



THE PRECIOUS BLOOD OF OUR LORD & ALL SOULS



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A parish of the Archdiocese of Birmingham in collaboration with the Ordinariate of Our Lady of Walsingham

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SUNDAY 7 FEBRUARY 2021

5TH SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME



Keep your family safe, O Lord, with unfailing care, that, relying solely on the hope of heavenly grace, they may be defended always by your protection. Through our Lord Jesus Christ, your Son, who lives and reigns with you in the unity of the Holy Spirit, God, for ever and ever. Amen

THE GOD WHO SPEAKS: CELEBRATING, LIVING & SHARING GOD'S WORD

The Book of Ruth : the story of a faithful Israelite woman

What is this book about?

The Book of Ruth appears in our Bibles right after the Book of Judges because its heroine is an ancestor of King David, whose story is told in the next books we will hear about: 1 and 2 Samuel. It tells the story of an Israelite woman, Naomi, who marries a Moabite man and goes to live in his country. They have two sons; but she loses her husband and sons in death and she decides to go home to Israel. One of her daughters-in-law, Ruth, although a Moabitess, decides to follow Naomi to take care of her – even though it will take her far away from her own people.

A story on different levels

This well-known and well-loved story tells of Ruth's dedication to her mother-in-law following Naomi back to her home and finding ways to take care of her, which ultimately ends up with her marriage to Boaz and her giving birth to one of David's ancestors. There are two levels on which to read this story: the surface level which reveals a story of love and commitment, and the deeper level which reveals a message of what "foreigners" (even hated foreigners like the Moabites) might contribute to God's story of salvation.

Kindness and redemption

There are many important themes in the book of Ruth. The two main themes are kindness and redemption (Ruth 2:20). Ruth shows kindness to her mother-in-law, Naomi, by leaving her homeland to care for her (Ruth 1:16–17; 2:11, 18, 23). Boaz shows kindness to Ruth as he welcomes her to Israel, acts as her kinsman-redeemer (Ruth 4:9–10), and marries her (Ruth 4:13). His human kindness reflects the Lord's kindness toward his people. Redemption is linked to kindness and is at the heart of the story.

Echoes of Ruth in the Mass

There is a verse from the Book of Ruth, however, that we hear at every Mass in the greeting of the priest, where Boaz calls out to Ruth, "The Lord be with you" to which Ruth replied, "The Lord bless you" (Ruth 2:4).

God speaks to us

Through the story in the book of Ruth, God tells us how he restores those who look to him with hope. It's about God's covenant faithfulness and it contributes to the overall covenant storyline that unifies the entire Bible.

✠ WORSHIP THIS WEEK ✠

Sunday 7th	FIFTH SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME <i>(Sunday next before Lent)</i>	10.30am MASS <i>For the People of the Parish</i> <i>Kitty Hennessy RIP (Fr Tim)</i>
Monday 8 th	St. Josephine Bakhita, Virgin	9.30am Mass <i>Bernard Mohan RIP</i>
Tuesday 9 th	Feria in Ordinary Time	9.30am Mass <i>Hilda, Cyril Lee & family RIP</i>
Wednesday 10 th	St. Scholastica, Virgin	9.30am Mass <i>Christopher Egan RIP</i>
Thursday 11 th	Our Lady of Lourdes	7.30pm Mass <i>Barbara Redpath RIP</i>
Friday 12 th	Feria in Ordinary Time	9.30am Mass <i>Sue Resh RIP</i>
Sat 13 th	Our Lady on Saturday	9.30am Mass <i>Annie & John Kearns & Kearns family RIP</i>
		10.30-11.30am Confessions (Sacrament of Reconciliation)
Sunday 14th	SIXTH SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME <i>(Sunday before Lent)</i>	10.30am MASS <i>For the People of the Parish</i> <i>Mary McHugh RIP (Fr Tim)</i>

Adoration of the Blessed Sacrament for half an hour before Mass Monday-Saturday

Daily Evening Prayer (Vespers) via Zoom at 6pm (email Fr Paul to receive log-in details)

Confession is also available before Mass and by arrangement

PUBLIC WORSHIP AT ALL SOULS

A daily public Mass continues at All Souls during lockdown. Individuals must of course decide for themselves whether it is advisable to attend in person and how *frequently* they attend public worship in the week. **It is very important that people do not mingle with others in church or outside church before/during/after Mass.** Live streaming of Masses continues.

Echoes of God: Journeying with the word of God Week 3: The Prophets

This is a 7-week journey through the Bible by David McLoughlin. Hard copies of the materials are available in the exit porch. If you are reading this online, scroll down to the materials.

THE RECENTLY DEPARTED Of your charity pray for the repose of the souls of **Yvonne Bradford** and **Mary Flynn** whose funerals are on Monday 22 February and Monday 1 March respectively. Also for **Fr Patrick Joyce** and **Canon Giles Goward**, Rector of St. Mary's College Oscott, who have died recently. *Eternal rest grant unto them, O Lord, and let perpetual light shine upon them.*

GROWING FAITH Week 13: The Community of the Church

This week's session is entitled The Community of the Church. Simply follow the link, press play and enjoy the video: <https://www.sycamore.fm/videos/session-13-the-community-of-the-church/> Those receiving the link by email will also find an attachment with some material for reflection.

ASH WEDNESDAY 17 February

The penitential season of Lent in preparation for Easter begins on Wednesday 17 February. Please note that there will be two Masses on Ash Wednesday, at **9.30am** and **7.30pm**.



As an anti-COVID precaution this year the ashes will be sprinkled on the top of people's heads rather than traced as a cross on the forehead. Please bow your head when you come forward for the Imposition of Ashes.

REFLECTIONS BY PAUL PALMER One of our parishioners, Paul Palmer, has produced a book entitled *Reflections*. It is "a collection of religious, poetic reflections, covering some of the major events in the Christian calendar". It is available in the exit porch priced £4. Paul has very kindly asked that all proceeds go to parish funds. A very good lockdown read!

MEMOIRS OF A CATHOLIC CHILDHOOD Christine Knox, a parishioner of Our Lady of the Assumption parish, has written a memoir of her childhood (1937-1949) with an emphasis on her faith. It can be purchased at [Amazon.co.uk](https://www.amazon.co.uk), search "**Chrissie O': The story of an Catholic Irish immigrant child**". It reminds us how in a time of such hardship and danger, family and Church lifted and sustained people in a way we perhaps need very much today. Another good lockdown read!

CHURCHES TOGETHER PRAYERS IN LENT At 7pm on the Tuesdays of Lent members of the different churches are invited to come together on Zoom for a time of prayer. More details to follow.

WALK WITH ME BOOKLETS AND CALENDARS for Lent are now available at the back of church. Please leave offerings (suggested £1 per booklet, 50p calendars) in the wall slot behind the booklets.

St. Josephine Bakhita 8 February Day of Prayer for the Victims of Human Trafficking



Josephine Bakhita, born in Olgossa in the Darfur region of southern Sudan, was kidnapped as a child of 7 and sold into slavery in Sudan and Italy. Once Josephine was freed, she became a Canossian nun and dedicated her life to sharing her testament of deliverance from

slavery and comforting the poor and suffering. She was declared a Saint in 2000.

The Feast of St Josephine Bakhita is an annual day of prayer against human trafficking. For information about trafficking and human slavery see the section of the Vatican website <https://migrants-refugees.va/trafficking-slavery/>

*O Saint Bakhita,
assist all those who are trapped in a state of slavery;
intercede with God on their behalf
so that they will be released from their chains of captivity.
Those whom man enslaves, let God set free. Amen*

Our Lady of Lourdes 11 February World Day for the Sick

"To Mary, Mother of Mercy and Health of the Infirm, I entrust the sick, healthcare workers and all those who generously assist our suffering brothers and sisters. From the Grotto of Lourdes and her many other shrines throughout the world, may she sustain our faith and hope, and help us care for one another with fraternal love. To each and all, I cordially impart my blessing."
(From the Message of Pope Francis for the World Day of the Sick 2021)

Our Lady of Lourdes, pray for us!

Saint Bernadette, pray for us!

DARE TO HOPE The Commission for Interreligious Dialogue for the Archdiocese is hosting a second series of Zoom meetings exploring what gives hope to people of faith and how they cope with the challenges of the Covid-19 crisis. Representatives of different faith communities will share their experiences. Participants will also have the opportunity to engage in dialogue in small groups. To register, please email interreligdialogue@rcaob.org.uk Meetings are on Thursday 11 & Thursday 18 February, 7.30-8.45pm.

Why interreligious dialogue? As Christians we should continue to build relationships of respect and trust with people of different religions to achieve deeper understanding, reconciliation and cooperation for the good of humanity. Though we are believers of different faiths, we share a common humanity. Every person, to whatever religion they belong, is to be treated with respect.

Appreciation and respect for other religions does *not* mean, however, that the Church stops preaching Jesus Christ. On the contrary, the Church must "*proclaim, and is in duty bound to proclaim without fail, Christ who is 'the way, the truth and the life'*" (Jn 4:6) (*Nostra Aetate*, Second Vatican Council). It is our Christian calling and mandate to give witness always and everywhere to the uniqueness of salvation in Jesus Christ.

When we enter into dialogue with people of other religions we shouldn't do so as if all religions are the same - they are very obviously not. Yet at the same time we are certainly not to attack other religions, but rather appreciate the goodness and holiness that exists in them. Though we proclaim Christ as "the way, the truth and the life", "the Catholic Church rejects nothing of what is true and holy in [other] religions" (*Nostra Aetate*).

Prayers for Spiritual Communion



Prayer for Spiritual Communion

My Jesus,
I believe that You
are present in the
Most Holy Sacrament.
I love You above all things,
and I desire to receive
You into my soul.
Since I cannot at this
moment receive You
sacramentally, come at least
spiritually into my heart.
I embrace You as if You were
already there and unite
myself wholly to You.
Never permit me to be
separated from You.

Amen.

Anima Christi

Soul of Christ, sanctify me
Body of Christ, save me
Blood of Christ, inebriate me
Water from the side of Christ, wash me
Passion of Christ, strengthen me
O good Jesus, hear me
Within thy wounds hide me
Permit me not to be separated from thee
From the wicked foe defend me
At the hour of my death call me
And bid me come to thee
That with thy saints I may praise thee
For ever and ever. Amen.

Lord Jesus Christ, you said to your disciples, 'I am with you always'. Be with me today as I offer myself to you. Hear my prayers for others and for myself, and keep us all in your care. Amen.

O God, help me to trust you, help me to

know that you are with me, help me to believe that nothing can separate me from your love revealed in Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

Prayer of General Thanksgiving

Almighty God, Father of all mercies, we your unworthy servants give you most humble and hearty thanks for all your goodness and loving kindness. We bless you for our creation, preservation, and all the blessings of this life; but above all for your immeasurable love in the redemption of the world by our Lord Jesus Christ, for the means of grace, and for the hope of glory. And give us, we pray, such a sense of all your mercies that our hearts may be unfeignedly thankful, and that we show forth your praise, not only with our lips but in our lives, by giving up ourselves to your service, and by walking before you in holiness and righteousness all our days; through Jesus Christ our Lord, to whom, with you and the Holy Spirit, be all honour and glory, for ever and ever. Amen.

Conclude with the following:

The Lord bless us, and preserve us from all evil, and keep us in eternal life. Amen.

ECHOES OF GOD: JOURNEYING WITH THE WORD OF GOD

Week Three: The Prophets



The journey of God's people, as with all our journeys, is rarely in a straight line. In times of national disaster and institutional corruption where do the people turn? God calls prophets "seers" who "*pro-fem*", "speak in the name of someone", in this case, of their disturbing God, "I am who I am". These prophets renew the imagination of the covenant with Moses and the original freed slaves. They re-state it in terms of their time, and they keep the vision clear.

The Bible records 16 books of the prophets but the whole people are called to be prophetic and to live out of a prophetic imagination. There are wonderful echoes of this much later in Mary's song - The Magnificat (Luke 1: 46-55) and in Jesus' first recorded sermon (Luke 4:16-22).

Main Text: Isaiah 55:1-13 – An invitation to renewed full life with God.

"Oh, come to the water all you who are thirsty; though you have no money, come! Buy and eat; come, buy wine and milk without money, free! Why spend money on what cannot nourish and your wages on what fails to satisfy? Listen carefully to me, and you will have good things to eat and rich food to enjoy. Pay attention, come to me; listen, and you will live. I shall make an everlasting covenant with you in fulfilment of the favours promised to David. Look, I have made him a witness to peoples, a leader and lawgiver to peoples. Look, you will summon a nation unknown to you, a nation unknown to you will hurry to you for the sake of the LORD your God, because the Holy One of Israel has glorified you. Seek out the LORD while he is still to be found, call to him while he is still near. Let the wicked abandon his way and the evil one his thoughts. Let him turn back to the LORD who will take pity on him, to our God, for he is rich in forgiveness; for my thoughts are not your thoughts and your ways are not my ways, declares the LORD. For the heavens are as high above earth as my ways are above your ways, my thoughts above your thoughts. For, as the rain and the snow come down from the sky and do not return before having watered the earth, fertilising it and making it germinate to provide seed for the sower and food to eat, so it is with the word that goes from my mouth: it will not return to me unfulfilled or before having carried out my good pleasure and having achieved what it was sent to do. Yes, you will go out with joy and be led away in safety. Mountains and hills will break into joyful cries before you and all the trees of the countryside clap their hands. Cypress will grow instead of thorns, myrtle instead of nettles. And this will be fame for the LORD, an eternal monument never to be effaced." (Revised New Jerusalem Bible)

Later, at the time of the first Prophets Hosea and Amos, Hosea is living through the break-up of the Northern Kingdom (around 722 BCE), the people have compromised with surrounding religions and prostituted the Covenant with "the God". Hosea is depressed and thinks the covenant is broken between God and the chosen people. In Hosea 6: 5 he imagines a furious God saying:

"I have killed them with words from my mouth, my judgement will blaze forth like the light, for my pleasure is in faithful love, not sacrifice, knowledge of God not burnt offerings."

Hosea thinks that a just God can show no more mercy. But in chapter 11 God's mercy turns Hosea's own heart upside down and mercy triumphs over justice "for I am God and no mortal, the Holy One in your midst and I will not come in wrath" (Hosea 11:9). Here again is the revelation of God's undefinable reality. "I am who I am" breaks out of the boundaries that believers place upon God – that God must revenge God's honour. Still God remains wholly other, different, and it is this very quality of mercy, which now distinguishes "the God" from human images of God. Here in the inspired Scriptures, God's sovereignty is seen in forgiveness and pardoning. This is the profound basis of the reconciliation seen at the heart of Jesus' ministry and teaching. Ultimately, this is the reason for the existence of the Church – to continue to offer this divine quality of mercy and reconciliation within our world.

In God's mercy, God is revealed as completely other and yet so close. God is revealed in mercy but is also hidden and incomprehensible in the quality of that love and graciousness. In the Jewish Christian tradition, mercy holds together divine mystery and accessibility. Yet it doesn't allow for an easy chumminess!

So in the Hebrew Scriptures, God's mercy is coupled with graciousness and fidelity. But in the prophet Hosea it is also linked to God's holiness, indeed it reveals that very holiness. However, the link between mercy and holiness is not immediately obvious. The Hebrew word for holy normally implies something or someone set apart - different and superior to the worldly and the evil. This is echoed in Isaiah's vision of the Seraphim singing "Holy, holy, holy!" - which makes him feel unworthy and sinful. "Woe is me! I am lost, for I am a man of unclean lips." (Isaiah 6:3-5). God's mercy is not to be trifled with - it is not the mercy of the fool, but of the All Holy.

Because of holiness, God cannot abide evil. This is what the Bible refers to as the wrath of God. It's not some extreme divine temper tantrum but the expression of God's holiness; we can't simply get rid of judgement. God's holiness and God's justice go together; but in the Hebrew Scriptures, this is a sign of hope - directed to the coming of the righteous Messiah (cf. Isaiah 11:4; Psalms 5-9.). Any evidence of justice in a self-evidently unjust world (cf. Moses and Jesus who are both seen as justice bearers and teachers) is already a manifestation of mercy for the oppressed, the marginalised, and those whose rights are denied.

God's mercy is not cheap grace. In the books of the Prophets Amos in 5:7, 24; 6:12; and in Hosea 2:21; 12:2 we are clearly expected to do what is right. They see God holding back justified wrath to provide the space and opportunity for conversion. The divine mercy offers us an opportunity for transformation - a time of grace. So one dimension of God's mercy is grace for conversion. We see this in Jesus' open table fellowship - where people experience the kingdom before being challenged to enter it - or in his parables which offer opportunities for seeing differently through the frame of God's unexpectedly merciful kingdom.

After the time of the exile in Babylon, an experience of seeming judgement and abandonment, God says to the people through the prophet Isaiah:

"In overflowing wrath for a moment I hid my face from you, but with everlasting love I will have compassion on you... For the mountains may depart and the hills be removed, but my steadfast love shall not depart from you, and my covenant of peace shall not be removed, says the Lord who has compassion on you." (Isaiah 54:7-8)

This is not the world of guilt, punishment and retribution. Nor does it contradict justice, but rather serves it. God in sovereign freedom establishes justice in God's way - and this way is fidelity which comes from the root Hebrew word meaning to stand or hold firm. Divine mercy is a dimension of divine fidelity. In God's absolute freedom, God is still reliable – and not capricious like the gods of Egypt or Canaan. The believer in all circumstances can depend on this.

This becomes clear at the beginning of Luke's Gospel when Mary walks across the hill country to help her expectant cousin Elizabeth. As they fall into each other's arms, the child dances in Elizabeth's womb, like David before the Ark of the Covenant coming to Jerusalem; and the two women sing forth the purest prophetic imagination of their people.

They anticipate its renewal as God comes close again in sovereign freedom, starting not in the Temple, the Royal Court or the holy places, but from the little ones, the poor and oppressed. The vision is of a new unforeseen community of freedom, and it is our challenge to envision and celebrate this vision in our time. It is a community of freedom that is still evolving in new and unexpected ways; which we can anticipate in hope and in generously forgiving acts.

Again, and again in the prophets we hear the call to the people to live out of God's mercy (cf. Isaiah 54:7; 57: 16-19; 63:3 - 64:11). This promise is made to the poor and not the powerful. Isaiah 61:1 proclaims that the Messiah will be sent, above all, to the poor and the little ones, to bring them the good news. This will be the opening theme of Jesus' first public teaching in the synagogue in Nazareth. However, this is not a human utopia - but the revelation of God's merciful saving will for all. Note in Mary's song, God raises up the poor and levels the proud-hearted to be alongside each other. No one is lost. Ultimately, this is God's promise. In every age, including our own, the believer and the Church are called to make this promise real in every way possible.

This mercy of God echoes above all throughout the poetry of the Psalms: *"The Lord is merciful and gracious, slow to anger and abounding in steadfast love."* Psalm 103:8. There the sinner calls out again, and again: *"Be merciful to me O Lord"*. (4:1; 6:2 etc.) We see it especially in Psalm 51:1 attributed to David after his adultery with Bathsheba, Uriah's wife, and after the Prophet Nathan has accused him in public. The repentant David cries: *"Have mercy on me, O God; according to your steadfast love; according to your abundant mercy blot out my transgression."*

The prophets call us to face the real world with all its compromises and shabby blurrings of good and evil. They charge us to reverse our neglect of the weak, the frail; and, in our present time, of the threatened Creation itself. In helping us to see more clearly what needs attention, and calling us to repent of our own collusion, they also reveal anew, the divine mercy. This mercy has never abandoned us and will sustain us every time we turn to God, in the midst of our struggles.

Reflection Re-read the text from Isaiah and feel the call within it to a fuller intimacy with God. Hear God's word anew, and allow yourself to accept his divine mercy. Isaiah was writing in a difficult time, but he reminds us that "the God" does not think like us. God can come to us unexpectedly and in all our struggles, whatever "desert" we are crossing at present. The invitation is to come with all "who are thirsty" to re-build the covenant community as a place for all, but especially for those most vulnerable and in need. Where will God's mercy be leading you today?

Written by David McLoughlin