

1st December 2021

Dear Parishioners,

Firstly, a Parish announcement, then a reflection. In order to have more people at Mass especially leading up to Christmas, we will have another Sunday Mass at Dromana as well as Rosebud. The Dromana Sunday Mass will be at 8:30am and will be a vaccination-status Mass with no number limit. This means those older than 12 years old will need to show proof of vaccination. The Rosebud Mass will be at 10:30am and will be a non-status Mass with a limit of 50 people. Fr Geoff Baron will help supply the extra Masses and we thank him for being available. These extra Masses are not a permanent feature but just until Christmas and then will be reassessed.

The first thing to notice from this Sunday's Gospel from St Luke is that he wants to emphasise that this actually happened, in a specific time of history. It was in the time of the Roman Caesar named Tiberius; Pontius Pilot was his governor in Judea; and Herod was the local Jewish ruler or king under Roman rule, and the Jewish High priests were Annas and Caiaphas. The faith does not just convey a set of moral lessons through a story, but the truth of a real person- Jesus of Nazareth and the things He actually did. In fact, it is what Jesus *did* for us that is most important, which gives the power, the grace, of redemption that comes to us through the sacraments of the Church.

Luke would also write the Acts of the Apostles. Where he recalls what the Church did in the world immediately after Christ's ascension. And the Church, very much existing in history, has never ceased to bring Jesus, in the fullness His truth and grace, to the world, throughout history to us right here. In fact, the Church, existing in history, made up of real people like you and me, makes Jesus Himself present here and now as His redemptive acts are re-presented in the sacraments.

We ourselves are real people who can imitate Jesus in our daily life and become holy like all the saints throughout history. Jesus came at the time John the Baptist. Repent he says, prepare a way for the Lord, make His paths straight. Repentance. To repent of sins is essential in our striving for holiness. A very beneficial practice is what's called 'an examination of conscience'. It is usually done in the evening with night prayers. We look over the day examining our conscience, if there have been serious, mortal, sins committed we must get to confession, if venial sins we make an act of contrition, but it is also good to mention them in confession. While examining our conscience, we ask the Holy Spirit to enlighten us, and we might be illumined as to times we could have done God's will better. An 'examine' is part of repentance, and having done so, having gone through the dusk, commended our spirit to God, and laid down to sleep, a nightly forerunning of death, we can pray Simeon's *nunc dimitus* totally prepared to meet Christ with joy: "At last all powerful Master, You give leave to your servant. To go in peace according to your promise. For my eyes have seen your salvation, which you have prepared for all nations, the light to enlighten the Gentiles and give glory to Israel your people."

Perhaps we have the idea that holiness is somehow far from us, unachievable, something for saints in books only. Jesus, John the Baptist and all the saints were real,

historical, flesh and blood persons, existing in a concrete time and place. You too are a real historical person. Do you expect that if you're holy, you would look like a holy card when you look in the mirror? Do you think to yourself, 'I'm only a saint if I start to glow in the dark!?' Holiness is simply being in union with Christ as He sanctifies our ordinary daily life with His grace. What does the daily life of a saint look like? Each day, wake up offering the day to Jesus; keep Him in mind throughout the day; if it be possible get to Mass or visit the Blessed Sacrament; say your rosary well; make an examination of conscience before bed; get to confession at least once a month; and you're basically there! Sounds easy doesn't it? ...yet there's plenty of room to strive to be as 'perfect as your Heavenly Father is perfect', and strive to conform your mind and heart and every thought word and deed to the will of God....that's something to strive for, never give up on, and try to make progress in everyday, which is all only possible by the generous grace of God.

God bless,

Fr John Paul