

Our Lady, Star of the Sea and St. Drostan

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St. Mary's

64 St Peter Street
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Our Lady Star of the Sea & St. Drostan Church, Fraserburgh, and St. Mary's Church, Peterhead, are currently closed until further notice, due to Government regulations in connection with action taken to combat the spread of the Covid 19 coronavirus.

Sun 24 th Jan	3rd Sunday in Ordinary Time
Mon 25 th Jan	The Conversion of Saint Paul, Apostle - Feast
Tue 26 th Jan	Saint Timothy & Saint Titus, Bishops - Memorial
Wed 27 th Jan	Saint Angela Merici, Virgin
Thur 28 th Jan	Saint Thomas Aquinas, Priest & Doctor of the Church - Memorial
Fri 29 th Jan	Friday in the 3 rd Week of Ordinary Time
Sat 30 th Jan	The Blessed Virgin Mary on Saturday – Optional memorial
Sun 31 st Jan	4 th Sunday in Ordinary Time



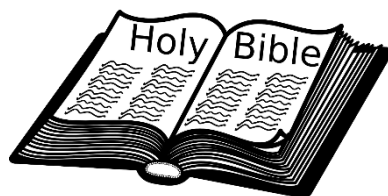
“Follow me and I will make you fishers of men”.

Sunday of the Word of God

“**The Sunday of the Word of God**, instituted by Pope Francis and to be held every year on the third Sunday of Ordinary Time,¹ reminds us, pastors and faithful alike, of the importance and value of Sacred Scripture for the Christian life, as well as the relationship between the word of God and the liturgy: ‘As Christians, we are one people, making our pilgrim way through history, sustained by the Lord, present in our midst, who speaks to us and nourishes us. A day devoted to the Bible should not be seen as a yearly event but rather a year-long event, for we urgently need to grow in our knowledge and love of the Scriptures and of the Risen Lord, who continues to speak his word and to break bread in the community of believers. For this reason, we need to develop a closer relationship with Sacred Scripture; otherwise, our hearts will remain cold and our eyes shut, inflicted as we are by so many forms of blindness’.²”

These words of Cardinal Sarah and Archbishop Roche, heads of the Congregation for Divine Worship and the Discipline of the Sacraments, in which Pope Francis is quoted,³ make some important points.

First, our need to “grow in our knowledge and love of the Scriptures and of the Risen Lord” is **something ‘urgent’**.



The urgency has to do in part with the fact that our lives involve a constant struggle with “**so many forms of blindness**”. If we do not recognize them, they are dangerous.

This blindness is in the world; and here I mean ‘world’ in the sense in which St. John uses it: “all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh and the lust of the eyes and the pride of life, is not of the Father but is of the world” (1John 2:16); “If anyone loves the world, love for the Father is not in him” (2:15). This ‘world’ is characterized above all by the absence of faith. Wherever faith is not present, there will always be some degree of blindness, since only faith gives “the conviction of things not seen” (Hebrews 11:1) and opens up the way to answers to the most important questions about life, death and eternity.

I remember a striking conversation that I once had with a highly educated man, reportedly Catholic, who did not believe that humans had a spiritual soul. Why can’t all that we do be explained by chemistry in the brain? The existence of a substantial, spiritual human soul, which survives the death of the body, is not easy to demonstrate by philosophical arguments. But that’s precisely where faith comes to our aid. Knowing that some things are beyond the grasp of reason alone, or at least are difficult to attain in this way, the Lord in His goodness positively intervened in human history to teach us (through the prophets, through biblical events, and especially through His own Son, Jesus) many things that are necessary or useful to know if our God-given vocation is to reach fulfilment.

A lack of faith is not just about *not* believing in this or that. Faith also *keeps us from believing* many things that are simply not true. “It’s the first effect of not believing in God that you lose your common sense” – said the character Father Brown in one of G. K. Chesterton’s mystery stories⁴. In another

¹ Cf. FRANCIS, Apostolic Letter *Motu proprio Aperuit illis* (‘He opened to them’ [the meaning, that they might understand the scriptures– Lk 24 :45]), 30.09.2019.

² FRANCIS, *Aperuit illis*, n. 8.

³ Note on The Sunday of the Word of God, Congregation for Divine Worship and the Discipline of the Sacraments, 17.12.2020.

⁴ The Oracle of the Dog, in The Incredulity of Father Brown.

passage in the same collection of stories, Father Brown notes that people without faith are “balanced on the very edge of belief – of belief in almost anything”⁵. Going back to John, the Apostle’s counsel is as important today as ever: “Beloved, do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits to see whether they are of God; for many false prophets have gone out into the world” (1John 4:1). Christian faith protects us not just from the outlandish things that strange sects sometimes teach. It also protects us from more commonplace – and dare I say it, more dangerous – falsehoods. So, for example, the idea that having lots of money, or a beautiful wife or husband, is enough to make one happy – one doesn’t need God... such an idea is also shown to be false by our faith. Jesus Himself said: “a man’s life does not consist in the abundance of his possessions” (Luke 12:15), and he suggested that someone who occupies himself with the good things of this world and “is not rich toward God”, is, in fact, a “fool” (cf. Luke 12:20-21).



The other point that particularly strikes me in the text quoted above is **the notion of relationship**: “we need to develop a closer relationship with Sacred Scripture”. Indeed, our devotion to the Bible ought to be a “year-long event” – that is,

with us always. We need to live ‘in a relationship’ with Scripture. It is as though everything we perceive should be understood in the light of Scripture; all that we do ought to be suffused with its spirit. A ‘close relationship’ is an **exchange of life**; it is a receiving from and a giving to. This is possible with Scripture because of the presence in it of the one who is its principal author: God Himself. In the pages of Scripture and, of course, in the present realities which it describes, we receive from Him light and love; and we give something similar back to Him through the power of His own gift: opening our hearts to Him, we give Him that which is the greatest expression of His glory in the created order: man fully alive, women and men alive with the life of God Himself.

This is the other part of the reason why growth “in our knowledge and love of the Scriptures” is something urgent: it is because of the greatness, the indescribable greatness, of the gift that the Lord wishes us to receive through this knowledge and in that relationship: friendship with God, union with Him. “My body and my heart faint for joy” – cries out the Psalmist – “God is my possession for ever” (Psalm 72/73:26 – Grail translation).

So, let us take up the word of God. Let us also ‘take it to heart’ – and love the one who reveals Himself therein. He is both God and man; eternal life, and “beautiful above the sons of men” (Psalm 44/45:3 – Douay Rheims version).

God’s Playfulness

Do you sometimes think that God is playing with you? I don’t mean that in a nasty way – for He is always love. But I had that experience again last week. It happened while I was praying the Office for the feast of St. Agnes in the church at Fraserburgh. Worried about the howling wind and gusts of storm Christoph – *Would the slates be thrown off the roof? What about the leaky eaves and gutters?* – I proceeded with my recitation: “**And you, all you breezes and winds, O bless the Lord!**” (cf. Daniel 3:43).



Lockdown Loneliness

Yes – the walls can seem to be closing in... It’s been great to receive the phone calls of a number of parishioners these last 2 weeks. Let us continue to encourage one another as we face another few weeks (?) of strict lockdown.

“I ask you, please, do try to bring them up with love, with a gentle and kindly hand, not overbearingly nor harshly. Try to be kind always. Notice what Jesus Christ says, ‘Learn of Me for I am gentle and humble of heart.’ And of God we read, ‘He orders all things graciously.’ That is, He arranges and governs all things gently.” (St. Angela Merici)

Safeguarding Audits

Last week I completed the online safeguarding audits for the year 2020 for our two parishes. My sincere thanks to those who helped with these. Part of the reason why we do these audits is so that we can identify and address any weaknesses that there might be in safeguarding-related practices (it might be as simple as improving the way documents are stored in the Parish Office...) and maximise the potential for good that comes from “best practice”. One of the more important things we’ll need to address in 2021 is the appointment of a new Parish Safeguarding Coordinator for St. Mary’s Parish, Peterhead. I really appreciate your support, to build a “culture of safeguarding” *together*. The protection and nurturing of the most vulnerable among us absolutely must be a major part of parish life.



From the Scottish Bishops’ Liturgical Calendar:

“St. Angela Merici (1474-1540), founded the Ursulines. She directed them to provide education to the young with love, kindness ... and an attention to each individual.”

Feast day: 27th Jan

⁵ The Miracle of Moon Crescent.