

Teams Newsletter

for the GB Regions.
July - Sept 2020



Equipes Notre Dame - Teams

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Cover Photo: "Social distancing"

Adapted picture of Anthony Gormley's 'Another Place', Crosby.

Photo by Mark Edwards

What's happening in your Team?

Please send all photos & articles for the October- December 2020 edition to Mark & Dymphna Edwards by **31st August**. Email to:

Teams Literature

Copies of all teams leaflets are available from the Teams GB literature couple Alan & Gaynor Hakes.

For a change in the number of newsletters please contact your regional couple.

For one-off extra copies please contact your regional distribution couple:

Southern Region: Bob & Lucy Barnes

Central Region: Paul & Janet Deboo

Northern Region: Mark & Dymphna Edwards

Regional Couple letter

Dear Friends in Teams

As we write, the Prime Minister has announced the next stage of relaxing Coronavirus seclusion, with primary schools welcoming back a few age groups, and outdoor gatherings in private gardens permitted for two households; but the Government's date for reviewing the re-opening of places of worship still lies more than a month away.



Individually, our lasting impressions about the time of Coronavirus inevitably will reflect the circumstances into which it cast us. Some will always remember it as tragic. Some will recall an intensification of workload driven by caring for the sick and vulnerable and maintaining key services. Some, losing businesses or livelihoods, plunged into a dark tunnel of uncertainty. Some, who never bought into smartphone and internet technologies have experienced real, perhaps acute, isolation. Some, like ourselves, who fit none of these categories and have so far avoided infection, have known, putting aside a few specific inconveniences, an oddly disguised time of quiet and blessing.

For us, a tellingly alien impact of Coronavirus lockdown that belies any apparent peacefulness and indicates its true gravity has been the suspension of regular access and duty to the sacraments, especially Holy Communion and Reconciliation. At the same time, however, the readiness of live-streaming facilities has brought the sacrifice of the Mass directly into our very living room almost as a daily diet. The other strikingly foreign consequence of the crisis has been the block on gathering for our monthly Team meetings; but our Team, like many, has tapped into conferencing tools such as Zoom to continue as best we can for as long as necessary, even into the new Teams year, while applying sensible adaptations to the meeting format.

Coronavirus notwithstanding, all three GB Regions are anticipating and preparing for this year's Regional Gatherings upcoming in September and October. Gatherings are important sustaining events for the Teams Movement where we can meet and befriend and harvest insights and draw inspiration from members outside our own Teams. At Gatherings we learn more of how the Teams Movement is spreading and helping couples all around the world to grow in holiness through the same familiar formula.

The theme for this year's Regional Gatherings, as recommended by the International Leading Team, is "The Sacrament of Marriage: Graces and Mission". Trying to choose, design, and focus content for our Central Region Gathering has already involved us in some considerable study simply to unpack the meaning of that theme, and has exposed how quickly we stumble at even very basic questions about our faith

like, “What exactly is the distinguishing grace (or graces) associated with sacramental marriage, and how do the couple experience and draw upon it?” We feel ourselves somewhat in the situation of that Samaritan woman who met Jesus at the well at Sychar:

Jesus replied, If you only knew what God is offering and who it is that is saying to you ‘Give me a drink’, you would have been the one to ask, and he would have given you living water....Sir, said the woman, give me some of that water, so that I may never get thirsty and never have to come here again to draw water. (John 4:10, 15)

Surely the grace of marriage was never more operative, more effective, or more worthy of imitation than in the Holy Family, in the relationship between Mary and Joseph. Grace, the Church tells us, imparts strength; as a word, it conjures calm and tranquillity. So it raised our eyebrows to observe that none of the Gospel scenes with Joseph and Mary interacting together fits a standard portrait of marital bliss, or particularly exudes strength. Our first introduction to their relationship sees Joseph contemplating whether to sever it. Their wedding obviously happened—joyously, we presume—but the Gospels pass over this. Our next snapshot some months later shows the child Jesus arriving not snugly cosseted at home among doting relatives, but in makeshift conditions for which Joseph and Mary are poorly prepared; then soon after evacuating to escape a capital threat against the child. What lessons can we derive from these vignettes? Obviously no shield against trials, exactly what is the mysterious grace distinctively given to a couple in sacramental marriage (as opposed to that given in any other sacrament)? What is its effect in their relationship, how does it manifest in their experience, and how can the couple invoke and wield this grace when they most need it? This and more is meat for discussion at the Regional Gatherings!

A few days ago via web-conference with our Regional Couple counterparts, Sue and Paul Rowney for the Northern Region and Annette and Paul O’Beirne for the Southern Region, we considered alternative approaches to Regional Gatherings if restrictions persist into the autumn on physical group meetings, and in any case, so that our Members can feel safe in participating. We agreed to examine how to offer remote participation in some if not all elements of the Gatherings; quite likely, each Region will take a somewhat different approach in doing so. We would all like to engage as many of our Members in these events as possible.

When we joined Teams in 2003, a protocol held that each Team would designate at minimum one couple as delegates to attend any scheduled Gatherings, although all members were invited and urged wherever possible to join. We certainly urge all of you to look ahead to this year’s Gatherings, to discuss them in your Teams, and to expect further information from your Regional Couple about how to get involved.

We wish peace in safety for all of you, your families, and all those dear to your hearts.

Paul and Janet DeBoo,

Regional Couple, Teams GB Central Region

Annual Contributions

This is a difficult time for us all, and we, along with all our friends in Teams, hope that you are keeping safe and well. However, we need to remind you that many of our expenses are continuing and we still need to collect annual contributions. Much of our income comes in to our bank account by means of standing orders. This makes our work as Treasurers much easier. There has been no problem with handling cash and cheques until recently but, in all other areas of our lives, cash and cheques are a declining feature of the way we do things.



Clearly, things are different at the moment and we need to adapt to circumstances. It is difficult for us to get to the bank and we are encouraged to avoid unnecessary journeys. With this in mind, we are inviting those who do not already do so to think seriously about setting up your annual contribution as a standing order. The form is available on the website (<http://www.teamsgb.org.uk/financial-cont.html>) but if you can not find this, call us and we will send you a copy by post.

If you do not wish to set up a standing order, there are Paypal accounts which you can use. There are two accounts that you can use and these are: www.teamsgb.org.uk/payment or www.teamsgb-transatlantic.org.uk/payment

Alternatively, you can pay your contribution directly to the bank. The account details are

Account name: Equipes Notre-Dame Great Britain

Account number: 28007131

Sort code: 60 - 21 - 05

At least one couple has paid directly to our bank account already and both methods were used last year in collecting payments for our 60th Anniversary Celebrations, so they are both safe and reliable methods.

Thank you to the majority of contributors have a Gift Aid Declaration. If you do not, and are income or capital gains tax payers, please think about setting one up. The standing order form also includes a Gift Aid Declaration Form (you can complete either part separately). Whichever form, or forms, you are completing please return it (them) to us. We will add the reference that we need to see on our statement to the standing order form (this goes at the end of the instruction to your bank, so please leave that blank). We will update our Gift Aid records for new Declarations and send the form to HMRC. And please remember, if you are paying directly, that you need to put enough in the reference to allow us to link the contribution to our Gift Aid Declaration.

It would also be very helpful if you could let us know your Sector and Team when you make a payment.

Chris & Dominique Thompson

GB treasurers

Teams, but not as we know it

Our lockdown has meant that we need to develop online ways of keeping in touch. We can note that Harry and Clotilde Meigh in early 1939 could meet their Team in Paris but kept in touch by writing letters. Alternatives today to being present are many; video conferencing seems the simplest for those with a computer, broadband and a little IT skill!



Online Options

While there are a large number of applications that can be used for video conferencing, Zoom seems to be the simplest and most used. Its use during the pandemic has increased from 10M to 300M calls per day. We have used it in our Team and recommend it. That said you will find information about security concerns. I'll give a little more information later.

Cost of Zoom

Zoom can be used free of charge for meetings of any size up to 100 people, but only for 40 minutes. When there are only 2 people the 40 minute limit does not apply. The first time you use it, you'll get a free time extension. If the meeting times out at 40 minutes, you can reconnect using the same meeting details.

What do you need?

To use video conferencing, you'll need a computer of some sort. This can be a desktop, laptop or tablet, Windows or Mac. Zoom can be used on a smart phone, but it's difficult to focus on the small screen for any length of time. You'll need a good-enough quality broadband internet connection (1.5Mb per sec is said to be good enough – but that is slow these days)

How do you connect?

One person in the Team will need to set-up the meeting; you put the time and get a meeting ID and password. It will also provide a link. This is

emailed or somehow sent to all the Team members. On your PC, the link will open in the browser or better you can open it with the App. The app is downloaded from www.zoom.us



What about where we sit?

We can sit where we are comfortable, on the sofa or at a table. Have good

lighting on your faces and be near enough to the microphone. Check with others if they can see and hear you well enough.

How we organise our Team meeting with Zoom.

Our Team has met several times with Zoom. We've learnt that the Teams discipline of speaking in turn and listening to each other really helps in Zoom. We've needed to make an order for sharing our intercessions – ours has been alphabetically; simple! The big thing we learnt early on is that it is difficult to sing together in any reasonable way, so for us, one couple leads the singing, with the rest of us on mute but still singing.



On the Screen

There are 2 main views; one is *Speaker* view, the other *Gallery* view. With Speaker view the person who is speaking occupies the majority of the screen and up to 4 others are shown in small icon strip. In Gallery view, up to 50 people are shown together on the screen. So in a Team meeting with 5 to 7 members the images are of a reasonable size.

It is possible for participants to share their screen, say to show a PowerPoint or Word document. When doing this the shared screen will cover most of the screen with the participants appearing in a small ribbon of four.

More detail

We'll upload this and other items about online meetings our website www.TeamsGB.org.uk/zoom.

Paul & Annette O'Beirne
Southern Regional Couple



Beatitudes for a pandemic

BLESSED ARE THOSE
WHO STAY INDOORS



FOR THEY HAVE
PROTECTED OTHERS

BLESSED ARE THE
UNEMPLOYED AND THE
SELF-EMPLOYED



FOR THEIR NEED OF
GOD IS GREAT

BLESSED ARE THE
CORNER SHOPKEEPERS



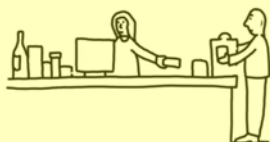
FOR THEY ARE THE
PURVEYORS OF SCARCE
THINGS

BLESSED ARE THE DELIVERY
DRIVERS AND THE POSTAL
WORKERS



FOR THEY ARE THE
BRINGERS OF ESSENTIAL
THINGS

BLESSED ARE THE
CHECKOUT WORKERS



FOR THEY HAVE PATIENCE AND
FORTITUDE IN THE FACE OF
OVERWORK AND FRUSTRATION

BLESSED ARE THE HOSPITAL
WORKERS; THE AMBULANCE CREWS,
THE DOCTORS, THE NURSES, THE CARE
ASSISTANTS, AND THE CLEANERS



FOR THEY STAND BETWEEN US AND
THE GRAVE, AND THE KINGDOM OF
HEAVEN IS SURELY THEIRS

BLESSED ARE THE
REFUSE COLLECTORS



FOR THEY WILL SEE
GOD DESPITE THE
MOUNTAINS OF WASTE

BLESSED ARE THE
TEACHERS



FOR THEY REMAIN
STEADFAST AND
CONSTANT IN
DISTURBING TIMES

BLESSED ARE THE CHURCH
WORKERS; THE DEACONS,
PRIESTS AND BISHOPS



FOR THEY ARE A COMFORTING
PRESENCE IN A HURTING
WORLD AS THEY CONTINUE TO
SIGNPOST TOWARDS GOD

BLESSED ARE THE SINGLE
PARENTS,



FOR THEY ARE COPING
ALONE WITH THEIR
RESPONSIBILITIES AND
THERE IS NO RESPITE

BLESSED ARE THOSE WHO
ARE ALONE.



FOR THEY ARE CHILDREN OF
GOD AND WITH HIM THEY
WILL NEVER BE LONELY

BLESSED ARE THOSE WHO
ARE ISOLATED WITH THEIR
ABUSERS



FOR ONE DAY-WE PRAY-
THEY WILL KNOW SAFETY

BLESSED ARE THE
BEREAVED.



FOR WHOM THE WORST HAS
ALREADY HAPPENED. THEY
SHALL BE COMFORTED

BLESSED ARE ALL DURING THIS TIME WHO HAVE PURE HEARTS;
ALL WHO STILL HUNGER AND THIRST FOR JUSTICE; ALL WHO
WORK FOR PEACE AND WHO MODEL MERCY



MAY YOU KNOW COMFORT. MAY YOU KNOW CALM. AND MAY THE
GRACE OF OUR LORD JESUS CHRIST, AND THE LOVE OF GOD, AND
THE FELLOWSHIP OF THE HOLY SPIRIT, BE WITH US ALL. AMEN

Wedding anniversary in Lockdown

On Sunday 3rd May we were truly blessed to reach the truly significant milestone of celebrating 45th Years of Marriage. Five years ago we celebrated our 40th Wedding Anniversary with our family and then again with other couples in our diocese at a mass for all couples who had reached significant wedding anniversaries typically ending with a zero or a five! So what did we plan for our 45th celebration originally we had planned to spend it in Italy at Rapallo. A cable car takes one up to most beautiful church of Our Lady of Montallegro, in the grounds one can do the Stations of the Cross or the 15 chapels of the Mysteries of the Rosary, which would have been perfect for the month of May. This idea was scuppered as we couldn't get travel insurance due to being on a hospital waiting list. Plan 2 was a weekend in Oxfordshire this was cancelled due to the pandemic.



Then it became apparent that we wouldn't even be able to attend mass on our anniversary to give thanks to God for our life together. This seemed at the time we thought about it as the cruellest blow of all. However at that time we were unaware as to how this pandemic would increase our prayer life, the marvels of technology in being able to "attend mass in many parts of the world" and in particular the live screening of mass by our team chaplain at 9am on Sunday mornings Father Chris from the beautiful church of Our Lady of Fatima. We then thought how we could share this milestone with others so we dressed in our finest and took photos on the patio of our flat, this caused some entertainment for our neighbours who were surprised by the longevity of our marriage. We then took some photos inside our flat and shared with family and friends on the internet so they could be part of our day. We even received a message from the priest who had officiated at our wedding all those years ago who said "congratulations and every blessing, always good to know that those you sought to help are still together". One of our team members summed this up by saying "love that the priest who married you sent a message; surely a gift from God." The whole day and indeed our whole marriage has been a gift from God for which we are truly thankful.

Bernard and Susan Kelly

Valentine's Day celebrations

On the evening of Friday 14 February all four Epsom Teams combined to hold their annual (well, second, actually!) St Valentine's Day celebration of marriage in the hall of St Joseph's Parish, Epsom. By clever use of subdued lighting and some wonderful table decorations using floating red candles and roses, and background mood music to suit the occasion, the room was transformed into a romantic and intimate setting. There were couples from each of the four Teams as well as other couples from the Parish who wanted to spend the evening with each other and those of like mind in celebration of their marriage.



A glass or two of Prosecco on arrival soon helped to create the right atmosphere and that was quickly followed by an excellent quiz, which dispelled any vestigial ice completely. The quiz was designed to help couples discern what was important to each of them and the priorities given to things like physical contact, or the giving and receiving of gifts, or words of affirmation, were very illuminating. Doubtless there were many meaningful discussions at the next series of Sit-Downs!

Cheese and wine and much socialising followed. It was a very successful and enjoyable celebration of marriage, whether vintage or nouveau.

Teddy & Collette Totman



Remembering Mary Timlin



Mary, with husband Mike, were one of the influential couples when we first joined teams. Our team came out of piloting in Spring 1994, and we were immediately faced with requests to support the Teams Regional Gathering in Northampton that year. It turned out to be a baptism of fire in the wider Teams movement, but perhaps that is another story.

Mary, being a music teacher, and choirmaster at St John's Banbury, was tasked with the music for the weekend, and was determined that it would be of high quality and well-rehearsed. Mary also did not take no for an answer, so Antony was recruited to sing tenor, but when it was learnt that he also used to dabble with a guitar, he was instructed to bring that along as well. So Mary is responsible for Antony developing a side-line in playing in church, at Teams birthday masses, regional gatherings, Mary also introduced us to the hymns of Graham Kendrick, with "The Servant King" and "Shine, Jesus, Shine" being memorable performances – even if Antony has not quite forgiven Mary for the whole tone uplift for the third verse of "Shine, Jesus, Shine" which put the tune at the top of his range.

Mary brought the choir together from choir members at St John's, friends, and any Team member who expressed a modicum of musical talent. A happy group, which practiced once or twice a week in the main room of their rambling farmhouse in Nethercote. Mary insisted that we got ready to sing with musical exercises to wake up our vocal chords, and get in top shape, before we got down to learning the songs themselves.



One of the keynote speakers at the Gathering was Father Neil Rodriguez, who started Teams in Trinidad, and who was on his first visit to England to learn more about the Teams movement. Mary was determined that we should have some music from Trinidad, and was sent a hand-written copy of a tune for the Magnificat, by Penguin. This started months of working out piano accompaniment, guitar chords, and rhythms, with Mary worrying that she was not doing the tune justice. However, the performance at Mass was a triumph,

so much so that Father Neil asked for an encore, and danced to the music as he thanks the choir for making him feel so at home.



Over the years since then, we have had the privilege of Mary and Mike's hospitality at mixed Team meetings hosted in front of their roaring fire; and, of course, participating in music for local Teams occasions.

Antony and Janet Denman

We also pray for the souls of Susan Forer from Fareham 3 and Maria Ponsford from Southbourne 1 all those who have died recently. We remember their families in our prayers and all those who are facing illness at this time.



The Knowledge

I have known a love which was true.
I have been beautiful in the eyes of the beautiful.
I have been kissed by the lips I longed for.
I have seen heaven in the eye of the beholder.
I have been home.

John Hegley

(submitted by Sue & Paul Rowney)

Teams patchwork banner stories

This time last year we started to look forward to seeing what Frank, our postman, brought each day; Teams from all around the country were sending us their contributions for the patchwork cloth we hoped to make in celebration of Teams 60 Years in Great Britain. The request was that each Team represented themselves on a patch in any way they chose. Several came with stories, and some with (unnecessary) apologies! We would like to share them with you. Look out for the finished article at Gatherings in the future!

Sue Rowney, Middlesbrough & Pat Banks, Warrington 3

Ampleforth 3

'Our Team design echoes the Benedictine medal/ cross of Ampleforth Abbey.'



BACKWORTH 1



CELEBRATING
1966 50 YEARS 2016

Backworth 1

In 2016, the Backworth 1 Team celebrated their Golden Anniversary with a Mass and large gathering. The Main Celebrant was Auxiliary Bishop Paul Mason, (Now Bishop of the Forces), son of Team couple Jim and Maris Mason.

Banstead

'Banstead was a sheep farm in ages gone and still has a hint of the history of sheep farming with the pub called "The Woolpack" which is the oldest pub in Banstead. The reason for the sheep and the shepherd.'



Cockfosters 4

We used our Team members nationalities to create a pattern. Our chaplain, Fr. Luis, is Portuguese. Maggie and Tony- Scottish/Irish Don and Marian- Irish Deirdre and Andrew- Irish/ English Vilma and Gerry- Italian/Norwegian Allan and Tessa- South African/Maltese Had great fun doing it.



Durham 1

'The Team's offering to the celebration of 60 years of Teams of Our Lady is the result of inspiration of the Holy Spirit and trying to stop the ink from 'bleeding' on the material.'

Epsom 1

'Our Team enjoyed discussing the design that best represents Epsom One. There were many suggestions but finally agreed, the cross on the screen above the altar, the lilies represent Saint Joseph.'



Fareham 1/Gloucester 1

'Our patchwork square represents both Fareham 1 which segued into Gloucester 1 two years ago, changing regions in the process.'

Formby

The Formby Team's patchwork shows not only their coastal region, but also celebrates Creation, The Team Prayer 'Magnificat' and some of the virtues needed for a happy marriage.



Guildford 1

'Teams of Our Lady Guildford Team 1 It was established 45 years ago and is still going strong.'

Guildford 6

'We are Guildford Six and have Abbot Paulinus from St. Augustine's Abbey in Chilworth as our spiritual leader.'



Poole 1

'Our cloth represents Poole 1 and our coastal community'.

Sacred Heart 2, Wimbledon

'Our square was designed by Claire Maurin and the embroidery itself was done by my mother while she was recovering from surgery. She enjoyed creating it.'



Southbourne 1

'We have decorated a cloth with the most recent picture of our Team. It includes two deceased members of our Team, Kath and Brian Green, but we feel it is appropriate as the patchwork will be celebrating 60 years of Teams of which they were part'.

Westbourne 1

'David did the sketching. Anne-Marie did the stitching. Represents our coastal community Silver threads of the Holy Spirit Blue of Our Lady Seagreen of our coastal waters'.



Wimborne 1

'Enclosed a small embroidery for the patchwork. We've been together so long and been through each family's highs and lows, hence the rainbow of colours!!'.



Worcester Park 1

'It is a very simple square but includes all our Team members' first names and our chaplains, as well as two deceased members of the Team.'

Worcester Park 2

'Quite a challenging idea. Our general area has been associated with lavender fields and the Pre-Raphaelites, so our theme is lavender symbolising calm and Holman Hunt's "The Light of the World". Hope this will contribute to this original and ambitious project'.



Warrington 3

'Warrington 3's Town Hall Gates are linked to a cancelled order by Queen Victoria because of a monarchical struggle two centuries earlier. The Cathedral of Christ The King, Liverpool (Affectionately known as 'Paddy's Wigwam') was where a three-minute film was made in support of the cause for Canonisation of Fr. Caffarel. It spoke of the International Ethos of the Teams Movement as experienced by couples attending the International Gathering in Brasilia 2012. It was shown at the Colloquium in Paris in 2017.'

Fr Eamonn's blog

There is a desert of a different kind, the desert we experience in our ordinary lives. The desert is within all of us. A few days after my return from the Sahara I went to the doctor who sent me to A&E to have my heart checked out because I have been struggling a bit with breathing. I have had a heart murmur since I was 17 and she had noticed something else in the ECG that she took in the surgery. So, I entered into a ten-and-a-half-hour process of waiting, being tested and waiting again. Two more ECG's, an x-ray and numerous blood tests. And I thought to myself that, for all of us gathered there, A&E is another kind of desert, a testing, an encounter with our own frailty.

You feel vulnerable and uncertain. And somehow unworthy to be the recipient of the attention all of the medical staff show. I'm seen by four different doctors each of whom asks me the same questions which makes me wonder if they don't actually believe me, that maybe I'm a fraud! But they treat me with such respect, touch my body with such reverence even as they prod and poke me with needles. They don't know I'm a priest, so it's not preferential treatment. I'm Mr. Monson to them and they are happy to treat me well, to do all in their power to ensure that I am well, to discover what it is that might be unwell within me. There's an air of happiness about them even though they must be under a lot of pressure.

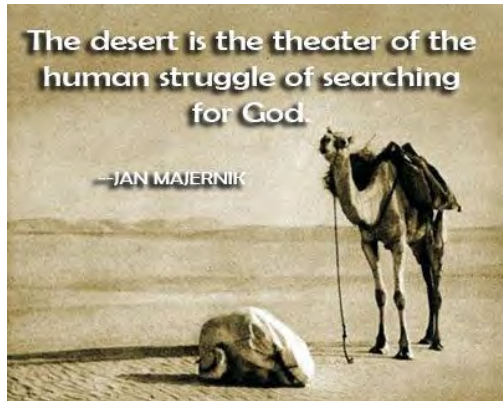
At 1.30am the doctor gently takes my hand and apologises for the length of time I have had to wait, telling me I have to wait just a little bit longer. "The waiting is in your own best interest" he says. I know it is, I tell him. As it turns out I have to come back again the next day for a scan which takes another five hours. There's no conclusion so they would like me to see a cardiologist. The bottom line is I'm fine, thank God!

The suffering of all the people gathered there in A&E finds its way into my heart. Particularly harrowing are the cries of the children, the suffering that they cannot put into words or understand. The perplexed, puzzled look on their faces. I have time to pray for them all.

Apart from the kindness of the medics and all the staff two other things hold me in peace, keep me going. Firstly, I feel enfolded in the embrace of God and, secondly, I meet quite a number of people from the parish who are there with their own ailments. Initially I was hoping that I would not meet anyone from the parish but very early on in the evening I saw a familiar face in the row opposite, so I went over to say hello and the woman told me she was at that very moment reading my Sahara blog! A few hours later a man from the parish came in great pain, later still a young family who seemed pleased to see me there! We are all concerned for each other and are bonded more closely by being there together.

Lent got off to a vibrant start with the presence at Mass of all the children from the primary school who brought a note of joy to this solemn season. And indeed, this joy is appropriate and in keeping with what Jesus says in the Gospel of Ash Wednesday – “when you fast, do not put on a gloomy look!” It is what Nehemiah calls us to, “this day is joyful to the Lord; do not be sad because the joy of the Lord is your strength!”

What we see happen to Jesus in the desert at the beginning of Lent is that the devil seeks to deceive, discourage, to bring him down and question his very identity, suggesting that Jesus isn't really who He says, that He isn't really the Son of God. What sustains Jesus and arms him against the devil's tactics is what God the Father said to Him at His Baptism immediately before the desert, “You are my Son the Beloved, my favour rests on you!”



We are all confronted by discouragement and self-doubt. Lent is partly about choosing which voice we listen to – the one that brings us down or the one that reminds us that we are, each one of us, the Beloved of God. It's not new news, very old news in fact but we haven't allowed ourselves to really hear it and take it in.

The desert is a fascinating and surprising place. In the midst of all the barrenness you come upon the most amazing miracles of life. A tiny yellow flower all on its own! And you wonder how it came to be there, how it can even survive, where does it get its moisture? The answer is hidden somewhere deep below the hot dry surface of the sand. The presence of such a flower is a reminder to us in our barren times of the spiritual and emotional nourishment that lies hidden in the deep recesses of our being.

We are reminded in the desert to contemplate the beauty of small things. In Lent we are reminded to contemplate the signs of life that are within and around us, to contemplate the beauty of God, to contemplate the beauty of those who fill our lives every day. It might be a good exercise this season to sit down with your family, to look at each one's face and contemplate the beauty there. To contemplate and be blessed by it.

*FR Eamonn Monson SCA
Hasting's Team*

To follow Fr Eamonn's blogs- <http://eamonnmonson.blogspot.com/>

Readings and Prayers for July

Romans 8:35,37-39

Nothing can come between us and the love of Christ, even if we are troubled or worried, or being persecuted, or lacking food or clothes, or being threatened or even attacked. These are the trials through which we triumph, by the power of him who loved us.

For I am certain of this: neither death nor life, no angel, no prince, nothing that exists, nothing still to come, not any power, or height or depth, nor any created thing, can ever come between us and the love of God made visible in Christ Jesus our Lord.

Psalm 144(145)

You open wide your hand, O Lord; you grant our desires.

The Lord is kind and full of compassion,
slow to anger, abounding in love.
How good is the Lord to all,
compassionate to all his creatures.

The eyes of all creatures look to you
and you give them their food in due time.
You open wide your hand,
grant the desires of all who live.

The Lord is just in all his ways
and loving in all his deeds.
He is close to all who call him,
who call on him from their hearts.

Concluding Prayer

Dear Lord, at this time of uncertainty thank you that you are always with us, whether we feel your presence or not. Help us to find ways to show your love in our troubled world. Amen.

Reflection for July

Bishop Marcus Stock, Bishop of Leeds used these words of St Paul when he prayed on You tube for all those caught up in the fight against the coronavirus pandemic. We can find them in the Readings for August 2nd. Faced with such a widespread danger which disrupted the lives of everyone it strikes me that the bigger the disaster the more likely we are to square up to it and present a united front betokening great grit and determination.

If you can identify with that then may you be guided to the reason behind it. We respond not with our own power, but the power of him who loved us.

Now St Paul shares with us his astounding faith that this powerful love is God's love for us. Not only that, but much more. God's love is not vague and invisible but identified with a person: Jesus Christ.

Paul was passionately in love with Jesus and passionately wants us to share in that passion.

But look what this same Jesus had done to Paul, thrown him off his horse, temporarily blinded him, required him to change his job, cut him off from his former friends. Lockdown and social distancing of a major kind.

For us to come through something of that kind and be all the better for it requires the loving strength of Jesus who has been there before us.

So how do we cascade that grit and determination in the face of the major disaster down to the lesser upsets which bedevil our daily lives and are listed by St Paul in the first paragraph of our reading.

He seems certain of the way forward and shares it with us in the second paragraph. Nothing can, or should, come between us and our faith that God does love us and the evidence is in His Son, made a human being like us.

That same God inspired Psalm 144 which opens us up to a healthy attitude to our daily problems.

Fr John Buchard, Formby Team

"The best love is the kind
that awakens the soul
and makes us reach for
more, that plants a fire in
our hearts and brings
peace to our minds."

Readings and Prayers for August

Matthew 14:22-33

Jesus made the disciples get into the boat and go on ahead to the other side while he would send the crowds away. After sending the crowds away he went up into the hills by himself to pray. When evening came, he was there alone, while the boat, by now far out on the lake, was battling with a heavy sea, for there was a head-wind. In the fourth watch of the night he went towards them, walking on the lake, and when the disciples saw him walking on the lake, they were terrified. 'It is a ghost' they said and cried out in fear. But at once Jesus called out to them, saying, 'Courage! It is I! Do not be afraid.' It was Peter who answered. 'Lord,' he said, 'if it is you, tell me to come to you across the water.' 'Come' said Jesus. Then Peter got out of the boat and started walking towards Jesus across the water, but as soon as he felt the force of the wind, he took fright and began to sink. 'Lord! Save me!' he cried. Jesus put out his hand at once and held him. 'Man of little faith,' he said 'why did you doubt?' And as they got into the boat the wind dropped. The men in the boat bowed down before him and said, 'Truly, you are the Son of God.'

Psalm 84(85):9-14

Let us see, O Lord, your mercy, and give us your saving help.

I will hear what the Lord God has to say,
a voice that speaks of peace.

His help is near for those who fear him
and his glory will dwell in our land.

Mercy and faithfulness have met;
justice and peace have embraced.
Faithfulness shall spring from the earth
and justice look down from heaven.

The Lord will make us prosper
and our earth shall yield its fruit.
Justice shall march before him
and peace shall follow his steps.

Concluding Prayer

Dear Lord, help us to have courage in times of difficulty and strengthen our faith and trust in you. May we recognise our frailty and rely on your promises and your strength not ours. Amen.

Reflection for August

Some years ago, whilst on a silent eight-day retreat – which I can't recommend highly enough, so why not consider going on one yourself – I was given this Gospel passage to ponder. That's how a retreat like that works. You meet with your retreat guide once a day, and in the intervening silence you reflect on particular passages from the Bible that seem to be the next step on the journey for you. This passage proved to be quite a revelation for me, even though I'd read it many times before.

In the passage, alongside witnessing to the need for personal prayer and hoping that – having just seen the feeding of the 5,000 – the apostles won't be surprised when he walks on the water, but recognise him as the Lord of all creation, he is also showing them that whenever they get it wrong he is there for them. That's the message that spoke to me. That whenever I get it wrong, he is always there for me.

One of the ways of praying with the Scriptures is to imagine yourself in the scene, and so I imagined myself being Peter getting out of the boat. I quickly realised that Peter was far braver than I would have been. However, I went with it and took the first tentative step on the water, but I started to sink very quickly, far quicker than Peter did. As I sank, I felt a terror come over me, but I realised my problem. I was looking down. I had started to sink at the moment when I took my eyes off Jesus and focused on the water and the storm. However, even as I realised that I became aware of a hand grabbing my arm and pulling me up. Despite my human frailty – maybe because of my human frailty - Jesus was saving me from that storm, as he would continue to save me from every storm that life might throw at me. I realised that whenever I take my eyes off of him as I walk the path of faith, he will always save me – he will save each of us – both because we are on the path and because, in his love, he came for the weak, the broken, the frail, for you and for me. So, when human frailty kicks in, don't worry, just trust. He will reach out his hand and save you.

Fr Simon Penhalagon



Readings and Prayers for September

Ecclesiasticus 27:33-28:9

Resentment and anger, these are foul things,
and both are found with the sinner.
He who exacts vengeance will experience the vengeance of the Lord,
who keeps strict account of sin.
Forgive your neighbour the hurt he or she does you,
and when you pray, your sins will be forgiven.
If a person nurses anger against another,
can he or she then demand compassion from the Lord?
Showing no pity for a person like themselves,
can he or she then plead for his own sins?
Mere creature of flesh, he or she cherishes resentment;
who will forgive their sins?
Remember the last things, and stop hating,
remember dissolution and death, and live by the commandments.
Remember the commandments, and do not bear your neighbour ill-will;
remember the covenant of the Most High, and overlook the offence.

Psalms 102(103):1-4,9-12

The Lord is compassion and love, slow to anger and rich in mercy.

My soul, give thanks to the Lord
all my being, bless his holy name.
My soul, give thanks to the Lord
and never forget all his blessings.

It is he who forgives all your guilt,
who heals every one of your ills,
who redeems your life from the grave,
who crowns you with love and compassion.

His wrath will come to an end;
he will not be angry for ever.
He does not treat us according to our sins
nor repay us according to our faults.

For as the heavens are high above the earth
so strong is his love for those who fear him.
As far as the east is from the west
so far does he remove our sins.

Concluding Prayer

Dear Lord, we are in constant need of forgiveness. Give us patience and understanding of ourselves and others. Heal us when we are hurt and help us to be generous in forgiving others. Amen.

Reflection for September

Have you noticed how we tend to respond in kind? If someone is courteous, we readily repay the compliment. But if someone is discourteous we find instinctively that we want to give them a taste of their own medicine. Today's reading is a reflection on this dynamic in our relationships. How revenge runs deep. And how damaging the resentment that causes can be.

Have you noticed how, if you sense your spouse is withholding something, you will tend to do the same? It's a natural defence mechanism. Something is not being said and so your guard goes up and so the logjam gets even worse.

I remember a couple who once had a huge row on holiday. It was the result of not taking the time in their marriage for real, honest communication. So to try and make sure that never happened again they decided to buy a tiny little stand-up flag of that country to use whenever something tricky needed saying. It would be put on the breakfast table in the morning just to signal that at some point they needed to talk. What a beautiful strategy! Something to break the deadlock. Something to cut the cycle of resentment.

But here's is hardest, but maybe the most important thing about the love to which the Lord calls us in Christian Matrimony. It is to seek NOT to respond in kind. NOT to do what seems to come so naturally to us – hard though that will be. To act beyond our instincts. To be generous. To be the first to break what might otherwise become a vicious circle. To always give back love. St John of the Cross puts this so well, 'Where there is no love, put love, and you will draw love out.'

This is what sets apart the greatest lovers that have ever lived. Like Jesus himself who on the Cross refused to answer back in kind. Who kept on loving. Who kept on trusting. Even when there seemed to be no reward for doing so, except the trust and love which always are their own reward.

Fr John Udris



Last notes...

The Magnificat (Lk 1: 46-56)

My soul proclaims the greatness of the Lord;
and my spirit exults in God my Saviour,
because he has looked upon his lowly handmaid.

Yes, from this day forward all generations will call me blessed,
for the almighty has done great things for me.
Holy is His name, and His mercy reaches from age to age for those who fear Him.

He has shown the power of His arm.
He has routed the proud of heart.
He has pulled down princes from their thrones and exalted the lowly.
The hungry He has filled with good things, the rich sent empty away.

He has come to the help of Israel His servant, mindful of His mercy
According to the promise He made to our ancestors
of His mercy to Abraham and to his descendants forever.

Our Lady of the Home, pray for us.



Regional Gatherings 2020- **update**

The sacrament of Marriage, Graces & Mission

Central Regional Gathering- 26 September

Southern Regional Gathering- 3 October

Northern Regional Gathering- 10 October

Plans for talks on YouTube, mixed team meetings by Zoom
and a socially distanced mass where possible

Further details from your regional couple.



Equipes Notre Dame, Teams, is an international Christian movement for married couples of all ages.