

Weekly Newsletter During the Covid-19 Pandemic

13th September 2020

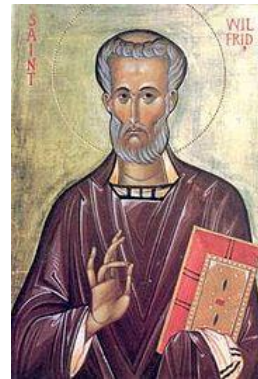
Joint Parishes of St Joseph's and St Wilfrid's Gateshead

Parish Priest Canon Michael Brown, resident at St Joseph's

Presbytery High West Street Gateshead NE8 1LX

Telephone 01914771631

Email:- michaelbrown6@btconnect.com or shaunadevitt@tiscali.co.uk



Cornelius whose feast day is September 16th. A Roman priest, Cornelius was elected Pope to succeed Fabian in an election delayed fourteen months by Decius' persecution of the Christians. The main issue of his pontificate was the treatment to be accorded Christians who had been apostatised during the persecution. He condemned those confessors who were lax in not demanding penance of these Christians and supported St. Cyprian, Bishop of Carthage, against Novatus and his dupe, Felicissimus, whom he had set up as an antibishop to Cyprian, when Novatus came to Rome. On the other hand, he also denounced the Rigorists, headed by Novatian, a Roman priest, who declared that the Church could not pardon the lapsi (the lapsed Christians), and declared himself Pope. However, his declaration was illegitimate, making him an antipope. The two extremes eventually joined forces, and the Novatian movement had quite a vogue in the East. Meanwhile, Cornelius proclaimed that the Church had the authority and the power to forgive repentant lapsi and could readmit them to the sacraments and the Church after they had performed proper penances. A synod of Western bishops in Rome in October 251 upheld Cornelius, condemned the teachings of Novatian, and excommunicated him and his followers. When persecutions of the Christians started up again in 253 under Emperor Gallus, Cornelius was exiled to Centum Cellae (Civita Vecchia), where he died a martyr.

Today is Twenty-Fourth Sunday in Ordinary Time

(OF) Readings for today are: -

| | |
|--------------------|---------------------------|
| First Reading | Ecclesiasticus 27:30-28:7 |
| Responsorial Psalm | Psalm 102 |
| Second Reading | Romans 14:7-9 |
| Gospel | Matthew 18:21-35 |

"I do not tell you to forgive your brother seven times, but seventy-seven times"

The message of the Gospel today is plain to see. One man who owes a huge debt is forgiven. The Greek says 10,000 talents. One talent would be 15 years of wages, so 15000 years of wages. He begs for mercy and is absolved. He then seeks out someone who owes him 100 denarii (100 days wages) and demands repayment. How could anyone be so lacking in awareness? Yet we don't think of the story as being impossible. There are those who are so self-centred they would just think they have been lucky in being forgiven their debt but still perfectly entitled to demand the debt due to them. They might even seek to justify it by saying they have done nothing illegal. They have acted within the law. Yet no-one can fail to be appalled by this man's behaviour as a greater law than the mere letter of the law has been broken. So, we cheer when the king punishes the ungrateful servant.

The Lord teaches this parable when asked a question about forgiveness by Peter. Clearly Peter is beginning to get the hang of Christ's teaching that we must forgive' but he's trying to make sense of it and comes up with what he assumes is embracing the Lord's teaching but also operating on a reasonable level. Forgive, okay but seven times should do. The answer 77 times is clearly not meant to be taken literally as the story shows but emphasises the need to always be ready to forgive.

If we grow in detachment and humility, then granting forgiveness will be easier for us. If we are aware of how much God needs to and has forgiven us, then we will find it easier to forgive. Refusing to forgive hardens the heart. There are people for whom the refusal to forgive becomes the hallmark of their lives. They hang on to the times they have been slighted or hurt and think because they have suffered, they are at liberty to inflict suffering on others. They want revenge. They nurse their hurt. This is what many cultures live by. The heroes and heroines of the ancient world of Greece sought to revenge wrongs done against them or their families. Vendetta is the Italian word for this: a duty to avenge wrongs. Clearly this is not Christian.

As Christians we presumably say the Our Father at least once a day. We ask to be forgiven as we forgive others. The amount we measure out is the amount we will be forgiven. We can let go of hurt if we have faith in a higher way of things. If we accept that the only real evil is sin, then we will find it easier to forgive. However, we might ask about the vengeful servant. Why is he not forgiven at the end of the story? Surely God reveals himself as a big softie who forgives everything and anything, yet this man is punished: handed over to torturers. If we refuse to forgive then God will refuse to forgive us. It's up to us: if we reject Him and what He stands for then he won't force us to accept Him. He will tug on the string arrange things in our lives to bring us back to Him, bring us to our knees if needs be and give us plenty of hints but ultimately we have to decide whether we take seriously His call to forgive so that He too can forgive us or whether we put ourselves beyond His reach.

"Lord help me to heal wounds, to build bridges, to offer and accept forgiveness to my brothers and sisters in Christ"



Today is the Fifteenth Sunday after Pentecost

EF readings for today are: -

| | |
|---------|---------------------------|
| Introit | Psalm 85: 1,2,3, |
| Epistle | Galatians 5:25-26 6; 1-10 |
| Gradual | Psalm 91:2,3 |
| Gospel | Luke 7:11-16 |

In the Gospel, the Lord shows us that by his teachings and his miracles he offers us new life: He can, as we see, alter the boundaries between life and death so that the widow's son is restored to life thanks to his compassion for the now childless widow of Naim.

Christ continues his ministry in the world through His body on earth which is the Church. By means of the sacraments his action continues. So, it is right to pray for those who are sick, to pray for healing. Heaven has shown the compassion of God through the shrines also where healings are performed. If you read a life of a saint from say the first millennium of Christianity, you may be puzzled to find the story of the saint's life ends about halfway through the book. Then there follows an account of the miracles that occurred at the saint's shrine. This is of as much interest to the author as the physical life of the saint and encourages devotion and pilgrimage. The grave of a saint was regarded as a window into heaven as the place where the body lay that would be raised up and reunited with the soul on the last day. So, the practice of keeping relics arose as a special form of access to the saint's presence and a tangible access to the heavenly realm.

It is well-known that in the process for canonisation the church requires evidence of two miracles obtained by the deceased's intercession as proof of the presence of their soul in heaven (except in the cases of martyrs: those killed for hatred of the faith, whose numbers have been greatly increasing in these recent times.). We are encouraged to pray for those who are seriously ill and I'm sure we all do even when our experience is that cures are rare, to the point of never being seen. That of course does not mean we give up, for we know God tells us our prayers are always heard but His plans may be different to ours. Nonetheless He provides even a special sacrament for bodily healing: The Anointing of the Sick or Extreme Unction. While its use is reserved for those who have a life-threatening illness and is most often associated with the last days of a person's life, the texts of the sacrament in the ritual are definitely about seeking healing rather than preparing for death. Before going into hospital for surgery or receiving serious treatment, we can ask the Church for the Sacrament of the Sick. The Lord's ministry of healing continues on earth. Some of those I have anointed in hospital have told me how much peace they feel as I lay my hands on their head and they are anointed with the oil of the sick which is surely a great healing in itself for those in the last days of life.

What matters ultimately is the relationship between our soul and Our Lord. This relationship can grow whatever happens to the body or mind. Some of the most profoundly handicapped people in the world are also the most spiritual and those souls most at peace. So sometimes through prayer and sacraments the sick are healed. Lourdes is the outstanding shrine for healing the sick and healings which are reported are thoroughly examined to ensure that there can be no other explanation except a miracle. Since 1858, there have been 69 verified miracles or cures. Not a lot considering the numbers who go looking for a cure. And yet they don't come away empty-handed. Healing of the soul is ultimately more significant than bodily cure and Lourdes does

provide that through an atmosphere of prayer and devotion to the Blessed Sacrament and Our Lady.

The Lord`s work of raising the dead, such as we see in the Gospel today does however continue up and down the land and all over the world by means of another sacrament. This of course is the sacrament of confession. There, the penitent in mortal sin is absolved and the life of grace returns to a soul that was dead to sin. It is, or should be, one of the best feeling s in the world to have received absolution and to step out of the confessional knowing we have been truly forgiven and restored to the life of grace. It is where we experience that compassion of the Lord who raised the widow`s son to life and reflecting on what God does for us should fill our hearts with love for Him.

God is good. He hears all our prayers and only wants the best for us so that we might share His life forever.

Mass Intentions

Canon Michael continues, as he has throughout the pandemic, to say daily Mass, if you have any intentions for Mass please put these in an envelope and pop through the letter box, or place them on the collection plate at the end of Sunday`s Mass.

The Week beginning 12th September 2020

Sunday 10: People of the parish

12: Intentions of T Turnbull

Monday: Susan Harwood Styles

Tuesday: Donald Trump

Wednesday: Special Intention D (sick person)

Thursday: In Honour of Our Lady

Friday: Thanksgiving

Saturday: Istavan Debreczeni

Sunday: 10: People of the Parish

12: Brenda Lowes

Mass is said at approximately 10.00am each weekday

Please remember in your prayers the sick of the parish and all those who have recently died



Welcome

To Sister Anuli who arrives today to join the community at St Wilfrid's, she will be studying at Sunderland University. We hope Sr Anuli settles into her new home quickly and enjoys joining in with parish life.

Special Mass Collections

- Holy Places of Palestine - weekend of 13th September
- Peter's Pence - weekend of 4th October
- World Mission Sunday - weekend of 18th October

Donations

Thank you to all those who have continued throughout the pandemic to give so generously to the church. Last Sunday **£305.65** was collected after our Masses and more donations were made through bank transfers.

If you would like to continue giving through direct debit, standing order or bank transfer, the details are below.

Diocese of Hexham and Newcastle
St Wilfrid's
Sort Code 40-34-20
Account Number 01164120

Diocese of Hexham and Newcastle
St Joseph's
Sort Code 40-34-20
Account Number 31164066

To donate via cheque please make out to
'DHN St Wilfrid's Gateshead' or 'DHN St Joseph's Gateshead'
These can be posted to the parish address

Please use the reference "Weekly Contribution"

We are continuing to raise money for the improvement of the 'Lourdes Garden' at St Joseph's, so far, we have had £360 donated, if you would like to help please use the reference 'Lourdes Garden'

Usually at this time of year **Gift Aid Donation Statements** are issued to those who are part of the scheme, however due to the strange circumstances in which we find ourselves the diocesan offices have decided to only issue such statements at the request of each individual should they want one.

If you are a Gift Aider and would like a statement of your donations you can request one by emailing the Gift Aid Office at:

gift.aid@diocesehn.org.uk or michelle.dixon@diocesehn.org.uk or
andrea.emson@diocesehn.org.uk



Re-Opening Churches

Please see the Diocesan Website for information regarding churches which are open.

St Wilfrid's is to be amongst the churches to reopen in phase 6, in order to do this safely we need as many volunteers as possible, if you would like to help please give your name and contact details to Canon Michael or to Veronica Georgeson, Health and Safety representative for St Wilfrid's

The re-opening of St Joseph's for Mass on Sundays continues to be a great success. There is still no need to pre-book a place as numbers so far have been accommodated with relative ease.

The **wearing of a facemask** is not only **mandatory**, but also **fulfils Jesus command** to 'Love our neighbours' as it is through wearing a mask, we protect others from our germs! You must keep your facemask on throughout the service, **removing it only to receive Holy Communion.**

Sanitise your hands; on entry to the church; prior to receiving Communion; and as you exit church.

As the **cases of Covid 19 have continued to rise in our area** and across the North East of England **we encourage** you to take part in the '**Trace and Track**' programme, please remember to bring with you an envelope containing your name, contact details, the time and date of your visit. Place this in the box as you enter church, the box will be sealed at the end of the day and only opened if the need arises, otherwise it and all contents will be destroyed, in line with Data Protection, after 21 days.

Please **follow the one way system** displayed in church and **heed the instructions** given by the ushers, it will feel strange and over regimented not to be able to attend church in the same way as we used to, but all the guidance is in place for everyone's safety.

In order to comply with government advice, and to maintain a safe environment, we ask that you **do not stop to chat** with friends as you enter or exit church, keep the system flowing smoothly by keeping any important conversations to be held outdoors at a sensible distance from the exit and entrance routes. Thank you

Please remember that everyone is trying their best to enable Mass to be as welcoming, safe, and comfortable for us all. The precautions in place are necessary, and although the environment is not as we would like it to be we just need to accept it until times change, please do not take out your frustrations on the volunteers who are trying to make a difference.

There will be **no collection during Mass**, the collection plates will be at the back of church near the exit, please put your donations on the plate as you leave church.

Volunteers

Thank you to everyone already giving up time to steward and clean St Joseph's church so that it remains open for Sunday Mass. Currently we have just enough to cover Sundays so it is unlikely that the church will open for weekday Mass until more volunteers come forward.

Apart from the Covid cleaning that must be done on Sundays, the church still needs its floors, glass and carpets cleaned regularly. We have a small rota of people to undertake this every 3rd week. Please think of giving time on Sundays or adding your name to the normal Church cleaning rota.

If interested please give your name to Canon Michael, Shauna Devitt, or Pat Macgregor.

Toilet Facilities

These are now re-opened thanks to the willingness of volunteers who are willing to clean and disinfect them before and after each Mass. You can do your part to help by only using the toilets if absolutely necessary, sanitising your hands before and after use and remembering to shut the toilet lid prior to flushing. Also, we ask that you please use the disinfectant wipes provided to wipe down any place you have touched - flush handle, door handles, taps, sink etc.

St Joseph's Hall

The hall has been given the go-ahead to open once again to groups who use its rooms.

We desperately need volunteers to help clean the hall on a Wednesday in order to maintain a COVID free environment and enable the hall to remain open. Please give your name and contact details to Canon Brown, Shauna Devitt, or Alan Telford if you can help.

Thank you for your continued co-operation and patience