

Dear Friends,

I am writing this magazine early as I am hoping to have my right knee replaced on the 20th October, and hopefully when you receive this I will be on the mend. It is for this reason that all weekday Services are cancelled until further notice; however, if there are any towards the end of November, they will be announced at the Sunday Mass. Fr. Richard Smith will be celebrating the Sunday Eucharists.

The month of November is with us again and as Christians our thoughts are focused on the wonderful promise of Our Blessed Lord Jesus the Christ, God-in-Human-Flesh, that everyone who believes in Him and seeks to follow Him will never die.

Of course, the earthly body in which we live belongs to the earth from whence it came and is in the end but dust. It is only to be expected that dust should return to the dust when its usefulness is worn out, but the person whose soul lifted it to the higher human sphere above the rest of creation, will continue to live in a new spiritual body as a gift of its Creator, if it sought, while in the flesh, to follow His Will.

Jesus Christ said of Himself: "I am the Way, the Truth and the Life; no one comes to the Father but by Me." He proved His words to be true by the perfection of His earthly life motivated by love for God His Father, and His love for all His Father's creation, and especially for His fellow human beings. He sealed this claim by His wonderful enlightening teaching, His selfless suffering and dreadful death on the Cross in order to save mankind from its destructive selfishness. This is not only the undisputed record of history and but the liberating experience of everyone who genuinely tries to follow Him.

If we truly claim to be Christians then we must try, and He has promised to help, to live our lives according to His will, and believe all that He has taught, and continues to teach through His One, Holy, Catholic and Apostolic Church which He founded as His continuing visible Body in the world. Individual members of the Church may, and sometimes do, err and go wrong. But the Church herself, guided by the Holy Spirit, cannot err because Jesus Christ promised to send the Holy Spirit to guide His Church unto all truth and to remind her of what He had taught His Apostles before His Ascension. The Church teaches only that which is consistent with what she has recorded, through the guidance of the Holy Spirit, in her Holy Book the Holy Bible, and, inspired by the same Holy Spirit, expounded through the General Councils.

On the day of Our Lord's death. He went and preached to the spirits of the departed so that those who died before He came into the world, might know from Him His saving message, which is for all mankind. The Church has always taught that those who die in Christ, though not yet perfect, the faithful departed, go to 'the abode of the dead' to be purified and prepared to share with Christ and all His Saints, the closer presence of God the Father in heaven.

There is only one God and there is only one Church, - one Lord, one faith, one Baptism - and that one Church is divided into three parts - the Church Militant on earth, the Church Expectant in Paradise, and the Church Triumphant in Heaven. These parts or states of the One, Holy, Catholic and Apostolic Church are united in the love of God in Christ, and join together in prayer and worship.

There are some who call themselves Christians but reject what they call 'prayer for the dead,' but in reality Christians pray for one another, those still living in the flesh, and those living beyond the veil of death, and with them praise God with the Saints. Unfortunately many people think that prayer is only about asking for something. True Christian prayer is more than just asking (intercession). It is primarily about worshipping God and thanking Him for His wonderful love and the many blessings He showers upon us. We also hold up before Him all our loved ones, wherever they are both in the Church Militant and Expectant, that He may give to us and to them all that is needed to continue our growth in holiness in our journey or pilgrimage to Heaven.

In this November month of the departed we begin with the Feast of All Saints, and the next day continue with All Souls. On All Saints Day we, in the Church Militant here on earth, celebrate with the Saints and heroes of the Faith their joyful birthday into Heaven in the great Church Triumphant.

On All Souls Day we commemorate all the Faithful Departed who are in Paradise in the Church Expectant waiting for the final consummation of their hopes and joy. What a wonderful and unending fellowship we have, and what a great company of brothers and sisters in the Body of Christ!

The supreme Act of Worship on earth which is most acceptable to Almighty God is the Mass, the Holy Eucharist, commonly called the Holy Communion, which Christ, on night before He was crucified, commanded us to do in remembrance of Him, and in which He shows forth His death upon the Cross until He comes again to close off the age.

In this special act of worship Christ feeds His Baptised and Confirmed disciples and members of His Body with His own Divine Life in order that they may have communion with Him and His Father in Heaven. By being in Communion with Christ we are also in Communion with all our loved ones who are in Christ and with all Christians wherever they are in this world or in the next. Thanks be to God for His amazing love and mercy.

This year on the 8th November, we will observe Remembrance Sunday. As you know, the original Armistice Day in 1918 was on the 11th November. Since then, in the British world, on the Sunday nearest the 11th those who died in the wars of the 20th century and the present conflict in Iraq and Afghanistan etc. are remembered before God and committed to His loving care.

As I wrote last year, and it still needs to be said: it has become the custom to buy and wear red poppies, especially on Remembrance Sunday, to help those who still suffer from the consequences of war, but they also remind us, as we honour the dead, not to forget the dreadful shedding of blood that occurred, and to pray that wars may cease in all the world. The wearing of a white poppy which some folk are now doing as some kind of protest against war, is, in their naivety, watering down the horror of blood shed, and by their action remove some of its ugliness!

It is also the time of the year when we are looking for and buying our Diaries and Calendars for next year, may I remind you to be careful of what you buy. If you are truly a Christian you will want a Christian Calendar and Diary which were easily available until recently. Unfortunately, it is getting more difficult to find them through our complacency. The market is now flooded with secular or pagan ones, which deliberately begin the week on Monday.

According to the Bible and to Christian teaching, Saturday, as the seventh day of the week, is the Jewish Sabbath, while Sunday is the first day of the week and the day of the Resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ from the dead and which, therefore, until recently was a public family holiday for the worship of God and recreation. True Christians meet together on the first day of the week to worship, and give thanks to God for the Resurrection of Christ. And in obedience to Christ's command Christians receive the Sacrament of His Body and Blood in Holy Communion, which only His Church can give through His appointed Priests, so that they may receive the grace needed to grow in holiness and enjoy eternal Life through Him with God in heaven.

It is therefore, imperative for us to resist this deliberate denial of our Christian heritage and refuse to buy or use these books. Where they are not available complain about it as an act of witness for Christ. Remember what Jesus said; "If you deny me before men, I will deny you before my Father in heaven."

May we all seek every God-given means of grace, especially His Sacraments, to enable us to grow in holiness and enjoy the bliss of the place prepared for us by Him in Heaven.

Your Priest & Friend,

Fr. Brian.

FAITHFUL DEPARTED

If I have communion with a saint of God as such while he liveth here, I must still have communion with him when he is departed hence.

John Pearson (1612-1686) Bishop of Chester

Day by day, we maintain our fellowship with those within the veil (the faithful departed). By our thought of them we keep ever by their side by our prayer for them we testify to the constancy of our love, by our thanksgiving for their lives we maintain that high faith which ever testifies to God's goodness in having given us their fellowship. They are always near us, sometimes nearer than we think.

George H. S. Walpole, D.D. Bishop of Edinburgh (1910-1928)

COMMUNION OF SAINTS

The Communion of saints is a mutual interaction of life and operation, whether conscious or unconscious, which continues between the members of the Body of Christ wherever they are, and under whatever conditions they exist. The basis of the communion of saints is membership in the Body of Christ, and the life and vital energy which permeates and unifies that Body. This communion is therefore

- vital and organic, not dependent for its origin and continuance upon our wills. The members of the Body necessarily act and react upon each other;
- reflective, in that the saints have communion with each other through Christ, who is the focus and mirror, as well as the determining principle, of every spiritual force within the Body;
- personal, as making possible contact and voluntary communion between persons not otherwise within reach.

The veil of death modifies without destroying this communion, a fact that has profoundly influenced the devotions of the Church militant. But spiritualism, which seeks direct communication with the departed by occult means, whether successful or not, is prejudicial to religion, and is forbidden in Scripture. It appears to be, partially at least, under the control of evil spirits.

The Church militant has always offered prayers for the faithful departed, and for the consummation of their bliss, especially in connection with the Holy Eucharist. In this and in other ways she exhibits her belief that such prayers are worth offering and are answered, although they cannot change the final destinies of souls. It is certain that the faithful departed, and the holy angels also, pray for those on earth; though their knowledge of earthly events, and the specific tenor of their petitions, are unknown to us.

Francis J. Hall, 1857-1933. Priest Episcopalian Theologian; Late Professor of Dogmatic Theology in the General Theological Seminary, New York City

