***The Rector writes …***

The last eighteen months have disturbed the rhythms of normal living and this has had a knock-on effect in the prayer lives of many of us. As the patterns of daily life have been confused so patterns of devotion have been harder to maintain and it would seem that for some at least their sense of communion with God has become somewhat distanced. With the impending return from whatever holidays people have managed to take and the beginning of the new academic year for our young people, we have the opportunity to re-set how we are living our lives and the establishment of fresh priorities. While the bishops of England & Wales will not be restoring the Sunday obligation to attend Mass until the first Sunday in Advent, each of us now needs to think out the place of prayer in our own daily living. We need to recognise that our friendship with God is crucial to who we are and cannot be treated as some sort of add-on to the rest of our existence. “*Heavenly King, Consoler Spirit, Spirit of Truth, present everywhere and filling all things, treasure of all good and source of all life, come dwell in us, cleanse us and save us, you who are All-Good*” (Byzantine Liturgy).

The first disciples watched Jesus at prayer and witnessed at first-hand how crucial was the relationship between him and his Father. Perhaps they were surprised when they plucked up courage to ask him how to pray that Jesus’s response – which has to remain the template for all Christian prayer – was so concise and so simple (Matthew 6:9-13). In the Saviour’s words and the petitions they express “*we* *find nothing sentimental, no bombast, no rhetoric: the prayer of Jesus is direct, sure, filled with nobility and grandeur*” (Yves Congar). To pray like Jesus, our intentions must be confident and out trust implicit (Matthew 7:7-11), but what form should this prayer take? When asked about her own devotions, Therese of Lisieux responded: “*for me, prayer is a surge of the heart; it is a simple look turned toward heaven. It is a cry of recognition and love, embracing both trial and joy.”*  Of course, words are necessary – they are our chief form of communication – but prayer has to be about more, much more, than a monologue on our part. When God first approached Moses in the phenomenon of the burning bush (Exodus 3:1) the Patriarch realised he was treading on holy ground: he knelt in adoration and out of that encounter developed a genuine relationship: “*thus the Lord used to speak to Moses face to face, as a man speaks to his friend*.” In the space we create for God within our daily routines we open ourselves to his presence and allow a warmth of mutual respect and friendship to develop.

Although we should be aware of the traditions of prayer within the long history of the Church, and it is always helpful to know how the great saints and mystics approached the Godhead, we must believe that “*the Spirit comes to help us in our weakness. For when we cannot choose words in order to pray properly, the Spirit himself expresses our plea in a way that could never be put into words*” (Romans 7:21). We need to recognise that while our personal journey into the fullness of God is paralleled by that of our brothers and sisters there is something unique about the path each of us has to take. We should not be afraid of seeking advice and the experience of others, but essentially, as Cardinal Newman realised in the motto he chose, “*heart speaks to heart*,” if we truly want God, he will not disappoint us and will lead us into what Saint John of the Cross describes as a “*silent love*.” We should begin each day consciously placing ourselves in God’s presence and offering all that will happen to him. We should round off each evening with some moments of reflection thanking God for his mercies and commending ourselves to his care during the night. These times of morning and evening prayer though fundamentally important as preface and epilogue to the day need be little more than “*a simple look turned towards heaven*” but they do need to be supplemented by longer periods (weekly if not daily) when we can really focus on the things of God. In the busy-ness of life our churches stand as beacons of the Divine presence and there is no better (or easier) place to pray than before the Blessed Sacrament in the tabernacle.

The journey of life is essentially the journey of prayer: it is on our knees that theory becomes practice. Saint Paul could assure the Corinthians: “*now is the* *acceptable time: this is the day of salvation*”. As we look ahead to the coming months and the task of strengthening our parish community with fresh purpose, it is incumbent on each of us to look at when we pray and how we pray. “*Lord,* *teach us to pray*”, his first disciples asked Jesus. We must make the same request of him. “*This then, is what I pray kneeling before the Father, from whom every family, whether spiritual or natural, takes its name: out of his infinite glory, may he give you the power through his Spirit for your hidden self to grow strong, so that Christ may live in your hearts through faith”* (Ephesians 316).

**Christopher Colven**

***Current Mass times***. **Sundays**: 8am, 9am, 10.30am, Midday, 4pm & 7pm. **Monday-Friday** at 12.30pm and 6pm and **Saturdays** 10am & 6pm (Vigil)

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On Tuesday **Dora O’Toole** will be **one hundred and four**: although unable to get to church, Dora joins us for the streamed Sunday Mass and is still a valued member of our parish community. Dora received Holy Communion in her home on Friday and we wish her a great celebration of a very special birthday.

***TRANSPORT FOR LONDON (TFL)*** has begun a consultation about future conditions of the Congestion Charge. Here is the opportunity to get across to London’s Mayor the harm to the faith communities which is being done by the punitive measures in force. Although some alleviation is proposed (the charge will operate 7am-6pm Monday to Friday, and Midday-6pm on both Saturdays and Sundays) these times still make it virtually prohibitive for anyone. to drive into central London for Sunday worship. Look up **TFL’s consultation page** and have your say: it is crucial that you do so. The consultation closes on 6th October.

Enrolment for the ***new sacramental programmes*** will begin on the first weekend in September and will close at the beginning of October. Forms will be available at the back of the church for those children whose parents wish them to be prepared for First Holy Communion, for those teenagers who are asking for the Sacrament of Confirmation, and for those adults who want to come into closer communion with the Catholic Church (or those who want to refresh their understating of their faith).

There is to be a ***EUCHARISTIC OCTAVE*** celebrated at Corpus Christi church, Maiden Lane (13th-18th September) which will coincide with the International Eucharistic Congress taking place in Hungary. The Octave will culminate in a ***Eucharistic Procession on Sunday (19th September***) which will begin at the Assumption, Warwick Street and come via Farm Street and the Ukrainian Cathedral finishing with Solemn Benediction here in Spanish Place. Our First Communicants from the past couple of years are invited to lead the procession, dressed in their First Communion clothes (if they still fit!)There are handbills at the back of church with fuller details.

***When did you last look at the parish WEBSITE:*** [***www.sjrcc.org.uk***](http://www.sjrcc.org.uk) ***?***

If you can helptheparish either by a one-off donation or by a commitment to regular giving, it would be greatly appreciated. More information from the parish office or use the bank details as set out below:-

**HSBC 69 Pall Mall, London SW1Y 5EY**

**Sort code: 40-05-20 Account no: 91094394**

**WRCDT Spanish Place**

**We are continuing to stream a Solemn Mass with the choir each Sunday at 10.30am. In addition, the 6pm Mass (Monday-Saturday) is also streamed. As is the Holy Hour on Saturday (4.45-5.45pm). The link is:**

**Point to Ponder**: “*The Lord’s Prayer is the most perfect of prayers. In it we ask, not only for all the things we can rightly desire, but also in the sequences that they should be desired. This prayer teaches us not only to ask for things, but also in what order we should desire them*” (Tertullian).

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