



St John Boste Parish, West Durham
Esh, Esh Winning, Langley Park and Ushaw Moor

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Please telephone the Chaplain if you have someone in hospital who would like a visit.



Seventeenth Sunday in Ordinary Time (Year A) : 26 July 2020

Choices: Imagine you have just been given £100....! What are you going to do with it? You may go out for a slap-up meal. You may choose to go to the theatre or maybe Alton Towers. Or you may prefer to buy lots of new plants for your garden. You can choose whatever you like but the one thing you *do* know is that, with £100, you can't do *all* of these things. Choices involve sacrifices. In choosing to do one thing you may well need to give up all thought of enjoying the others. In today's first reading we meet the young man called Solomon. His father, King David, has just died and so Solomon finds himself to be the new king of Israel. The Lord appears to Solomon and says, "Ask what you would like me to give you". Solomon is invited to choose. He keenly recognises his inexperience as a leader compared to his father who had been king for 40 years and so Solomon decides to ask God for the gift of wisdom and discernment so as to lead the people well and with fairness. In a touching way God commends Solomon for his choice. Let's take a look at the story:

'At the place called Gibeon the Lord appeared in a dream to Solomon during the night. God said: "Ask what you would like me to give you." Solomon replied, "Lord, my God, you have made your servant king in succession to David my father. But I am a very young man, unskilled in leadership. Your servant finds himself in the midst of this people of yours that you have chosen, a people so many its numbers cannot be counted or reckoned. Give your servant a heart to understand how to discern between good and evil, for who could govern this people of yours that is so great?" It pleased the Lord that Solomon should have asked for this. "Since you have asked for this," the Lord said, "and not for long life for yourself, or riches, or the lives of your enemies, but have asked for a discerning judgement for yourself, here and now I do what you ask. I give you a heart wise and shrewd as none before you has had and none will have after you.' (1 Kings 3: 5, 7-12)

The message of that first reading is, as always, taken up by its accompanying psalm. Today's psalm is a prayer which recognises that 'wisdom' comes from following the ways of God:

'My part, I have resolved, O Lord, is to obey your word. The law from your mouth means more to me than silver or gold. Let your love be ready to console me by your promise to your servant. Let your love come to me and I shall live, for your law is my delight. That is why I love your commands more than finest gold. That is why I rule my life by your precepts. I hate false ways! Your will is wonderful indeed; therefore, I obey it. The unfolding of your word gives light and teaches the simple.' (Psalm 118)

Then, we have Jesus telling one of his many parable stories. Jesus seemed to love telling stories as a means of communicating with people. Again, Jesus is talking about choices. If someone discovers treasure hidden in a field, he is willing to sacrifice everything else that he *might* have had so as to be able to buy that field!

'Jesus said to his disciples, "The kingdom of heaven is like treasure hidden in a field which someone has found; he hides it again, goes off happy, sells everything he owns and buys the field' (Matthew 13: 44-52)



- What would you say is the 'number one' thing that you are striving for in your life?
- If God were to say to you, like to Solomon, 'Ask what you would like me to give you', what would you say?
- If you were to die today, how would you like to be remembered by others?
- In your relationship with God, what are you most seeking?

Recently deceased: Nicholas Moralee (Langley Park). Nicholas died at home on Tuesday.

Anniversaries: Our Lady Queen of Martyrs: Elizabeth Duffy, Catherine Shaw, Jean Kenny, Olive Rooney, Jacqueline May.

St Joseph's: Ernest Hope, Anne Chatterton, Rose Jennings, Margaret Halliday, Margaret Mortimer, James Naisbit, William Thornton, Robert Wilkinson, Ellen Gallagher.

St Michael's: Tom Rowntree, Elizabeth Johnson, Kathleen Cahill, Elizabeth Marley, Sir Bobby Robson, Carl Benjamin Young, Magda McMahon.

17TH SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME

Re-opening our churches: St Joseph's church in Ushaw Moor was open again on Saturday so that people had the opportunity to come along for individual prayer. Those who came along would be aware of considerable differences since their last visit in March. Benches are now cordoned off to allow two metres distancing; this is distancing *in each direction*. We also have a one-way system, and a variety of things that once we could do, and now can't. With distancing, St Joseph's can accommodate a maximum number of 23 people, though this can increase slightly if a household or people within a 'bubble' come together; they can sit together without the two metres to separate them. Hopefully, we will be able to move shortly to celebrating masses in St Joseph's but, again, numbers will be restricted to 23 because of distancing. We will probably need to arrange some sort of 'booking system' since it would not be good for people to turn up for mass and then need to be turned away. Remember, though, that the Sunday mass obligation remains relaxed at present. You only need to come to church *if you feel comfortable in coming*. Since Friday 24 July we are also encouraged to wear face coverings in enclosed public spaces where there are people we do not normally meet, such as a church. As I have mentioned recently, the big concern is that before every opening of every church for prayer, masses, baptisms, weddings and funerals, that building needs to be cleaned with water and disinfectant. We follow a strict cleaning protocol for this which is quite straightforward but it wouldn't be fair to expect the same group of people to have to clean churches in advance of every service. Ideally, it would be helpful to have teams of cleaners to spread the load. We hope to open St Joseph's again for prayer next **Saturday, 1 August, 11.00am – 12.30pm**. Please note: not quite the same times as last week. We will gather to clean the church during the course of this week; do please bring your buckets again!

- If you are in the [clinically extremely vulnerable group](#), you must not volunteer at this time.
- If you are in the [clinically vulnerable group](#) you could be at a higher risk of severe illness from Covid-19.
- For more information please [read page 3 of our handbook for the reopening of churches](#) on the diocesan website [rcdhn.org.uk] This includes links to HM Government guidance.

If **you** would like to volunteer to clean our churches, please contact the Parish Office: you can phone 0191-373 0219 or you can email: stjosephs.ushawmoor@btopenworld.com

What does 'individual prayer' mean under the new restrictions? Individuals are expected to be able to "reflect and pray" whilst adhering to physical social distancing rules. Votive candles may still be lit but shared matches, tapers or lighters must not be used. Candles must be lit from existing lit candles. Statues and relics must not be touched or kissed. This instruction will be displayed on posters in church.



Parish Centre at Newhouse: Are you one of those people with a 'tidy mind' and a natural desire for 'order' in things? Then you may be able to use your 'tidy mind' to benefit our parish. For many years Mary Rochford has been secretary of our Parish

Centre at Newhouse but now she would like to retire. Her work has involved sorting out the occasional contract and keeping the paperwork in order so that everything in the Parish Centre flows smoothly. If your natural desire for order attracts you to help out with our Parish Centre that would be terrific. Offers of help happily accepted at the Parish Office: email stjosephs.ushawmoor@btopenworld.com or phone 0191-373 0219. In the meantime, very many thanks to Mary for her work over the years.

News from the diocese: Remember, you can keep up with all sorts of news about support and resources in our diocese by looking at the diocesan website: rcdhn.org

Ushaw Moor Catholic Club: The Catholic Club is now open on Friday and Saturday evenings, from 7.00pm.



Thoughts and reflections:

Since the beginning of the lock-down I have included the Sunday Scripture readings in the newsletter and offered a few thoughts in relation to the background of the texts. I then invited people to offer any thoughts or reflections of their own on those passages from Scripture. Some people did that and, I have to say, it was fascinating to read those reflections. While I haven't mentioned this for a while, I am still very happy to receive any of your own thoughts, and what may have struck you about those passages from the bible.

Diaries and memories: Over these past few months I know that some people have been keeping diaries or at least writing down something of their thoughts and feelings as to how the Covid-19 has affected their daily lives. In the early days, there was the utter silence, the sunshine and the birdsong. Then, perhaps, the renewed interest in baking, gardening and DIY. Then the books and the television programmes we chose to pursue, and perhaps experimenting with different ways of praying. Then, as the lock-down was eased, a fluctuation between relief and also anxiety at not really feeling ready to go out from the safety of our own homes. That, in many cases, may be where we are at the moment. It will make interesting reading in times to come. [From my own point of view, I have had a go at making a variety of vegetarian meals, watching 'The Joy of Painting', 'Being Beethoven' and 'The Rise of the Nazis' on television - as well as some of my regular favourites like 'Vera' and 'Police Interceptors'!]

Readings next week: Isaiah 55:1-3; Psalm 144; Romans 8: 35. 37-39; Matthew 14: 13-21

