



THE MISSION OF SAINT MARY MAGDALENE

Father Alan's Blog

For the 70th Anniversary of the Accession of HRM QEII
(Fifth Sunday After the Epiphany) – February 6, 2022

"But above all these things put on love, which is the bond of perfection."
Colossians 3:14 (NKJV)



Today, February 6, 2022, we are celebrating the Platinum Jubilee (the 70th anniversary, if you will) of Queen Elizabeth II's accession to the throne, following the death of her father King George VI on this day in 1952.



At the moment of accession, the then-Princess Elizabeth, just 25 years old and a mother of two young children (Prince Charles & Princess Anne), was in a remote treetop lodge hotel in Kenya on a brief holiday with her husband, Prince Philip, before they embarked on a royal tour, standing in

for her ailing father. (One writer famously commented that it was “the only time in history that a princess climbed up a tree one day and climbed down the next a queen”.)

In any event, as Queen, Elizabeth II has for 70 years been Head of the Church of England – the “Defender of the Faith”. And, as such, Her Royal Majesty (HRM) has endeavoured to live her life in the Spirit and to be a model for others to follow; as an example of obedience and servitude Elizabeth II has certainly embodied what it means to be Christian. The historical record shows that our Queen has lived a good life among “the world, the flesh, and the devil”, and as a true servant of God (notwithstanding the decisions and actions of some of the clergy in her church’s employ), Elizabeth II has indeed been an ardent “Defender of the Faith”.

In addition, for 70 years our Queen has been a tireless servant of the society in which she has lived, ever mindful of the “common good” served by her actions:



she has attended an endless stream of state dinners and ceremonies;



she has visited numerous countries met with many dignitaries and spent countless hours meeting the common people of her realm; and (we would do well to remember)



she has endeavoured to be a wife and mother, when neither was easy to be – especially under the watchful eye of the world,



courtesy of the “paparazzi”.

I really don't know how HRM maintains her schedule – or her sanity. (I believe she must have a full and rich prayer life.) Yet, I am also aware – and wary – of those who would say that Elizabeth II is well compensated for her trouble, because I couldn't **disagree** more. **For no amount of money could make up for the sacrifice of one's life.** And our Queen, HRM Elizabeth II, has willingly sacrificed her life for the “common good”; she has done her duty very well.

And so we honour her this day.

(It should be obvious by now that I believe strongly in the need for our constitutional monarchy – and I'm not ashamed to admit that I'm a staunch supporter thereof. So this day I, too, honour our Queen, for she is so worthy of such honour.)



But my *KING* – well, He is a Jewish carpenter and I honour *Him* daily. For no one better exemplified the words He uttered Himself in St. John 15:13: *“Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends.”*

To reiterate – outside of a rich and full prayer life, I really don't know how Queen Elizabeth maintains her schedule. I mean, I sure wouldn't be able to do it – to say nothing of trying to emulate her sacrifice.

But all that pales in comparison to the schedule and the sacrifice of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.

Jesus lived here on earth for an estimated 33 or 34 years. And never in all of recorded history has more living been packed into such a short life – because every second counted, every minute was measured.



For 33 or 34 years Jesus lived a *perfect* life.

He lived in a world teeming with sin, and yet He remained sinless.

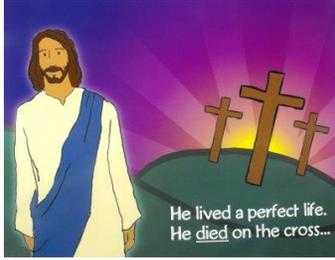


For 33 or 34 *YEARS*.

I have difficulty remaining sinless for 33 or 34 *seconds*.



And Jesus managed it for *His entire life*.



And He got hammered to a tree for it.



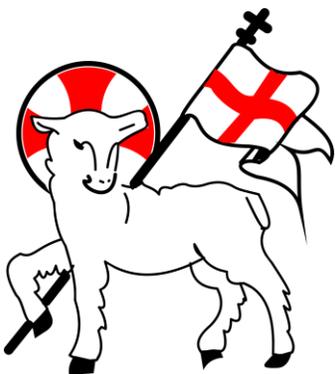
No paparazzi, either.



Just three Roman spikes.



and the insults and jeers of the assembled multitude for doing *His* duty.



In short, Jesus, the perfect human being, was the "Lamb of God" – Almighty God's *perfect sacrifice* without blemish, or spot of sin, to free us of our sins.



It couldn't have been easy, but with **perfect obedience** Jesus of Nazareth – Jesus *Christ*, God's Messiah – did His duty. And He calls us to do ours. So what, exactly, *is* our duty?



Not just to pay “lip service” to His Ten Commandments (or, in other words, obeying them to the *letter*); but



to live by the *Spirit* of them (Galatians 5:25).

Thus, as Christians, as members of our Lord Jesus Christ's “One Holy Catholic and Apostolic Church”, we are called:



to ask Jesus (in our daily prayers) to give us (via His Holy Spirit) His love and ability to be carers of – and sharers with – all others; and



to seek (through daily reading of His Holy Word) Jesus' will for our lives.

And, in so doing, Jesus promises us (St. John 14:13-14) that He will honour our sincere petitions:

“And I will do whatever you ask in my name, so that the Father may be glorified in the Son. You may ask me for anything in my name, and I will do it.”

However, Jesus is also quick to point out to us (in the very next verse, St. John 14:15) that our prayerful efforts must also be “sincere”:

“If you love me, you will obey what I command.”

And what is it that Jesus REALLY asks of us?



St. John 13:34-35: *“A new command I give you: Love one another. As I have loved you, so you must love one another. By this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another.”*



Which is precisely the point being made in our Propers for today, “The Fifth Sunday After the Epiphany”. Epiphany season comes to an end this week with the manifestation of Jesus Christ, both as:



God’s mercy; and



His judgement.

Today's readings break from the pattern of Jesus' miracles in the first four Sundays of Epiphany season to sound a note of finality – and of **warning**, as they teach us that the manifestation of Divine glory in and through Jesus Christ calls forth life of a certain *character* in us, precisely in the light of (and in proper response to) that Divine glory, as so magnificently shown to (and modelled for) us in Him.

In short, therefore, God's revealing of Himself to us, as perfected in the person of Jesus Christ, requires no "casual response" – since how we respond to Jesus in this life is a matter of the utmost **and eternal** consequence.



"Keep thy Church continually in thy true religion..."

We pray in today's Collect that by true religion and hope of God's heavenly grace, we may endure and persevere in this self-centred world of confusion and uncertainty.



"Therefore, as the elect of God, holy and beloved, put on tender mercies, kindness, humility, meekness, longsuffering; bearing with one another, and forgiving one another, if anyone has a complaint against another; even as Christ forgave you, so you also must do. But above all these things put on love, which is the bond of perfection."

We, as Christians, are exhorted by St. Paul (in verses 12-14 of today's Epistle Lesson from Colossians 3:12-17), in which he delivers to us "God's Rules for Holy Living", which explain:



where our focus should be;



what we should leave behind;



what true equality is; and



what we should strive to become.

Here, St Paul literally sets before us the habits of the soul, whereby our lives are fully focused on God.



Finally, today's Gospel Lesson (St. Matthew 13:24-30) teaches us to be the "good seed" which brings forth the "good wheat" in the midst of the world's "mixed field" of:



tares (or weeds) and wheat.

Jesus Christ, "The Eternal Word of God", is planted in us just as the sower sows the seed. And we are called to be faithful to the Sower of the good seed of eternal life in us. As a result, Jesus will bear His fruits of righteousness in us amidst the world's mixed field of tares and wheat (for, as depicted above, tares look identical to wheat before it is fully ripe).

To accomplish this, Jesus promises that He will protect us from being uprooted in an untimely fashion, so that in the day of His judgement, once we have each fully matured, we may be more easily separated from the tares and gathered into the eternal barn of heaven. All because we willingly responded to Jesus Christ's calling forth of a life of a certain *character*.



Unfortunately, though, in our "blindness", we're all too often quick to point out the shortcomings (that is, the "tare-like" actions) of others.

Case in point:

A parishioner once shared with me about the "opportunity" she had to kneel at the communion rail beside my then four year-old son.

Evidently, while this parishioner knelt in solemn prayer in anticipation of receiving the Blessed Sacrament, she felt a gentle tapping on her arm. And looking down, she saw my young son's smiling face looking up at her. As soon as he was sure he had her attention, he gestured to his right and whispered:

"That's my little brother, he's always getting into trouble."

(However, my four-year-old son neglected to mention the fact that he regularly got into trouble, too.)



And, by the way, *so do we.*

And that's why we're called to attend Holy Worship every Sunday.

We are supposed to all get down on our knees and admit to God (**and to everyone else present!**) that we regularly get into trouble, too – that we fully recognize that without God's Divine Assistance, we would all be hopelessly lost in our sins. And so, like the two blind beggars in St. Matthew 9:27, we pray in humility and in all honesty:



*"Jesus of Nazareth, thou Son of David,
have mercy on us, sinners all."*

For that is the first step in performing our Christian duty.

And the "Lamb of God that takest away the sin of the world" hears

our helpless cries and He responds by giving us His perfect Body and His perfect Blood, so that, as we petition on page 84 of the Book of Common Prayer (BCP) as part of the “Prayer of Humble Access”:

“... our sinful bodies may be made clean by His Body, And our souls washed through His most precious Blood, That we may evermore dwell in Him, And He in us.”

Simply put, then, our task, as disciples of the Lord Jesus Christ, is to grow into the good wheat fit for heaven’s everlasting barn in the midst of a world full of tares.

For as I’ve said countless times before, there will come a day when we are all called to give an account for how well we took up the mantle of discipleship. And all of creation’s people, whether made by God a long time ago, or a short time ago:



(including HRM Queen Elizabeth II),

will have to answer for their choices and for their actions, and be judged either:



as tares, fit only to be bound into bundles and burned in the fire; or as wheat, having “... put on love, which is the bond of perfection...” and gathered into our Lord Jesus Christ’s eternal barn.

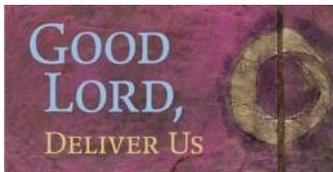


And so, this day...

This Fifth Sunday After the Epiphany...

This 70th Anniversary of the Accession of HRM Queen Elizabeth II...

Let us pray in all earnestness:



“Good Lord, deliver us.” (BCP, pp. 30-31); and



“God Save the Queen.”



Dearest Reader in Christ:

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