

St. Joseph's Family Activities

February 2022

Year C weeks 5-8

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<https://www.theannunciation.org.uk/resources/>



A blessed February!

February is indeed a blessed month! Our Sunday readings see Jesus' ministry developing and with that his teaching becomes challenging. We always need to be challenged by His words. If we are not, then they are not alive in us.

There are a range of other celebrations in February, beginning with the feast of St. Brigid, one of Ireland's patron saints, swiftly followed by Candlemas. Both these feasts offer lovely creative activities. There are quite a few interesting saints this month too, including one of my favourites, Blessed Fra Angelico and there is an activity using his art to sort the order of Jesus' earthly ministry. We celebrate the martyrdom of two wonderful but very different saints; St. Robert Southwell, one of England's Forty Martyrs, and St. Polycarp, a martyr from the middle of the second century. Different circumstances but the one and same faith in Our Lord Jesus Christ.

The next issue will come out towards the end of February and will cover Lent so it will be another bumper edition. If you have any suggestions for activities or prayers, please do send me suggestions... ideas are always welcome.

Recent past copies are available from

<https://www.theannunciation.org.uk/resources/>

If you are after copies that go back further, please contact me directly.

There are Four Dimensions of our Faith, and the activities all reflect one or more of each of these dimensions.

Jesus is the light of the world!

Candlemas celebrated on 2nd

February gets its name from the prayer of Simeon who says that the child before him will be a light for the gentiles and will be the glory of God's people, Israel (Lk. 2:32).

The use of candles in our churches is a reminder of Christ's light amongst us and some families like to have the candles used for prayer at home blessed on this day.

Even if this has not been your practice in the past, why don't you think about it this year?



The family is the "domestic Church" and if we are not able to gather in person with the parish, it's a good idea to set aside special times to pray with the family, even if it is just 10 minutes two or three times a week. These are graced moments. Light a candle and have a few moments' silence and remind everyone that they are in the presence of God who is Father, Son and Holy Spirit. These times are very precious and even if it is just a few minutes after a meal, it can be a fruitful time. Don't bite off more than you can chew! Start with just a few moments and build up the scope and variety of prayers slowly. Give everyone the opportunity to voice their own prayers as well as reciting traditional prayers.

**Speaking/Learning the faith
(which the Church calls
"professing the faith")**

**Living it (in Christ) – i.e. the
choices we make in
everyday life**

**Celebrating it in the Liturgy
and the Sacraments**

**Christian
prayer.**

**Gospel for Sunday 6th February; 5th
Sunday in Ordinary Time Year C**

Luke 5:1-11

Jesus was standing one day by the Lake of Gennesaret, with the crowd pressing round him listening to the word of God, when he caught sight of two boats close to the bank. The fishermen had gone out of them and were washing their nets. He got into one of the boats – it was Simon's – and asked him to put out a little from the shore. Then he sat down and taught the crowds from the boat.

When he had finished speaking, he said to Simon, 'Put out into deep water and pay out your nets for a catch.' 'Master,' Simon replied, 'we worked hard all night long and caught nothing, but if you say so, I will pay out the nets.' And when they had done this, they netted such a huge number of fish that their nets began to tear, so they signalled to their companions in the other boat to come and help them; when these came, they filled the two boats to sinking point.

When Simon Peter saw this, he fell at the knees of Jesus saying, 'Leave me, Lord; I am a sinful man.' For he and all his companions were completely overcome by the catch they had made; so also, were James and John, sons of Zebedee, who were Simon's partners. But Jesus said to Simon, 'Do not be afraid; from now on it is men you will catch.' Then, bringing their boats back to land, they left everything and followed him.

The Gospel of the Lord

R/: ***Praise to you Lord Jesus Christ***

Children's liturgy of the word for this week

Discussion on the Gospel



- ✚ Light a candle
- ✚ Make the Sign of the Cross
- ✚ Someone read the Gospel slowly

The call of the disciples varies slightly here from John's Gospel but that does not matter. Jesus calls us many times and as we need to hear that call many times, and so it was with His first disciples.

Q: What was the crowd doing? (A: pressing around Jesus, listening to Him.)

Q: Why did Jesus get into a boat? (A: To teach people better as in the middle of a crowd, he could not teach them easily.)

Q: What did Jesus ask Simon to do? (A: To put out into deep water to catch more fish.)

Q: What was Simon's response? (A: They had been fishing all night and had caught nothing. *Note, fishing was generally done at night when the fish were nearer the surface of the water.*)

Q: What happened when Simon obeyed Jesus and let down the net? (A: They caught so many fish that their nets began to tear.)

Q: What did Simon Peter say and do? (A: Fell at Jesus' feet saying, "Leave me Lord, ...".)

Q: Why did Simon say this? (A: He was scared/overwhelmed/realised his own inadequacy/sinfulness next to Jesus' glory. *No doubt he had also been moved or had learned something from Jesus' teaching and realised that he was but a poor fisherman, who knew very little detail about God's plan of salvation.*)

Q: What did Jesus say to Simon and the others? (A: Do not be afraid, from now on you will be fishers of men.)

Q: What does Jesus mean by saying that they will be "fishers of men"? (A: That they will go out and tell people about Jesus and "fish them out" of their ordinary lives to be able to live with Jesus.)

Q: What did Simon and the others do then? (A: They left everything to follow Jesus.)

Jesus calls us to follow Him as well. We can follow Him in our everyday lives by spending time with Him in prayer, and also when we come to church. On the next page is a guided meditation reflecting on Jesus' call to each one of us.

Read this slowly and gently aloud and try to join in yourself mentally. Where there are a series of dots, pause a bit to allow the picture to develop in everyone's mind.

Shut your eyes and imagine you can see Jesus by the Sea (it's a big lake really). There are a lot of people around and you are there. Jesus gets into Simon's boat and carries on teaching. His voice is loud and clear over the water.... What can you hear Him saying? Then watch, the men lower the nets in the daytime, that is amazing!.... See them haul in the nets and they are full of fish!..... Simon is shocked and kneels down, his head bowed in shame.... But Jesus tells him to get up.... You hear Him saying, "Follow me, and I will make you into fishers of men"..... You watch Simon, Andrew, James and John leave their boats and follow Jesus..... Then Jesus turns and smiles at you..... See Him smiling at you..... Feel His love pouring into your heart.... He gently says your name (add the names if you wish, gently)..... Jesus then says "I love you"..... Hear Him saying this. Hear his gentle voice.... He says it again..... "I love you".... then He says, "Will you follow me too?"..... Answer Him in the silence of your heart.... Your answer is private, just between you and Jesus.

When you are ready, you can come back into the room.

Which of these choices are following Jesus? Colour in the boxes that are things we do to follow Jesus.

When I say "Good morning Jesus" when I wake up.

When I pay attention at Mass and do my best to follow the readings and prayers.

When I help at home because I love like Jesus loves.

When I say grace (prayers) before and after my meals.

When I don't bother to say my prayers at bedtime.

When I invite someone to join in with my game at school.

When I don't do my best work at school.

When I sit and read a story from the Bible.

When I drop litter.

When I look at the beautiful world and say thank you to our heavenly Father.

When I smile and am polite to people.

When I just take a big sigh and tell Jesus that I love Him.

When I am disobedient to my parents.

When I say thank you to people.

When I shout and argue with family members.

When things are difficult, I ask the Holy Spirit to help me.

Children's liturgy of the word for this week



Gospel for Sunday 13th February; 6th Sunday of Ordinary Time Year C

Luke 6:17,20-26

Jesus stopped at a piece of level ground where there was a large gathering of his disciples with a great crowd of people from all parts of Judaea and from Jerusalem and from the coastal region of Tyre and Sidon. Then fixing his eyes on his disciples he said:

‘How happy are you who are poor: yours is the kingdom of God.

Happy you who are hungry now: you shall be satisfied.

Happy you who weep now: you shall laugh.

Happy are you when people hate you, drive you out, abuse you, denounce your name as criminal, on account of the Son of Man. Rejoice when that day comes and dance for joy, for then your reward will be great in heaven. This was the way their ancestors treated the prophets.

‘But alas for you who are rich: you are having your consolation now.

Alas for you who have your fill now: you shall go hungry.

Alas for you who laugh now: you shall mourn and weep.

‘Alas for you when the world speaks well of you! This was the way their ancestors treated the false prophets.’

The Gospel of the Lord

R/: *Praise to you Lord Jesus Christ*

Discussion on the Gospel

- ✚ Light a candle
- ✚ Make the Sign of the Cross
- ✚ Someone read the Gospel slowly

We are more familiar with these teachings of Jesus from the “Sermon on the Mount” in Matthew’s Gospel. Apart from the location – here, Jesus is on “level ground” and in Matthew He is on a mountain (echoing Moses bringing down the Ten Commandments from Mount Sinai) – the message is the same. True happiness comes not from worldly riches and superficial “fun” but from real happiness, and our deepest joy comes from following and being with Jesus. This is a perfect Gospel after last week’s, when “we” (along with the disciples) were invited to follow Jesus.

Q: Who does Jesus say are happy? (A: The poor, the hungry those who weep (cry) those who are hated etc.)

Q: What is the reward for these sufferings? (A: the Kingdom of Heaven, satisfied, laughter/Our reward will be great in heaven...)

Q: What does Jesus say about those who are rich and who have everything now? (A: They will be hungry etc...)

Q: Jesus is telling us that it is not easy to be one of His followers, but that in the end, staying close to Him will give us a real deep joy and happiness. When are we closest to Jesus? (A: Various, but most particularly when we are at Mass.)

Q: Why are we the closest to Jesus at Mass? (A: Because Jesus is present in Holy Communion.)

Q: How else is Jesus with us at Mass? (In the person of the priest, in the readings [the word of the Lord] and in the congregation [Jesus said that where we are gathered together in His name, He is with us].)

Q: When we come into a Catholic church we genuflect, why? (A: Because Jesus is present in the Tabernacle and by genuflecting, we acknowledge His presence in the saved hosts (Holy Communion).)

Q: What little prayer can we say whilst we genuflect to remind ourselves that we are in the presence of Jesus who is united to His Father and the Holy Spirit? (A: The Sign of the Cross.)

In the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit

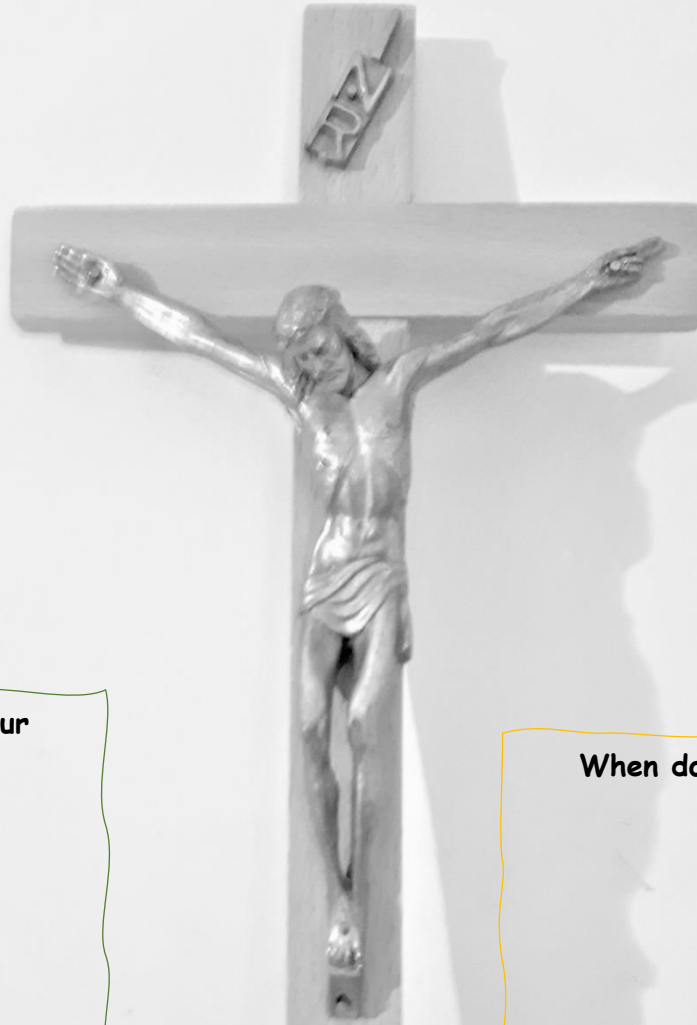
Either write your answers to these questions about the Sign of the Cross in the Four Dimensions of the Faith or choose some of the colour-coded labels from the next page to stick in correct boxes.

Why do we say, "in the NAME of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit"?

When do we make the Sign of the Cross in the liturgy (Mass) and sacraments?

When do we make the Sign of the Cross during our everyday lives?

When do we make the Sign of the Cross in prayer?



We are baptised into the NAME of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit.	The Sign of the Cross shows that we believe in God who is Father, Son and Holy Spirit.	The Sign of the Cross helps us to be strong in our faith.
We make the Sign of the Cross at the beginning and end of Mass.	We make a Sign of the Cross over our bodies with our arms because it shows that our whole bodies are important.	The Sign of the Cross helps us to stay close to Jesus when we are tempted to make wrong choices.
We make the Sign of the Cross when we genuflect in front of the Tabernacle.	Making the Sign of the Cross with our bodies shows that we don't always need words to pray.	The Sign of the Cross is a beautiful short prayer.
The Sign of the Cross reminds us of the grace that Jesus gives us to help us love Him and other people.	The Sign of the Cross reminds us that Jesus died on a cross.	The Sign of the Cross is like a door that we go through to be able to pray.
We make the Sign of the Cross on our forehead, lips and heart at the Gospel.	The Sign of the Cross was marked on us by our parents and godparents when we were baptised.	We make the Sign of the Cross when we see an ambulance to pray for the person inside.
On Ash Wednesday we are marked with ash in a cross shape.	The Sign of the Cross is recognised all over the world as a prayer.	Some people make the Sign of the Cross when they see a funeral to pray for the person who has died.
The Sign of the Cross means that we belong to God who is Father, Son and Holy Spirit.	When we make the Sign of the Cross it shows that we love Jesus who died for us on the cross.	The Sign of the Cross is like a shield in front of our bodies.
The Sign of the Cross means that we are joined to Jesus.	The priest makes the Sign of the Cross over the bread and wine before it becomes Jesus' Body and Blood.	We make the Sign of the Cross when we say grace before meals as it is like inviting Jesus to be with us.

**Gospel for Sunday 20th February; 7th
Sunday of Ordinary Time Year C**

Luke 6:27-38

Jesus said to his disciples: 'I say this to you who are listening: Love your enemies, do good to those who hate you, bless those who curse you, pray for those who treat you badly. To the man who slaps you on one cheek, present the other cheek too; to the man who takes your cloak from you, do not refuse your tunic. Give to everyone who asks you, and do not ask for your property back from the man who robs you. Treat others as you would like them to treat you. If you love those who love you, what thanks can you expect? Even sinners love those who love them. And if you do good to those who do good to you, what thanks can you expect? For even sinners do that much. And if you lend to those from whom you hope to receive, what thanks can you expect? Even sinners lend to sinners to get back the same amount. Instead, love your enemies and do good, and lend without any hope of return. You will have a great reward, and you will be sons of the Most High, for he himself is kind to the ungrateful and the wicked.

'Be compassionate as your Father is compassionate. Do not judge, and you will not be judged yourselves; do not condemn, and you will not be condemned yourselves; grant pardon, and you will be pardoned. Give, and there will be gifts for you: a full measure, pressed down, shaken together, and running over, will be poured into your lap; because the amount you measure out is the amount you will be given back.'

The Gospel of the Lord

R/: *Praise to you Lord Jesus Christ*

Children's liturgy of the word for this week

Discussion on the Gospel



- ✚ Light a candle
- ✚ Make the Sign of the Cross
- ✚ Someone read the Gospel slowly

The Gospel paints a picture of the ideal Christian world which can seem to be so impossible that we can be tempted to give up at the first hurdle. However, we can live as Jesus commands by the grace of the Holy Spirit. Some people think that turning our cheeks seems to indicate that Jesus wants us to be "doormats," but it is about retaining our dignity. (For a fuller explanation of the cultural background on these instructions see the explanation at the end of these pages.)

Q: Jesus gives us a lot of instructions here, what are the positive verbs (actions) that He says? (A: Listening, love, do good, bless, pray, do not refuse, give, treat others, be compassionate, do not judge, do not condemn, pardon (forgive)....)

Q: Who is Jesus telling us to love? (A: Our enemies.)

Q: Why does Jesus ask us to love our enemies? (A: So that we will have a great reward.)

Q: What does "being compassionate" mean? (A: Being kind to those who are in difficulties, loving, caring etc.)

Q: Why does Jesus tell us not to judge? (A: Judging is like criticising. If we judge people, we may not know what is going on inside them. Only Jesus knows the real reason someone does what they do.)

Q: As well as loving, Jesus also tells us to give. To whom must we give? (A: To everyone who asks.)

Q: What will happen when we give? (A: God will reward us with far more than we have ever given! ["a full measure, pressed down...."])

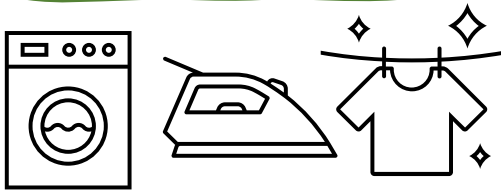
Q: Giving does not always have to be things, we can give of our time. How can we give of our time this week? (A: Open....)

Q: Doing as Jesus asks is not always easy, but it is not impossible for us as Jesus has given someone to help us. Who is that? (A: the Holy Spirit)

Think about how you are going to give time this week and say a quiet prayer to the Holy Spirit asking Him to help you.

Here are some ideas about how we can show Jesus how much we love Him by giving time to help other people. Tick or colour in the things that you could do this week.

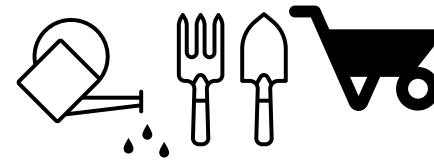
I can show my love for Jesus by helping with the laundry at home.



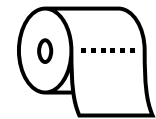
Make my own and other family member's beds.



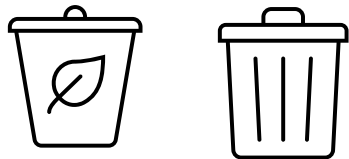
I can show my love for Jesus by helping in the garden



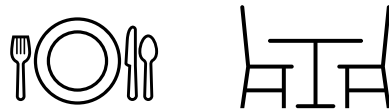
I can show my love for Jesus by changing the loo roll when it's empty!



I can show my love for Jesus by taking out the bins.



I can show my love for Jesus by laying the table.



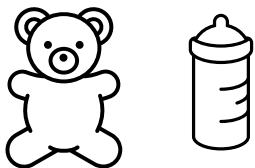
I can show my love for Jesus by helping with the housework.



I can show my love for Jesus by baking a cake or helping with the cooking (and cleaning up afterwards).



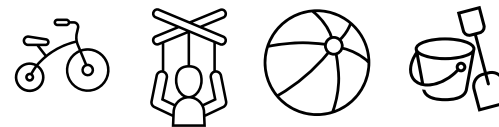
I can show my love for Jesus by helping to look after a younger brother or sister.



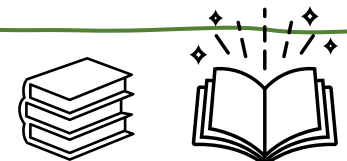
I can show my love for Jesus by helping making tea for the family.



I can show my love for Jesus by tidying up at home or at school.



I can show my love for Jesus by reading to a younger sibling or by hearing them read.



**Gospel for Sunday 27th
February; 8th Sunday of
Ordinary Time Year C**

Luke 6:39-45

Jesus told a parable to his disciples: 'Can one blind man guide another? Surely both will fall into a pit? The disciple is not superior to his teacher; the fully trained disciple will always be like his teacher. Why do you notice the splinter in your brother's eye and never notice the plank in your own? How can you say to your brother, "Brother, let me take out the splinter that is in your eye," when you cannot see the plank in your own? Hypocrite! Take the plank out of your own eye first, and then you will see clearly enough to take out the splinter that is in your brother's eye.

'There is no sound tree that produces rotten fruit, nor again a rotten tree that produces sound fruit. For every tree can be told by its own fruit: people do not pick figs from thorns, nor gather grapes from brambles. A good man draws what is good from the store of goodness in his heart; a bad man draws what is bad from the store of badness. For a man's words flow out of what fills his heart.'

The Gospel of the Lord

R/: *Praise to you Lord Jesus*

Christ

Children's liturgy of the word for this week

Discussion on the Gospel



- ✠ Light a candle
- ✠ Make the Sign of the Cross
- ✠ Someone read the Gospel slowly

Jesus gives us three images here on how to live as Christians: 1. That we have to know Jesus to be able to lead people to Jesus (the blind can't lead the blind); 2. That we are prone to criticise others but be "blind" to our own faults; 3. Our "goodness" comes from the goodness inside us.

Q: Jesus is talking about how we can help other people today and starts by referring to blind people. What is a blind person? (A: Someone who can't see.)

Q: What does Jesus say would happen if a blind person leads another blind person? (A: Both will fall into a pit.)

Q: What does Jesus mean by this? (A: If the person who is leading can't see where to go, both people will be in danger.)

Q: Jesus often talks about people who don't know who He is, as being "blind". What is the second example He gives in today's Gospel about not being able to see? (A: ... The splinter and the plank.)

Q: Here Jesus is saying that before we criticise other people, we need to make sure that we are not doing wrong things ourselves. Finally, Jesus talks about good trees and rotten trees. What does He say about them? (A: See the text opposite.)

Q: Last week in the Gospel we learned about all the good things that Jesus was teaching us to do, can anyone remember them? (A: Loving, not judging, giving....)

Q: When we give to other people or are nice to them, because we love Jesus, what kind of tree are we like? (A: A good tree.)

Q: When we look at the bad things that we have done and say sorry to Jesus, and try to not do them again, what are we doing? (A: Taking the plank out of our eyes [some children may refer to the Sacrament of Reconciliation and may say they are going to Confession, which is great!])

Q: How can we grow into being like good trees that bear lots of good fruit? (A: Open, e.g. paying attention at Mass, praying, reading the Bible, listening to the homily at Mass/to our teachers/parents....)

Let's just close our eyes and privately ask Jesus to help us to grow into "good trees" that bear lots of good fruit.

Which of these lines lead to Jesus and which lead to falling into a pit?



I decide to pray the "Our Father" every day and invite a friend or brother or sister to pray with me.

I come to Mass but spend the whole time trying to distract someone else.

I make a little booklet of write some of my favourite prayers to give to someone who is isolating or who can't get to Mass.

I invite my friend to come to something at church with me.

I tell a friend that I can play on a Sunday instead of going to Mass.



Some February Festivals

1st February, St. Brigid of Ireland

As with many of the early Irish saints, not a lot of detail is known about her, the foremost woman saint of Ireland. Born a pagan, near Dundalk in about 451, she converted to Christianity after hearing St. Patrick preach. She founded a monastery at Kildare for both men and women (Ireland's first women's monastic community) where she died in 525. The origin of "St. Brigid's cross" (traditionally made on this day), is also shrouded in mystery. Tradition says that she used it to explain the meaning of Christ's Passion, death, Resurrection and Ascension to a seriously ill chieftain. He was so impressed that he was baptised, and died holding the cross to his breast.

We can reflect on two main questions here;

1. Who has impressed us with their teaching about Jesus?
2. What can we say to other people about Jesus?

Make a St. Brigid's Cross.

The cross pictured here was given to me and I treasure it dearly as my confirmation saint is "Brigid". Why don't you have a go at making one - if you can't get hold of rushes, use paper straws.

Here is a link to a website that shows how to make St. Brigid Crosses, and if you do make any, please send me photos to share.



https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Yn_MG4HZVOo

2nd February, Feast of the Presentation in the Temple, or Candlemas

Today's feast has three names.

1. Purification of Mary
2. Presentation in the Temple
3. Candlemas.



Read **Luke 2:22-32** and see if you can work out why this feast has these three names.

1. Why was the feast called the "Purification of Mary"?

Because it was the mother who needed to be "purified" after giving birth and this happened when a sacrifice was made in the temple.

2. Why is today's feast called the "Presentation in the Temple"?

Because the Law said that the first born male (boy) was to be consecrated to God - that is dedicated to God. (Note - just because Jesus is referred to as the "firstborn" does not mean that Mary had other children, which she did not. An only child is also a firstborn child.) As of course we can't kill children to sacrifice them to God, parents were asked to make a sacrifice of an animal instead. Usually this would be a goat or if you were rich, a bull, but Mary and Joseph could not afford these, so they sacrificed two small birds. That was all that they could afford.

3. Why Candlemas?

Note the words of Simeon, who said that his eyes have seen the salvation which was promised. That is Jesus - and he says that He (Jesus) is a light to enlighten the pagans. Later on Jesus would call say about Himself "I am the light of the World"(Jn. 8:12). We light candles to remind us that Jesus shows us the way to live - He helps us to "see".

On the next page are some suggestions on how you can decorate your own candles.



I found these pictures by looking online, with the exception of the large one on the left, which is what was made in a workshop with children in the parish.

Acrylic paint works well on candles (just make sure that clothes are well-protected).

As ever, if you make any, please send me photos to share.

3rd February: St. Blaise:



He was bishop of Sebaste and was martyred, probably early in the fourth century. Devotion to him spread throughout the Church during the Middle Ages. We traditionally ask him to pray for protection of our throats, and often, after Mass on this day, priests would bless throats with a pair of crossed candles like this (on the left) calling upon St. Blaise to protect us from diseases of the throat.

*Through the intercession of St Blaise, bishop and martyr, may God deliver you from ailments of the throat and from every other evil.
† In the Name of the Father, and of the Son
and of the Holy Spirit. Amen. †*



**8th February, St. Josephine St Josephine Bakhita
(1869 - 1947)**

Josephine Bakhita was born near Jebel Agilere in South Darfur in what is now Sudan. She was kidnapped when still a young child, and was sold as a slave. The life of a slave was hard, and Josephine had to work very long hours with little food and no comfort. Again and again, she was sold to different families and was treated very cruelly. One day a Christian family from Italy rescued her by buying her, and took her to Italy with them. They treated her very well as if she was a member of their family, and she joined in with their family prayers, and went to Mass with them. Eventually she heard God calling her to become a religious sister and joined the Canossian Daughters of Charity. She spent the rest of her life living at Schio, a small village near Vicenza, serving the poor with a great deal of devotion and prayer. She died on 8 February, 1947.



St. Josephine Bakhita is an example of someone who came to know Jesus through the example of Christian living. The family that rescued her not only saved her life and gave her a chance to grow up free from slavery, but by their practice of the faith Josephine was able to come to know Jesus and hear Him call her to serve the poor.

We must never be afraid of practicing our faith, even if we have visitors who are not Christian in our home. We never know how God is going to use our witness for His glory.

St. Josephine Bakhita, pray for us that we may courageously live our Christian faith even when those around us do not know you. Amen.

11th February, Our Lady of Lourdes



In 1858 a poor illiterate young girl called Bernadette Soubirous was gathering sticks near a cavern called "de Massabielle" when she saw a beautiful woman who said that she was "The Immaculate Conception." This is one of the titles that the Church has given to Our Lady and it means that SHE (Mary) was conceived without sin. (It is not about the way Jesus was conceived in her womb).

At the spot where Mary appeared a stream began to flow, and many people have been healed physically and spiritually by bathing in these waters.

Many dioceses organise pilgrimages to Lourdes. May be you have been on one? Whether or not you have, today you can say a special prayer for those who are sick, asking Mary, our Blessed Mother to comfort and heal them.

Ever Immaculate Virgin Mother of Mercy, Health of the sick, refuge of sinners, Comforter of the afflicted, you know my wants, my troubles, my sufferings; look with mercy on me. Amen.

14th February, Sts. Cyril (827-869) and Methodius (826-885)

Sts. Cyril and Methodius were declared Patrons of Europe by Pope St John Paul II because they worked so hard to take the Gospel to the Eastern European countries. They were brothers who born in Thessalonica in Greece (The same place that St Paul wrote to in his letters to the Thessalonians), and both became priests. They went to Moravia, Bohemia and Bulgaria to tell people the Good News of Jesus and when there were there, they translated liturgical texts (Mass) into the Slavonic language, inventing the Cyrillic alphabet which many of our Eastern European friends are familiar with. After Cyril's death Methodius became Bishop of Pannonia in Hungary, where he continued to evangelise. Because he was firm in his beliefs, some people got jealous and attacked him for his faith. However, he was always supported by the Pope.

If you can speak other languages, translate these phrases from the Bible into as many languages as you can: Send me any of your translations to include another time!

"My Soul Magnifies the Lord" (Lk. 1:46)

"Go and make disciples of all nations, baptising them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit" (Mt. 28:19).

"I am the Bread of Life" (Jn. 6:35).

14th February St. Valentine (C.269)

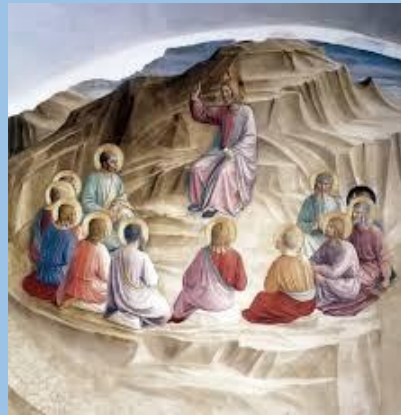
There are more legends than facts, surrounding St. Valentine. What we do know is that he was a priest living in Rome who was martyred because he refused to stop worshipping Jesus. The emperor Claudius II had declared that everyone should worship him, but Valentine said that we must only worship God. Some stories say that Valentine had tried to be friends with Claudius and had tried to teach him about Jesus. He had told the emperor that Jesus Christ loves him and that he would lose nothing and gain everything by becoming a Christian. However, Claudius was too frightened to accept Jesus and instead put Valentine in prison. When in prison, he wrote letters to the emperor's daughter telling her about Jesus and ended with "from your Valentine." It was not a romantic letter though!

Valentine was let out of prison, and he thought that he would be free to carry on telling people about Jesus Christ, but on 14th February, he was set upon and was beaten with clubs and stones, before being beheaded outside the Flaminian Gate in Rome. He was buried at a Christian cemetery on the Via Flaminia.

Why has his feast day become associated with romantic love? In Rome at that time, the Romans used to spend three days celebrating Romanic love and it was a coincidence that Valentine was martyred during the middle of these celebrations.

St. Valentine is also patron saint of bee-keepers and epileptics as well as of lovers.

Spend a few moments praying for these groups of people, especially for those who are married and those who are preparing to get married.

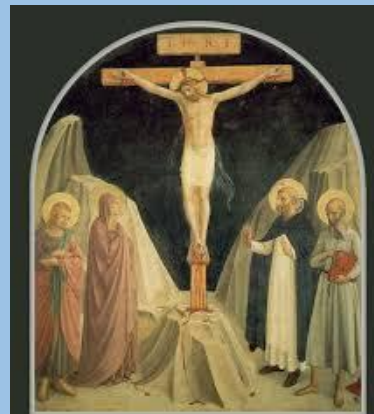
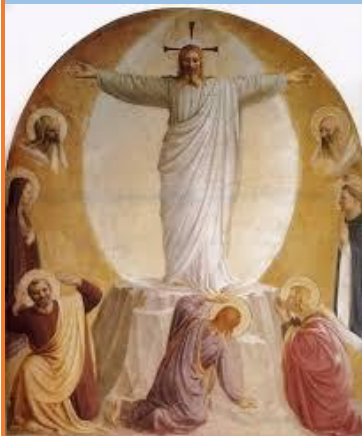


18th February: Blessed John of Fierose/Bettter known as Fra Angelico

This amazing painter was a Dominican friar from Florence in Italy.

Dominicans are officially known as the "Order of Preachers" which means that their job is to tell people about

Jesus Christ. Blessed Fra Angelico did not use words, but he used paintings to speak about Jesus. Notice that in a lot of them we can see some monks (Dominicans) in black cloaks in the picture. They are there to remind us that the pictures are not decorations but are to reflect and pray about. When we look at art, we are not worshipping the image, but the picture helps us to talk to Jesus/Our Lady etc. A bit like we might talk to a photo of someone who has died. Here are some of his most famous pictures. How about cutting these out and putting them in chronological order? Please send us a photo of your version to share.



21st February St. Robert Southwell (1561-1595)

St. Robert Southwell was born in Norfolk but grew up in West Sussex near Horsham, so his memorial is celebrated in these two counties. His was a staunch Catholic family in a time when it was illegal to be a Catholic. He knew from a very young age that he wanted to be a priest and at the age of 15 left home to study in Paris and then at the English seminary at Douai in France. However, he was determined to be a Jesuit, so that he could go back to England to support the Catholic families who were secretly celebrating Mass in their homes. So, aged 17, he walked to Rome to train for this dangerous job and was ordained priest when he was 23 years old.

Two years later, in 1586 he was permitted to return to England and with Fr. Henry Garnet, began to support both the Jesuit priests and the Catholic families in England. Their arrival had been noted by the queen's spies, but he and Fr. Garnet were able to outwit the authorities, travelling in disguise and adopting other names, such as "Mr Cotton" for a while. They were able to go from safe house to safe house celebrating Mass, baptising, hearing confessions and anointing the sick. All this time he organised a lot of the other Jesuit priests travelling around the country, also in disguise. (We know a lot about his travels because another Jesuit, John Gerard survived and wrote an account of his time in England in a wonderful book called "The Autobiography of a Hunted Priest".)

Eventually he settled in London for most of the time where he was chaplain to Anne Howards, wife of (St.) Philip Howards who was in the Tower of London because he was a Catholic. (The family is related to Katharine Howard, the 5th wife of Henry VIII). St. Robert wrote lots of letters to people to support them, including many letters to St. Philip Howard and poems that were secretly published as pamphlets.

In 1592, after St. Robert had spent six years in England, Topcliffe, the hated priest-hunter was hard on his heels. John Gerard described Topcliffe as "old and hoary and a veteran in evil". Topcliffe pressurised a young Catholic girl, Anne Bellamy, to betray St. Robert. She invited him to her house in Harrow and told Topcliffe that he was coming. Topcliffe was delighted and arrested St. Robert at once, taking him to his own house where he tortured him for four days. However, St. Robert refused to give out the names of any Catholics or their addresses, so he was sent to the Tower and kept in dirty squalid conditions for two and a half years without trial. Eventually in 1595 he was tried as a traitor and sent to Tyburn on 21st February to be hung, drawn and quartered, the usual treatment for Catholics who refused to give up their faith. Just before his death he prayed for Queen Elizabeth (1st) and for his country, England. He was 33 years old.

St. Robert's poetry is written in a language that is not easy to read these days (like Shakespeare) but is nevertheless beautiful. Here are a couple of lines from one poem, "My child, my choice" which is about the infant Christ, whose love blesses all.

*I praise Him most, I love Him best, all praise and love is His;
While Him I love, in Him I live, and cannot live amiss.
Love's sweetest mark, laud's highest theme, man's most desired light,
To love Him life, to leave Him death, to live in Him delight.*

Why don't you write a poem about Jesus Christ? Send your poems to the email on the front page for inclusion in future editions.

For more about St. Robert Southwell's poetry see
<https://mypoeticside.com/show-classic-poem-27940>

22nd February, St. Peter's Chair

Today's feast reminds us that the Church is built on the Apostles. Jesus chose 12 men to go out and take the Good News of salvation to the whole world. The head or spokesperson of the Apostles was St. Peter and right from the beginning of the Church, the Bishop of Rome was recognised as the father on earth of the Church. ("pope" comes from "papa" meaning "father").



Today is a day to give thanks that the faith Jesus gave to His Apostles, is the same faith that we now have. What Jesus taught, the Apostles passed on, and what was heard by their hearers, has been handed on for 2,000 years. The whole mission of the Church, before anything else, is to pass on the Good News of salvation in Jesus Christ. Maybe you can say this prayer today or write one of your own.

Collect from Mass today

Let us pray.

Grant, we pray, almighty God,
that no tempests may disturb us,
for you have set us fast
on the rock of the Apostle Peter's confession of faith.
Through our Lord Jesus Christ, your Son,
who lives and reigns with you in the unity of the Holy Spirit,
God, for ever and ever.

Amen.

23rd February St. Polycarp (-155)

In the previous box we saw about how the faith was passed on from the Apostles to the early Church and from them to us. St. Polycarp is an example of that happening as he was taught by St. Ignatius of Antioch, who had been taught by St. John the Apostle. In fact, some people think that St. John lived for so long that he knew Polycarp as a very small child, but we don't know for sure. Anyway, St. Polycarp became bishop of Smyrna in what is now Turkey. The Romans did not like the Christians because they wanted them to worship the emperor, which of course the Christians refused to do as only God can be worshipped. When St. Polycarp was arrested, he was an old man of about 84 years (which was VERY old for those days). Before being condemned to be burned to death, the Roman who was trying him said, "come on, you are an old man, surely you want to live the rest of your life in comfort?" but Polycarp replied, "My Lord Jesus has been a friend of mine for eighty-four years and I am not going to give up on Him now!"

Martyrs like him, and St. Valentine and St. Robert Southwell (above), have inspired the Church from the very beginning to be strong in her faith against those who would rather that we conformed to the world around, which is always a temptation!

*Think of all the older people you know who have taught you about Jesus, be teachers, parents, grandparents, priests, friends.
Say a prayer for them that they will keep strong in their faith in difficult times.*

A reflection on Jesus' instruction to "turn the other cheek."

God is our strength! He is our hope and by His grace we can follow in the way of peace and reconciliation. Revenge is the complete opposite, and in the Gospels, Jesus teaches us that His way is not revengeful. Each time we pray the Lord's Prayer we are asking our heavenly Father to forgive us AS we forgive others. Jesus underlines these words by adding, "If you do not forgive men their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive you your trespasses" (Mt. 6:15). By His grace we can forgive those who hurt us.

Certain cultural situations escape us the Gospel for Sunday 20th February (Lk. 6:27-38). First of all, to be hit on the right cheek, the assailant would have to either backhand you, since only the right hand could be used (the left hand was used for unclean activities), or hit you with his fist. Fists were used between equals; backhanding was done to inferiors. Therefore, once backhanded, if you stood your ground and turned the other cheek, you are showing your dignity and saying "hit me as an equal" (which no master would do to his servant or child).

On giving your cloak as well as tunic... that was all poor people had to wear. It was not scandalous to be naked, but it was scandalous to look upon a naked person. Offering all your clothing shows that you are keeping your dignity and putting your assailant in a compromising situation.

On going an extra mile, the occupying Romans could command locals to carry their packs for one mile only; any more and the soldier risked punishment. Going beyond the legal limit, you put yourself in control and refuse to behave as a victim. The soldier risks punishment if you carry on!

So how to translate this to our modern world. We have received God's grace in Baptism and in the other sacraments. By His grace alone we can begin to forgive others. Forgiving is not easy and comes in stages. The first stage is to want to forgive. First, we must ask the Holy Spirit for the grace to want to forgive. Secondly, we have to pray for the person(s) who has/have hurt us. Ask Jesus to bless them as human beings, for He loves them as much as He loves us. Then, every time we are reminded of the hurt, if we repeat these two actions, slowly, very slowly, we find that we are letting go of the hurt. Our Lord Jesus Christ asked His Father to forgive His crucifiers (Lk. 23:34) and united to Him as His Body, the Church, by the grace of the Holy Spirit, we can do the same.