

THE ORATORY—dedicated to THE IMMACULATE CONCEPTION

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Registered as a Charity

Parish Weekly Newsletter

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This newsletter is available in large-print format. Ask at the Sacristy.

March 2nd 2008: The Fourth Sunday of Lent "Laetare"



In Jerusalem: The Healing of a Man born blind

The second of the passages from St. John's Gospel that we read on the three middle Sundays of Lent tells how Our Lord gave sight to a man born blind, but goes on to explore yet more deeply the themes of light and faith. Just as in last Sunday's Gospel, Our Lord brought the Samaritan woman to faith in Him through His discoursing with her about water and thirst, so here in giving the blind man his sight Our Lord thereby prepares Him to receive the far greater gift of faith. However, this miracle takes place not in the remote country of Samaria, but in the cosmopolitan city of Jerusalem, bustling with life and the many conflicting strands of power and interest. This means that the setting and the unfolding of today's Gospel passage are much more complex than last week's. On encountering a man blind from birth, Jesus's disciples ask Him about the connection between sin and blindness. It is a connection that will prove enormously important in the subsequent events, though not in the way that the disciples assumed at first. For they *assume* that the man is blind as a punishment for sin. The only question in their minds is *whose* sin? Was it the man's own for which God is punishing him, or was it his parents' sin? Our Lord tells them that it was not for that reason that the man was blind at all, but so that *"the works of God might be displayed in him"*. And so Jesus gives him his sight.

Enter the Pharisees. Because Our Lord healed the blind man on the Sabbath Day, they are enraged that He has "broken" the Sabbath by doing "work", in contravention of the 3rd commandment. *"This man cannot be of God"*, they say. But others contest this, saying, *"how can a sinner do such works?"* This is a real problem for them, which they try to resolve by suggesting that the blind man was never really blind at all, and so there can have been no miracle! Therefore the Pharisees summon the man's parents to get them to testify that their son really was blind. The parents are terrified because the authorities have already agreed to excommunicate anyone who acknowledges Jesus as the Christ, and therefore they say defensively, *"He is old enough to speak for himself"*.

So the Pharisees once again interrogate the formerly blind man. Having already given his own account of the healing, the man asks the Pharisees if they, too, wish to become Jesus's disciples? After all, he *was* blind and *now* he sees, so he says *"God doesn't listen to sinners, but does listen to devout men who do His will."* The man is in no doubt that Jesus is God's messenger and that his own healing is God's Will. So the Pharisees protest, *"Are you trying to teach us? And you a sinner!"* For like the disciples they assume blindness is a punishment for sin, so they drive him away because he believes Jesus is good.

Then Jesus seeks the man out and asks him: *"Do you believe in the Son of Man?"*, (meaning the Christ or the Saviour). Having suffered excommunication for Jesus's sake, the once blind man is ready to listen to His teaching. *"Tell me who he is, sir, that I may believe in him!"* Jesus replies, *"You have seen Him, and it is He who is speaking to you"*. The man hears, he sees, and he says: *"Lord, I believe"*, and he worships Jesus. So we see how, first because of the miracle, then by following the Pharisees' arguments concerning Jesus's goodness or wickedness, the once blind man now sees both with his bodily eyes, and now finally with the inner "eyes" of faith, that Jesus is not just a healer, but the Messiah.

This is in stark contrast to the Pharisees, who remain obdurate in their resistance to Jesus, and convinced that, because He heals on the Sabbath Day, regardless of the goodness of what He has done, He must be a sinner, too. Jesus therefore says at the end of this scene: *"For judgement I have come into the world so that those who do not see may see and those who see may become blind"*. The sight of which He speaks is that of faith, just as the blindness of which He speaks is that of unbelief. It is of such wilful unbelief that Jesus convicts the Pharisees, saying *"because you say 'we see', your guilt remains"*.

Sunday March 2nd: *Laetare* or "Mothering" Sunday (Rose)

Year 1 or A of the Lectionary at Mass

- 8.30 a.m. **Low Mass**
- 9.30 a.m. **1962 rite Mass (in the church)**
- 10.30 a.m. **Solemn High Mass**
- 12.00 p.m. **(Families with young children)**
- 5.30 p.m. **Sung Congregational Mass**
- **Vespers and Benediction at 7.30 p.m.**

Liturgical Calendar

Monday to Friday: Masses at 7.30 a.m., 12.45 p.m. and 5.45 p.m.

Rosary at 7.45 p.m. STATIONS OF THE CROSS ON FRIDAYS IN LENT: 1.10 & 8 p.m.

Confessions are heard from 12.30 p.m. and from 5.30 p.m. until the end of Mass

Monday March 3rd: Monday of Lent Week 4. (Purple)

- **Blessing with St Philip's relic at 8 p.m.**

Tuesday March 4th: Tuesday of Lent Week 4. (Purple) Optional commemoration of St Casimir.

- **Benediction at 8 p.m.** Brothers of the Little Oratory meet after Benediction in St Philip's Chapel.

St Casimir (1460-83) He was a prince of Poland who shunned his wealth and luxuries. He refused his father's order to invade Hungary and imprisoned for three months. The remainder of his short life was spent in prayer, penance and helping the poor. He is the patron of Poland and of Lithuania.

Wednesday March 5th: Wednesday of Lent Week 4. (Purple)

Thursday March 6th: Thursday of Lent Week 4. (Purple)

Friday March 7th: Friday of Lent Week 4. (Purple) Optional commemoration of Sts Perpetua and Felicity, Martyrs.

- **Stations of the Cross at 1.10 and 8 p.m.**

Sts Perpetua & Felicity (d.203) Both were married women and mothers; Perpetua was from a noble family and Felicity was a slave. Despite the fact that the emperor, Septimius Severus, had forbidden conversions to the faith, both became Christians and so were imprisoned at Carthage. They were sentenced to be thrown to the wild beasts in the amphitheatre. They were much revered in the early Church and the names are included in the Roman Canon of the Mass.

Saturday March 8th: Saturday of Lent Week 4. (Purple) Optional commemoration of St John of God, Religious.

- **Masses at 8 a.m. and 11 a.m.**
- **Exposition of the Blessed Sacrament from 8.30 to 10.45 a.m.**
- **Benediction at 10.45 a.m.**
- **Confessions from 10.55 a.m. to 12 noon & from 5.30 p.m. until the end of Mass**
- **Vigil Mass of THE FIFTH SUNDAY OF LENT at 5.45 p.m.**

St John of God: (1495-1550) Born in Portugal, until the age of forty, he had various careers; he had been a shepherd, soldier, superintendent of slaves, and a vendor of religious books in Gibraltar. Hearing a sermon by St John of Avila, he was inspired to change his life and devoted his time to the care of the poor and sick, working in a hospital in Grenada, which he founded. Slowly he drew a dedicated circle of disciples whom he organised into the Order of Hospitallers (*now the Brothers of St John of God*). He is the patron of the sick and hospitals.

Sunday March 9th: The FIFTH SUNDAY OF LENT (Purple)

Mass & Service Times:

- **8.30 a.m. Low Mass**
- **9.30 a.m. Latin Mass 1962 Missal**
- **10.30 a.m. Solemn High Mass**
- **12.00 p.m. (Families with young children)**
- **5.30 p.m. Sung Congregational Mass in English**
- **Vespers and Benediction: 7.30 p.m.**

Please pray for the sick: Doreen Ogunnaike, Elaine Roberts, Derek Botowski, Marie-Thérèse Jones, Dorothy Price, Ellen Westwood, Margaret Casey, Jacqueline Griffiths, Frank McGuinness, George Saunders and Desmond Williams. **Of your charity please pray for the repose of the souls of those who have died recently:** Patrick Nash, Michael Miller, Maureen Bryan and James Broderick; **and of the souls of those whose anniversaries occur about now:** Fr Humphrey Crookenden of this Oratory, Elena Cozzi, Elsie Kraft, Maura Kelly, Thomas Molloy and John Milton.

The following are requested to read next weekend,

March 7th/8th: The 5th Sunday of Lent

Saturday 5.45 p.m.: Tracey Butler

Sunday 8.30 a.m.: Margaret Hawkins

12.00 p.m.: Dennis Wood

5.30 p.m.: Simon Stacey

Collections

The 3rd Sunday of Lent, 24th February:

Offertory: £1,540

Second: Diocesan Development Fund: £529

Thank you

The second Collection today will be for the provision of Music in the Holy Week Liturgy

TODAY

MOTHERING SUNDAY, also known as "Laetare" (Rejoice), or "Refreshment" Sunday, is the one day in Lent when we are allowed to relax our Lenten penances, especially to celebrate with our Mothers, if we are fortunate enough to be able to do so, and to thank God for them and all they have done and still do for us!

HUMAN FERTILISATION AND EMBRYOLOGY BILL If you haven't yet sent a letter or a postcard to your MP, please do so, it only takes a moment to fill in the card and stick a stamp on it. Also, please sign the Petition at the Church Doors. That only takes a moment!

PIETY STALL: Easter cards are on sale and also cards and gifts for Confirmation and First Holy Communion in addition to a large selection of books, rosaries, statues etc.

PRO LIFE TIMES: The latest edition is now available FREE at the Church doors.

LENTEN ALMS: The box for your Lenten alms-giving is near the Plough and Harrow Door. Proceeds are for Father Hudson's Society.

THIS WEEK

The Sacrament of CONFIRMATION will be administered by Bishop Pargeter, during Holy Mass on Wednesday at 7 p.m.

ORATORY PRIMARY SCHOOL TALKS FOR PARENTS / Carers: The fifth in this important series of talks is on **Monday** from 2.00— 3.15 p.m. in the Oratory School Hall, on the subject of **Sex Education**, and is open to all parents of children in the school. The title of the talk is: **"Family Life and Relationships: The Truth & Meaning of Human Sexuality"**. The talk, (which is the earlier postponed third talk) and will be given by Antonia Tully who works for SPUC's Safe at School campaign, supporting parents against government policy with regard to sex education in schools. We hope that, if at all possible, parents will attend these very important talks.

ADORATION AT REDNAL will take place this week on Tuesday commencing with Mass at 2.30 p.m.

LENTEN TALKS: The fourth talk will be on Saturday, in the Lower Cloister Hall after the 11 a.m. Mass, on "Conscience". The talk: "True and False Conscience" will be given by Fr. Paul.

ELCT ECUMENICAL LENT DISCUSSIONS on characters in the Passion story continue on Tuesday 4th March with coffee at 7.15 for 7.30 p.m. at the Church of the Redeemer, Monument Road. next topic: "Our Lady, St. Mary, Mother of Jesus".

IRISH NIGHT: at St Paul's Girls School this Friday night. Please see the poster in the Notice Board for details.

THE LEGION OF MARY are hosting a "Welcome Home" Talk for lapsed Catholics, with a cup of tea, at 11.45 a.m. (after 11 a.m. Mass) next Saturday, 8th March at St. Francis, Handsworth

FORTHCOMING EVENTS

CATHOLIC WOMEN'S BOOK CLUB will next meet on 11th March when Joanna Bogle will be there to discuss her new book: "A Year-book of Seasons & Celebrations". On the day, she will be happy to sign copies of her book (available on the piety stall, now £7.50). All women are welcome. Please contact Jackie Parkes: 688 4154

Dates for your Diary:-

SEVEN CHURCHES WALK: Monday 17th March, from 2 pm. to 5.45 approx. Please remember that you need to be

PRO-LIFE MORNING OF PRAYER AND WITNESS on GOOD FRIDAY from 12 noon to 3 p.m. outside the Calthorpe Clinic, Arthur Rd.

DIVINE MERCY SUNDAY AFTERNOON: March 30th. Adoration and Confessions from 2.30 p.m. ending with Mass at 4.30 p.m.

EX CATHEDRA is performing Handel's "Messiah" on Saturday April 5th in Symphony Hall. For tickets telephone 0121 780 3333

NOTICES

PALM SUNDAY, 16th March. Please note that the Blessing of Palms and Procession will begin at **10.15 a.m. in the Sports Hall**. As usual, palms will only be available at, and after, the High Mass and only until they are all taken. First come, first served!