

The Saint Raphael Link

Some Periodic Ramblings of the Prior

DECEMBER 2020 Issue 40)

Email: revgeoffreyrobinson@ntlworld.com / Tele: 07817 825624



Dear Members,

Advent is one of my favourite seasons in the Church Year. Not because it is closely linked with the Biblical Exile, but more particularly, as it speaks about hope in the midst of despair.

It can also produce a sense of purpose and commitment in the midst of turmoil; reminding us that God's dream for humanity is always there if we care to withstand all things to the contrary.

Today, in the midst of many situations, which can create feelings of hopelessness; it is easy for us to be overwhelmed and numbed. We can feel powerless and unable to make a difference to the lives of many people, who are suffering in many different ways.

Nonetheless, when we are on the side of the poor, the vulnerable, those people who are sick and suffering - when we stand in solidarity with those without hope and act together, we can be channels of peace and of hope.

In opening our eyes and hearts to the sufferings of our world, hope can be awakened, a hope that allows us to see things from the God's perspective rather than our own.

Thinking about this recently, I recalled a short story that I read some time ago about a mother who had three sons. In due course, each one of them left home and went out into the world. After working hard for several years, each of them began to prosper. Then just before Christmas, they all decided to meet to discuss the gifts they would like to give to their elderly mother.

The first son said, "I'll build a big house for our mother." The second son said, "I'll buy her a

Mercedes with a driver." The third son just smiled and said, "I can beat both of those ideas".

Do you remember how mum enjoyed reading the Bible? Well, now that she can't see very well, I'm going to send her a remarkable parrot that recites the entire Bible. It took years to train him and he's the only parrot in the whole world that can do this. All mum has to do is to name the chapter and verse, and the parrot will recite it."

After Christmas, mum sent out her letters of thanks: Firstly, she wrote her son David, "The house you built is so huge. I live in only one room, but I have to clean the whole house."

To her son John, she wrote, "I am too old to travel. I mostly stay at home, so I rarely use the Mercedes, and that driver is so rude!"

"Dearest Simon," she wrote to her third son, "You had the good sense to know what your mother really likes. The chicken you sent was delicious; I cooked and ate it for Christmas lunch!"

In today's Gospel, Jesus uses The Parable of the Faithful Servant, which is similar to The Parable of the Ten Virgins, to remind his disciples of the need to be alert. A kind of spiritual sensitivity and vigilance, which allows us to discern God's presence and action in the world and to make a faithful response to it.

The parable stresses the element of waiting in the dark of night as a symbol of transition. The dark of night is a short interval, a time in which one stands between the old and the new. Yet we must each learn to listen in silence and stillness.

Our task is to live our lives between the pain of the present world and the hope of the future.

Only then, can we begin to discern and act according to the promptings of the Holy Spirit.

Through the symbolism of Advent, we are often reminded of the need for us to take stock of our lives; to watch, and to wait. Like John the

Baptist, let us seek humility, repentance and be open to the call of conversion. As a Church, we must return to the core of the Gospel, which is love, compassion, justice, and solidarity with the poor. It must return to its ancient role of being a refuge for the poor and an oasis for the oppressed.

Advent should be a time of reflection, a kind of spiritual wilderness in which the Spirit of God led Jesus himself at the beginning of his public ministry. It is a time of letting go of ourselves from the unnecessary trappings of life, and focusing on the things, which matter most.

Advent is a time when we should seek to nourish ourselves more deeply from Jesus, who is the source of life and love.

The slightly humorous story of the mother and her three sons should serve as a reminder for each one of us. They only saw things from their own narrow perspectives, rather than letting God bring about his plan for us and for his church.

Let us pray that during this Advent Season, we may all become more authentic signs of his presence and love in the world. Then we like Mary, who submitted humbly and courageously to God at every turn in her strenuous journey, help us to become his true and humble servants.

Amen.

+*Geoffrey* – GRAND PRIOR

PLEASE PRAY FOR THE SICK:

Paul Shaw / Sheila Hogarth / Ruth Barr / Lesley Fudge / Thelma Thompson / Charlotte Park / Nicole Vendettuoli / Ivor MacFarlane / Clarice Shaw / Tony Kirby / Sally Hayes / Bishop Gerard & Pam Crane / Brian & Brigitte Duffett / Archbishop Norman & Dorothy Dutton / Eileen Duffy / Marjorie Hooley / Harry Shaw / Ian Weatherall / Lilian King / Luish Sao / William (Bill) Collier / Geoff Lamb / Bev & Barrie Chester / Chris McKenna / Barbara Lee / Johnny & Pat Williamson / Lesley & Mick / Alice Beer / Mary Ayrton / Alison Marshall / Janet Illingworth / Shelley Coulter / Una Kirby / Graham & his father (Coward) / Bro Adrian / Thelma Dunkley / Joanne Corbett / Irene Solley / Linda Webster / Jackson Amick / George Fitzwilliam / Sylvia Holgate / Monsignor Antonio Silliman (Brazil) / Ian Lester / Evie Campbell / Cath Bromilow /

James Hardman / Ted & Julie Wooley / Charles Mills / Jane Spiers / Richard Mackie / Darren Paige | Brian Keane OSR | Mary Dalton OSR / Matthew Shaw / Laura Spiers.

GUESS THE LOCATIONS

1. *The Holy House in Loreto, Italy* | 2. *The Holy House at the Anglican Shrine in Walsingham England.*

COOK'S CORNER:

Smoked Salmon Christmas Wreath



INGREDIENTS:

- 1 large fennel bulb, trimmed, core removed
- 3 limes
- 2 green shallots, trimmed
- 3 large ripe avocados
- 250g baby cucumbers, peeled into ribbons
- 200g (1 bunch) radishes, trimmed, washed, thinly sliced
- 400g sliced smoked salmon
- Extra virgin olive oil, to drizzle
- Crème fraîche, to serve
- Salmon roe, to serve
- Fresh dill sprigs, to serve
- Micro herbs, to serve
- Gluten-free crackers or crusty bread, to serve (optional)

METHOD

Step 1

Use a mandolin to very thinly slice the fennel lengthways. Place in a large bowl with the juice of 1 lime. Add a large pinch of salt, toss to combine and set aside to pickle.

Step 2

Cut shallots into 8cm lengths and thinly slice lengthways. Place in a bowl of iced water for 2-3 minutes or until lightly curled. Drain well. Roughly mash the avocados in a bowl. Add the juice from the remaining limes, season and stir to combine.

Step 3

Drain fennel. Arrange avocado in a heaped circle around the edge of a large plate. Arrange pickled fennel, cucumber, radish, shallot and salmon over the top. Drizzle with oil and season with pepper. Dollop on crème fraîche and salmon roe. Scatter with the dill and micro herbs. *Serve immediately with crackers or bread of choice.*

FACTS ABOUT THE CHURCH



Light is a common spiritual theme in Christian theology. In Genesis God's first words at creation were, "Let there be light"; and there was light. And God saw that the light was good" (Genesis 1:3-4).

Jesus even went so far as to identify himself with light, saying, "I am the light of the world; he who follows me will not walk in darkness, but will have the light of life" (John 8:12).

With this in mind it was fitting for Christians to spend much time and energy developing the design of windows in churches. Windows funnel the light of the sun and dispel the darkness of the shadows. Architects saw them as the perfect opportunity to highlight a spiritual truth while serving a functional purpose.

However, stained glass windows as we know them today were not developed until the 10th century. Prior to that the Egyptians and Romans had developed a technique for creating small coloured glass objects, but did not use the technology for large scale windows.

The oldest surviving complete stained glass window is found in the Augsburg Cathedral in Germany. It was constructed in the 11th century and was part of a project to make the windows larger and more beautiful. These windows not only served the spiritual purpose of bringing to mind how the light of God shatters our darkness, but also proved to be an important catechetical tool.

It was during the medieval period that stained glass windows became a primary way to teach the illiterate laity the many stories of the Bible. Often these windows, depending on the size of the church, would go from Genesis to Revelation, highlighting the most important stories in Salvation History.

The history of the Bible depicted in these windows would also be connected to a brief representation of Church history.

Saints were also shown in these windows and presented as a daily inspiration for the people struggling on their Christian journey. The windows were also used to illustrate the illumination of the mind with divine knowledge and how grace penetrates our world.

As technology improved over time, stained glass windows grew larger and larger, becoming extremely complicated and full of all kinds of symbolism.

On account of the complex artistry involved, stained glass windows were typically the last item to be installed in a new church and many years would pass until the final window was completed. The windows were also very expensive to produce and so to encourage donations, names of patrons would be etched on the bottom. In larger medieval churches, the patrons themselves would even be depicted along with the saints.

Stained glass windows are some of the most beautiful treasures of Christian churches and are there to inspire and teach the faithful many spiritual truths. They remain an essential part of church architecture and continue to be used in new constructions throughout the world.

A REMINDER FROM THE GRAND MASTER

Julian has asked that we notify the various Officers of the Order when any of our Members are ill. Given below are the contact details:-

Dame Helen Wilson (Almoner) –
rosewilson65@gmail.com

Chevalier David Heywood (Chancellor) -
training@microtutor.co.uk

Bishop Geoffrey (Prior) –
revgeoffreyrobinson@gmail.com

A CHRISTMAS PRAYER



May God grant us:

The Light of Christmas, which is Faith.
The warmth of Christmas, which is Love.
The radiance of Christmas, which is Joy.
The righteousness of Christmas, which is Purity.
The belief in Christmas, which is Truth.
The All of Christmas, which is CHRIST.

Amen.

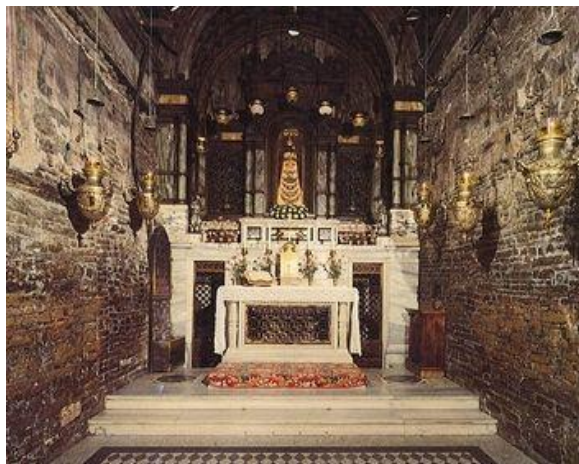
A SAINTS DAY IN DECEMBER

St. Bernard of Quintavalle



Bernard of Quintavalle, son of Berardello, (died 1241) was the first disciple of St. Francis of Assisi. Bernard was declared as the *Minorum Ordinis prima plantula*, the "First fruits of the Minor Orders". He accompanied Francis on a number of missionary journeys and served as Minister Provincial in Spain.

GUESS THE LOCATIONS



1.



2.



A HOLY & BLESSED CHRISTMAS



The Grand Master and his Officers wish all our Members and Friends of the Order a Blessed Christmas and a very happy New Year.



The Healing Teaching &
Chivalric Order of
St Raphael

www.orderofstaphael.org.uk