and that you ought not to do it, can you say “No” to yourself, and keep to that “No”? When you know that a certain thing is your duty, can you say to yourself, “You must”? The self-denials of Lent are meant to help us to rule ourselves. If we can say “No” to ourselves about the nice pudding or the sweets we shall find it easier to say “No” to the naughty temper or the bad word or the deceitful action.

I am going to give you a little reading for each week in Lent, and I want to try to help you to use this holy season to get rid of those naughty things which are not pleasing to GOD. He alone can make you able to do this, so you must pray to Him, and ask Him, for JESUS’ sake, to help you to rule your kingdom well.

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First Week in Lent

TO-DAY we will try, with GOD’s help, to think for a little while about the forgiveness of sins. Whenever we do anything naughty we commit sin. You are old enough, dear child, to know the difference between right and wrong; you know when you have done a wrong thing, and it makes you feel ashamed and unhappy. The saddest thing of all about sin is that it displeases GOD and grieves the heart of our dear LORD. Think how good the heavenly FATHER has been to you. He has given you everything; your good home, your kind parents and friends, your clothing, your food—all that you have is the gift of GOD. Think, again, how much the LORD JESUS loves you; He loves you so much that He came down from heaven to die for you; He loves you so much that He is always praying for you in heaven. What a sad, sad thing to grieve One Who loves you so much! And yet we do grieve Him every day. Whenever we get into a temper, or say an unkind word, or fail to do our duty, or are lazy or greedy, we grieve the LORD JESUS.

Our sins grieve GOD because we belong to Him; we are not our own, we are bought with a price—that is to say, we do not belong to ourselves, but to GOD, because He has bought us to be His own, and paid for us the price of the precious Blood of JESUS. You will see now, dear child, that it is not enough just to make up with those to whom we have spoken crossly, or been unkind. If we belonged to ourselves it would be different, but we belong to GOD—we have grieved GOD, we have sinned against GOD. That is why we want GOD’s forgiveness. Will He forgive us? Yes, if we are truly sorry; if we own our fault, and promise to try our best not to be naughty again. Let us think carefully about these three things:



Canon Charles C. Bell, MA: Ash Wednesday & Early Lent

First, to be truly sorry.

When we have been naughty, and have been found out and punished, it is not at all difficult to be sorry; we do not like to be punished, and so we wish we had not done the wrong thing. But that is not being truly sorry, it is only dislike of being found out and punished. True sorrow for sin means a great deal more than this. It means that we are really and truly sorry that we have grieved GOD. A child who is truly sorry will not mind the punishment nearly so much as the feeling that GOD has been grieved.

Secondly, to own our fault.

We must own that we have been naughty. We must kneel down and tell GOD exactly what we have done wrong; we must not think that it is enough just to tell Him that we have been sinful. No; we must say the very thing, like this, "O GOD, I confess that I have told a lie, or hit my little sister in anger, or stolen something." Mind you say the very thing which you did, then ask for GOD's forgiveness, for JESUS CHRIST'S sake.

Thirdly, to try our best not to be naughty again.

We shall show that we are really sorry by doing this. We are not sorry if we make up our minds that we shall do the same thing the next time we are tempted. I know, dear child, that we cannot say that we will never do anything wrong again, but we can make up our minds that, with GOD's help, we will try our very best. If we do these three things faithfully and well GOD will forgive us, because our dear LORD died that we might be forgiven.

*FIRST,
TO BE TRULY SORRY.*

*SECONDLY,
TO OWN OUR FAULT.*

*THIRDLY,
TO TRY OUR BEST NOT
TO BE NAUGHTY AGAIN.*



Second Week in Lent

WE will think for a while to-day about perseverance. I expect you know that old rhyme :

"If at first you don't succeed,
Try, try, try again."

Now, that is just as true with regard to our holy religion as it is in such things as our lessons and our play. Those who give up as soon as they find that a thing is not easy will never succeed. From the very first, dear child, you have been taught that the Christian life is a battle. When you were brought, a little child, to the font, when you could neither speak nor understand, you were called CHRIST'S soldier, and the cross was

*"IF AT FIRST YOU DON'T
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Canon Charles C. Bell, MA: Ash Wednesday & Early Lent

signed upon your forehead as a token that you would fight manfully under CHRIST'S banner against sin. Now, a soldier must never be a coward, he must never give in, he must never stop fighting. Have you never read of good soldiers who, even after they were wounded, went on fighting bravely? We must be like them, we must never give up fighting till GOD calls us to our rest. This "going on trying and fighting" we call perseverance.

Lent is a great time for thinking about perseverance.

Do you find that there is one sin, one kind of naughtiness, into which you very often fall? We call it a besetting sin. Are you really trying to fight against it? Or do you say to yourself, "Of course I shall always fall into that sin"? There is no "of course" about the matter. GOD does not want you to fall into that sin, and He will, if you ask Him, give you the strength to break off that bad habit, only you must persevere. When you find that you have done that naughty thing again, you must be like the brave soldier. You must not lose courage because you have been wounded. If you confess your sin, GoD will heal your wound; and then you must go on fighting.



"The abield of faith."—Ezek. vi. 16.

Again, we very often get tired of doing good things. We begin very well, almost too well ; people say that it is too good to last. They mean that we are taken up with the good work because it is new, and they think that as soon as the novelty has worn off we shall either stop doing it, or else do it very badly ; and they are very often right. You are told of something good which you can do. " Oh," you say, " let me begin at once, this very day." You are quite impatient and angry if any one says that it would be a good thing to wait a little and think it over. You do not stop to think whether you will be able to go on with it. Ah, you do not stop to ask *GOD'S* blessing and help; and perhaps a week later, when you are reminded that it is time to do the good thing which you began so eagerly, you will be quite cross, and say, " Oh, there's plenty of time for that another day. I want to go and play now."

Dear child, this is want of perseverance. How sad it will be if all your life is going to be spent in just taking things up, and then growing tired of them and leaving them, because you will not persevere.

We must try to do good things because they are good and pleasing to GOD, not only because we have taken a fancy for them. There are many good things which we ought to do which we shall not care for at first, but if we persevere we shall grow to love them very much. Do not lose heart because you feel that your good actions do not do much good. Go on bravely, and GOD will make those good actions useful. Lastly, pray for the great grace of perseverance, and you can remember this little text:

"Be not weary in well-doing."



Fr. Robert's Remarks

(Continued from page 1)

Another martyr whom we commemorate in February is St. Ignatius of Antioch. (He shares his day with St. Bride of Kildare, patroness of our Lower BC Mainland parish of St. Bride.) Ignatius is reputed to have been the child Jesus took and set among his disciples in St. Matthew 18. 2-4. He grew up and eventually became the Bishop of Antioch and was sent to Rome to the lions, to be martyred for his love of Jesus.

In his book on St. Ignatius, Fr. Andrew Stephen Damick writes,

One of the things that makes the Christian story so compelling is that people have been willing to die for it. To be sure, people have voluntarily died for a lot of things in history, whether it is because they were fighting for their king, for some cause, or in order to kill or wound other people. But Christian martyrdom is unique. In the historical record, we do not see people dying voluntarily in humility, with joy, and with genuine love for their persecutors the way we see people dying for the Lord Jesus.

(Fr. Andrew Stephen Damick. Bearing God (Kindle Locations 357-360). Ancient Faith Press.)

Joy is not something that one would associate with dying but that is certainly the way St. Ignatius is portrayed.

Of Jesus, St. Paul writes in Hebrews 12, that He is

the author and finisher of our faith; who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God.

and St. Paul in the previous verse exhorts us :

Wherefore seeing we also are compassed about with so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which doth so easily beset us, and let us run with patience the race that is set before us,

This is the call to us as we enter into the Pre-Lenten season and then Lent. Yesterday's Epistle reading was from 1 Corinthians 9 beginning at verse 24. It is a call to the disciplined life where St. Paul expresses his concern that he be well trained lest, as he says,

That by any means, when I have preached to other, I myself should be a castaway

and this should concern us all. While there are many among us who do not preach liturgically, we all preach to the world with our every word or attitude we express. Even our bearing communicates something. There is a statement attributed to St. Francis of Assisi, "Preach the Gospel always, and when necessary use words." For example, to carry ourselves as though we were of no worth communicates something to others around us and it certainly is not the joy and love for Jesus that was expressed by St. Ignatius of Antioch as he ran toward his martyrdom.

CHRISTIAN
MARTYRDOM
IS UNIQUE.

Fr. Robert's Remarks

In May 2004, the then Cardinal Joseph Ratzinger commented, “Many people perceive Christianity as something institutional — rather than as an encounter with Christ — which explains why they don’t see it as a source of joy.” <https://zenit.org/2004/05/07/cardinal-ratzinger-tells-why-many-misperceive-christianity/>

Behold,
I bring you
good tidings
of great



“[A] source of joy”. Joy is referred to in our Canadian BCP, beginning with the opening sentence for Christmas in Morning Prayer. It shows next in the Absolution at Morning Prayer — so that at the last we may come to his eternal joy ‘ and 106 more times in our BCP.’ The Collect for All Saints’ Day speaks of ‘those unspeakable joys, which thou hast prepared for them that unfeignedly love thee’.

To the left is a detail from a Christmas letterhead that I have had for a long time. “Behold I bring you good tidings of great JOY”. It has its obvious associations with the Feast of the Nativity of our Lord.; but the idea of joy is not exclusive to Christmas. It is also not the same as happiness.

The word “happy” shows up in the 14th century and is etymologically related to the word for “luck”. Think of ‘happenance’—a combination word derived from ‘happening’ and ‘circumstance’, a lucky circumstance. One can appreciate that ‘happenance’ or ‘happiness’ can be quite ephemeral depending on the circumstances.

When you hear people speak of joy, does it seem to ring hollow?

JOY, along with love, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance, is a fruit of the Spirit. (see Galatians 5.22-23)

Recently I listened to an interview with Phoebe Farag Mikhail about her book *Putting JOY into Practice: Seven Ways To Lift Your Spirit From the Early Church*. Phoebe is the wife of a Coptic priest.

She notes that “Joy is not happiness, either; otherwise, those without happy circumstances would never experience joy.” (Farag Mikhail, Phoebe; *Putting Joy Into Practice: Seven Ways to Lift Your Spirit from the Early Church* (p. 15). Paraclete Press. Kindle Edition.)

Pre-Lent and Lent are periods of discipline. This book speaks of joy, it speaks of things that can steal your joy,

At the beginning of the chapter on ‘The Joy Thieves’, Phoebe quotes Anthony Ray Hinton who said, a few years after being released from thirty years in prison for a wrongful conviction,

The world didn’t give you your joy, and the world can’t take it away. You can let people come into your life and destroy it, but I refused to let anyone take my joy.

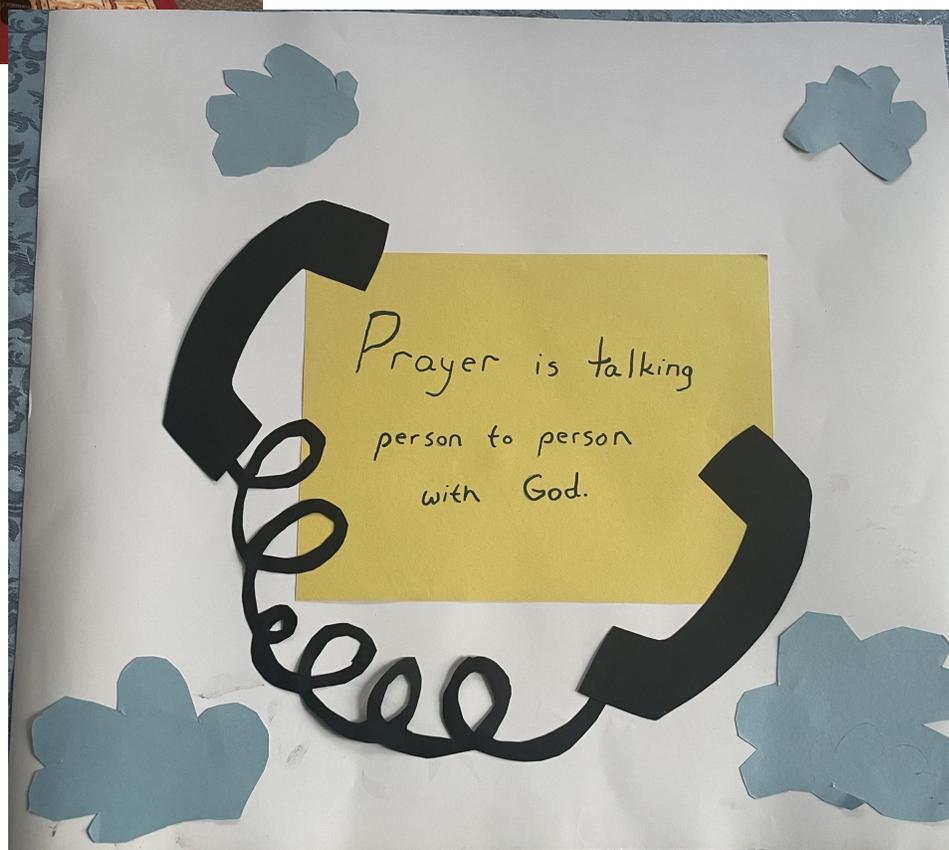
News from the Parishes

Parish of the Resurrection, Walkerville (Windsor), ON



The Church Of The Resurrection's Sunday school is studying Section Four of the 1962 BCP (Canada) Catechism which covers Prayer.

Natalie and Danielle are displaying the mural which they constructed on The Fifth Sunday After The Epiphany. Good job girls !



The Church Mouse: WAIT A MINUTE

Afternoon tea time in the church office! My favourite time of day! Mrs. Bee had been baking again and had brought date squares to share with Fr. Palmer. They set aside the papers from the table and put out the tea things. Outside it was pouring rain, and big drops were hitting the windows. There was thunder, too! Lightning!

“How dark it is!” remarked Mrs. Bee. “You’d never know it’s only the middle of the afternoon!” Fr. Palmer did not answer. He was staring out the window.



“I must go see who is coming,” he said over his shoulder, “There is someone struggling to the door with a big umbrella.” There was the sound of the door opening, and feet stamping on the floor. I heard Fr. Palmer say, “Set your umbrella over here to drip.” Then he came in with a rather wet boy. It was Jessie, the newest member of the children’s Bible class. But it wasn’t the right day for the class. I was puzzled.

“Have you come to see me, Jessie?” asked Fr. Palmer.

“I can go out if you wish to talk to Father privately,” offered Mrs. Bee as she passed Jessie some date squares and a napkin.

“Oh, no, Mrs. Bee, I have a question, but I’d like it if you’d stay. You see, I haven’t been part of the church for very long and I’d like to hear from some really old Christians...” Here he stopped and looked embarrassed. “I mean, Christians who have, um...”

“You mean you want to hear from people who have had EXPERIENCE. Is that right?” asked Mrs. Bee.

“Yes. Experience,” said Jessie, nodding. “You see, sometimes I feel like the Lord is really close to me and then other times it’s like he is not there at all. Even, like...He’s not real.” And Jessie’s face got red. Fr. Palmer poured a cup of tea for Jessie, added lots of sugar, and passed it to him.

“That’s a very common experience, Jessie,” he told the boy. “You see, the trouble is, our feelings are like the weather. They change all the time, like the wind and the clouds.”



The Church Mouse: WAIT A MINUTE

“Where I grew up,” said Mrs. Bee, “There was an old saying. ‘If you don’t like the weather, wait a minute’. We always had real changeable weather. We’d also say, ‘We get three seasons before sundown.’”

Fr. Palmer said, “We can’t use our feelings as a guide, because they change so much. So we must look at the things the Lord has said, learn them by heart, and go by what He said, not how we feel about things. We should have good solid habits, like reading a bit of scripture every day, even one verse! And by praying every day. If someone is important to you, you must talk with them, to keep up the relationship. Just think! How would your friends feel if you never spent any time with them and never spoke to them! Are you doing those things, Jessie?”

“I try, but sometimes...I don’t feel like it! Yes, I see I have been going by my feelings. But it’s hard to remember what the Lord has said, because there is like a whole Bible full of things...”

“One thing that has helped me,” said Mrs. Bee, “Is having been in the church choir. I remember so many things that are in the hymns, and sometimes they just come into my mind at the right moment!” And she sang, “Fear not, He is with you. O be not dismayed. For He is your God and will still send you aid. He’ll strengthen you, help you, and cause you to stand, Upheld by His mighty, omnipotent hand.”

Fr. Palmer picked up a prayer book and opened it to the service of Confirmation. “Jesus promised his disciples that he would ask the Father to send his Holy Spirit, the Helper, to stay with them and guide them. He said this Helper would be both WITH them and IN them, to teach them and help them remember the important things we must learn to live a Christian life. Now Jesse, I want you to read this service at home, and pray about it. It could be that the Lord is bringing these questions to your mind so that you will take the next step, and be Confirmed. Will you read it and let me know what you think?”

Jessie grinned and took the book. As he opened the door, he exclaimed, “Look! It’s not raining and the sun is coming out!”

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EUNTES IN MUNDUM UNIVERSUM
GO YE INTO ALL THE WORLD

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Fr. Robert's Remarks

After addressing this topic of losing joy, Phoebe continues and speaks of practices and disciplines that can help us experience joy. The practices of which she speaks are Praying the Hours, Visiting the Sick, The Joy of Repentance, Giving Thanks, Hospitality, Arrow Prayers, & Singing Praise to God.

I definitely want to recommend the book* as a Lenten reading. It is readily available in paperback and e-book formats.

May your joy be full!

Till next month; God Bless!

R+



Note

*Farag Mikhail, Phoebe. Putting Joy Into Practice: Seven Ways to Lift Your Spirit from the Early Church, Paraclete Press. 2019, paperback 978-1640601680 or e-book editions.

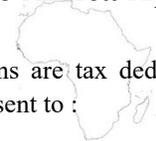


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