

DEANERY OF ST EDMUND CAMPION

ENGLISH MARTYRS—VALE OF THE WHITE HORSE PASTORAL AREA

www.portsmouthdiocese.org.uk

www.hendredcatholicparish.org.uk

East Hendred Catholic Parish

After Epiphany

17th-23rd January 2021



The Marriage at Cana

Reflection - The Marriage at Cana

THE PROBLEM that always presents itself with this 'first sign' in Jesus' ministry, as told to us in the Fourth Gospel, is the extraordinary quantity of wine. A wedding feast with 180 gallons of the finest wine – 50 cases of 12 bottles as we should say today – is what we have here when the wine provided by the host has run out! Why, asks the head waiter, has this very best wine been kept till last? The feast is seen by the Church as the third of the three manifestations – epiphanies – in which God makes known his love and his glory. It happened with the Wise Men in Bethlehem. It happened with St John the Baptist at the Jordan. It happens now in the Wedding Feast at Cana. As always with St John, we see behind the story-telling (and there is no good reason to regard his account of things as not being accurate) and consider the symbols. So this 'wedding feast' is both the feast promised in the Old Testament (Isaiah 25:6) and the Marriage Feast of the Lamb (Rev 19:6-9) which is the culmination of our earthly pilgrimage. It also links in with the wedding feast in the parable (e.g. Mt 22:1-14), the Feeding of the Multitudes (e.g. Mk 6:30-44), and the Eucharist, whether linked to the Feeding of the Multitudes (John 6) or associated with the Last Supper (Mt 26:17-30, Mk 14:12-26, Lk. 22:7-39). The finest wine is also associated with the revelation and wisdom that come from God (Prov 9:4-5, Sirach 24:20-21) and the promise of abundant wine associated with the Messiah (Amos 9:13-14). This is foretold mysteriously in the Book of Genesis (Gen 49:10-11), worth here quoting in full.

**The sceptre shall not depart from Judah,
nor the ruler's staff from between his feet,
until he comes to whom it belongs;
and to him shall be the obedience of the peoples.**

¹¹**Binding his foal to the vine
and his ass's colt to the choice vine,
he washes his garments in wine
and his vesture in the blood of grapes;**

No less intriguing is the interplay in the story of the Wedding Feast of Our Lady and her Son. She intercedes on behalf of the wedding family, is at first rebuffed because her Son's hour has not yet come, but this leads to as profound a statement of discipleship ('Do whatever he tells you.') as in the Annunciation at Nazareth: 'Behold, I am the handmaid of the Lord; let it be to me according to your word' (Lk 1:38). Mother and Son certainly but, in the context of the Marriage Feast of the Lamb, the Bride - the Mystical Body of the Church – and the Bridegroom.

17th -24th January 2021

All masses live-streamed on Church Services TV

Sunday	SECOND SUNDAY <i>Per Annum</i> (Year B)
17th January	9.30am Mass <i>Pro populo</i> 1 Samuel 2:3:3-10, 19 1 Corinthians 6:13-15, 17-20 John 1:35-42
Monday	<i>(Ordinary Time: Year 1: Week 2)</i>
18th January	9.15am Mass <i>RIP Brian Binding</i> Hebrews 5:1-10 Mark 2:18-22
Tuesday	<i>St Wulfstan, Religious, Bishop</i>
19th January	9.15am Mass <i>FM Col S V Dauglish 1925</i> Hebrews 6:10-20 Mark 2:23-28
Wednesday	
20th January	9.15am Mass <i>RIP Maria Luisa Sanchez García [Ramona Frearson]</i> Hebrews 7:1-3, 15-17 Mark 3:1-6
Thursday	<i>St Agnes. Virgin, Martyr</i>
21st January	10am School Mass <i>RIP Sheila Shepherd</i> Hebrews 7:25 - 8:6 Mark 3:7-12
Friday	<i>St Vincent, Deacon, Martyr</i>
22nd January	9.15am Mass <i>Private Intention</i> Hebrews 8:6-13 Mark 3:13-19
Saturday	<i>Our Lady on Saturday</i>
23rd January	<i>No Mass</i> Hebrews 9:2-3, 11-14 Mark 3:20-21
Sunday	THIRD SUNDAY <i>Per Annum</i> (Year B)
24th January	9.30am Mass <i>Pro populo</i> Jeremiah 1:4-10 Acts 22:3-16 Mark 16:15-18

East Hendred Catholic Parish

NOTICEBOARD

ST MARY'S ON LIVE-STREAM

LAST SUNDAY we had a somewhat larger congregation than the previous week. As well as the inflated figure of those who drop by – 349 last Sunday – we are given the figures for different IPs (i.e. different computers that tune in) and the number of those who take part for a significant time. From this I reckon that 176 homes passed by, 115 of them staying long enough to take part in the Mass. Obviously homes where there is more than one person viewing help explain the largest figure. Feedback is always appreciated: one person who listened in on her own told me that, as I invited people to make an Act of Spiritual Communion, the sun penetrated the mist and shone. Someone else wrote to me this week from Lancashire. In an exchange with the Bishop, he reminded us that there is a significant difference between taking a full part in the service in front of the screen and sitting there with a mug of tea!

CHILDREN'S LITURGY

Google Children's Liturgy 17th January 2021 and there are many on-line resources. See, for example, CAFOD or Diocese of Westminster.

TENTH ANNIVERSARY

Friday 15th January was the tenth anniversary of my ordination as a Catholic Priest and of the founding of the Ordinariate of Our Lady of Walsingham.

VERSO L'ALTO - REACH THE HEIGHTS!

An Hour of Prayer and Praise

Bishop Philip invites you to join him and the Cathedral clergy online every Thursday 7.30 to 8.30 pm during lockdown to pray for safety, for the sick and for key workers, for the Diocese and for a speedy end to the pandemic.
<https://www.portsmouthcatholiccathedral.org.uk/live-mass.php>

CHURCH CLOSED

The churches in the parish are currently closed: for safety's sake, before accessing please check with Fr Andrew. In place of the scheduled Parish Pastoral Council Meeting on Wednesday 10th February, the Standing Committee will be convened, 8pm on Zoom that night, to monitor progress. Whilst St Mary's is closed, there are plans to repair the floor. Whilst St Patrick's is closed, we hope to re-hang the *baldacchino* securely.

FOR YOUR PRAYERS

HOLY FATHER'S JANUARY PRAYER INTENTION

May the Lord give us the grace to live in full fellowship with our brothers and sisters of other religions, praying for one another, open to all.

THE SICK AND THOSE IN NEED

Kristina, Baby Martha, John Castle, Petal Connell, Daniel Cuevas, Rose Millet, John Stringer, Louise Woodhouse, Sr Catherine, Mary Wallace, Brenda Paddon, Angus Clark, Karen Greig, Kitty Teasdale, Mary Mc Nichol, Andrew Gunn, Elizabeth Gunn, Des McNichol, Christine Robinson, Rose

THE FAITHFUL DEPARTED

Janina Krokowska, Winifred Day, Thomas McDonagh, Fr Sean Murphy, Brian Mulford, Edmond Joseph Mockler, Tamsie Mary Tonnor, Veronica Lineham, Edwin Harper, John Fisher, William Champ, Elsie Mulford, Gordon Tomlin.

THE YEAR OF THE WORD

Following the disruption caused by COVID-19, Bishop Philip has extended 'The Year of the Word' until 30th September 2021. In short, we shall continue with our intense Scripture programme till then.

GIVING: THE CATHEDRAL

Next weekend we take the annual second collection in support of your Cathedral in Portsmouth. This collection is the only support our Cathedral receives from the wider Diocesan family. Due to the lockdown, a 'Give as you Live' page has also been created to enable you to donate online at:

<https://donate.giveasyoulive.com/fundraising/cathedral-annual-appeal>

Understandably, we all are aware that these are difficult times for us all, but please give generously to support your cathedral, gift aiding your donation wherever possible.

GIVING: CHARITY

To help with supplying the Didcot Foodbank, contact Veronica Paget: veronicapaget@hotmail.com or leave suitable food outside her front door.

Jackymattam@btinternet.com helps with the poor locally. Does anyone have a washing machine (or could buy one)? Also, the same family, are in need of warm clothes for their daughter for age 3.5 to 4 years. She particularly needs waterproof clothes. The parents are doing their best to work around Covid restrictions and child care requirements. Answers to Jacky.

GIVING: THE PARISH BY REGULAR STANDING ORDER OR GIFT

BANK DETAILS: PRC DTR East Hendred, St Mary

Sort Code: 309304 Account Number: 00877183

To arrange Gift Aid, contact : hendred@portsmouthdiocese.org.uk

CONTACT DETAILS: Fr Andrew is 01235 835038 or 07976 437979
aburnham@portsmouthdiocese.org.uk

East Hendred Catholic Parish



Six Stone Jars at the Wedding at Cana

**Second Sunday in
Ordinary Time (B)**

17th January 2021

**Antiphons,
Prayers and
Readings**

Entrance Antiphon

All the earth shall bow down before you, O God, and shall sing to your name, O Most High!

Omnis terra adoret te

Ps 66:4

Collect

Almighty ever-living God, who govern all things, both in heaven and on earth, mercifully hear the pleading of your people and bestow your peace on our times. Through our Lord Jesus Christ, your Son, who lives and reigns with you in the unity of the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever

First Reading

1 Samuel 3:3-10, 19 (RSV)

The lamp of God had not yet gone out, and Samuel was lying down within the temple of the LORD, where the ark of God was. ⁴ Then the LORD called, 'Samuel! Samuel!' and he said, 'Here I am!' ⁵ and ran to Eli, and said, 'Here I am, for you called me.' But he said, 'I did not call; lie down again.' So he went and lay down. ⁶ And the LORD called again, 'Samuel!' and Samuel arose and went to Eli, and said, 'Here I am, for you called me.' But he said, 'I did not call, my son; lie down again.' ⁷ Now Samuel did not yet know the LORD, and the word of the LORD had not yet been revealed to him. ⁸ And the LORD called Samuel again the third time. And he arose and went to Eli, and said, 'Here I am, for you called me.' Then Eli perceived that the LORD was calling the boy. ⁹ Therefore Eli said to Samuel, 'Go, lie down; and if he calls you, you shall say, 'Speak, LORD, for your servant hears.'" So Samuel went and

lay down in his place. ¹⁰ And the LORD came and stood forth, calling as at other times, 'Samuel! Samuel!' And Samuel said, 'Speak, for your servant hears.' ...¹⁹ And Samuel grew, and the LORD was with him and let none of his words fall to the ground.

Psalm 40:2-4, 7-10 R/ cf vv8-9

R/ Here I am, O Lord! I delight to do your will.

I waited, I waited for the Lord
and he stooped down to me; he heard my cry.
He put a new song into my mouth,
praise of our God. **R/**

You delight not in sacrifice and offerings, but in an open ear.
You do not ask for holocaust and victim. **R/**

Then I said, 'See, I have come.'
In the scroll of the book it stands written of me:
'I delight to do your will, O my God;
Your instruction lies deep within me.' **R/**

Your justice I have proclaimed
in the great assembly.
My lips I have not sealed;
you know it, O Lord. **R/**

Second Reading *1 Corinthians 6:13-15, 17-20 (RSV)*

¹³ The body is not meant for immorality, but for the Lord, and the Lord for the body. ¹⁴ And God raised the Lord and will also raise us up by his power. ¹⁵ Do you not know that your bodies are members of Christ? ...¹⁷ But he who is united to the Lord becomes one spirit with him. ¹⁸ Shun immorality. Every other sin which a man commits is outside the body; but the immoral man sins against his own body. ¹⁹ Do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit within you, which you have from God? You are not your own; ²⁰ you were bought with a price. So glorify God in your body.

Alleluia

Alleluia, **alleluia.** Speak, Lord, your servant is listening: you have the message of eternal life.

Gospel

John 2:1-11 (RSV)

On the third day there was a marriage at Cana in Galilee, and the mother of Jesus was there; Jesus also was invited to the marriage, with his disciples. When the wine failed, the mother of Jesus said to him, 'They have no wine.' And Jesus said to her, 'O woman, what have you to do with me? My hour has not yet come.' His mother said to the servants, 'Do

whatever he tells you.' Now six stone jars were standing there, for the Jewish rites of purification, each holding twenty or thirty gallons. Jesus said to them, 'Fill the jars with water.' And they filled them up to the brim. He said to them, 'Now draw some out, and take it to the steward of the feast.' So they took it. When the steward of the feast tasted the water now become wine, and did not know where it came from (though the servants who had drawn the water knew), the steward of the feast called the bridegroom and said to him, 'Every man serves the good wine first; and when men have drunk freely, then the poor wine; but you have kept the good wine until now.' This, the first of his signs, Jesus did at Cana in Galilee, and manifested his glory; and his disciples believed in him.

Prayer over the Offerings

Grant us, O Lord, we pray, that we may participate worthily in these mysteries, for whenever the memorial of this sacrifice is celebrated the work of our redemption is accomplished. Through Christ our Lord.

Preface

(II De mysterio salutis)

It is truly right and just, our duty and our salvation, always and everywhere to give you thanks, Lord, holy Father, almighty and eternal God, through Christ our Lord. For out of compassion for the waywardness that is ours, he humbled himself and was born of the Virgin; by the passion of the Cross he freed us from unending death, and by rising from the dead he gave us life eternal. And so, with Angels and Archangels, with Thrones and Dominions, and with all the hosts and Powers of heaven, we sing the hymn of your glory, as without end we acclaim: Holy, holy, holy &c.

Communion Antiphon

Nos cognovimus

We have come to know and to believe in the love that God has for us.

1 John 4:16

SPIRITUAL COMMUNION

St Alphonsus Liguori (18th cent.)

My Jesus, I believe that you are present in the most Blessed Sacrament. I love you above all things and I desire to receive you into my soul. Since I cannot now 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.

Lord, I am not worthy that you should enter under my roof, but only say the word and my soul shall be healed.

Or

O come to my heart, Lord Jesus. There is room in my heart for you.

Prayer after Communion

Pour on us, O Lord, the Spirit of your love, and in your kindness make those you have nourished by this one heavenly Bread one in mind and heart. Through Christ our Lord.

Alma Redemptoris Mater

Mother of Christ, hear thou thy people's cry
Star of the deep and Portal of the sky!
Mother of Him who thee from nothing made.
Sinking, we strive and call to thee for aid.
Oh, by that joy which Gabriel brought to thee,
Thou Virgin first and last, let us thy mercy see.

Scripture Reading

Monday	Hebrews 5:1-10	Week 2 [I] Mark 2:18-22
Tuesday	Hebrews 6:10-20	Mark 2:23-28
Wednesday	Hebrews 7:1-3, 15-17	Mark 3:1-6
Thursday	Hebrews 7:25 - 8:6	Mark 3:7-12
Friday	Hebrews 8:6-13	Mark 3:13-19
Saturday	Hebrews 9:2-3, 11-14	Mark 3:20-21
Sunday 3B	Jeremiah 1:4-10 Acts 22:3-16	Mark 16:15-18

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FOOD FOR THE JOURNEY

11th – 16th January 2021

Week 2 (Year 1)

Monday 18th January

Reading

Hebrews 5:1-10

Although he was a Son, he learned obedience through what he suffered

Every high priest chosen from among men is appointed to act on behalf of men in relation to God, to offer gifts and sacrifices for sins. ² He can deal gently with the ignorant and wayward, since he himself is beset with weakness. ³ Because of this he is bound to offer sacrifice for his own sins as well as for those of the people. ⁴ And one does not take the honour upon himself, but he is called by God, just as Aaron was.

⁵ So also Christ did not exalt himself to be made a high priest, but was appointed by him who said to him,

**‘You are my Son,
today I have begotten you’;**

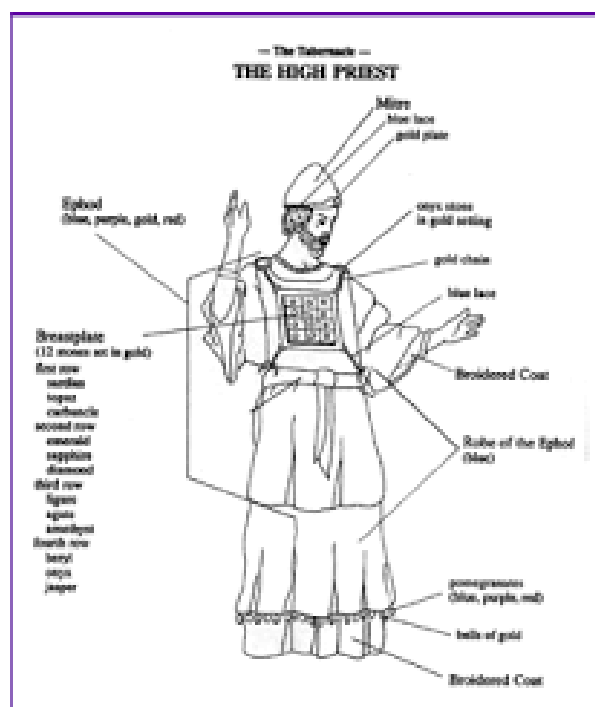
⁶ as he says also in another place,

**‘You are a priest for ever,
after the order of Melchiz’edek.’**

⁷ In the days of his flesh, Jesus, offered up prayers and supplications, with loud cries and tears, to him who was able to save him from death, and he was heard for his godly fear. ⁸ Although he was a Son, he learned obedience through what he suffered; ⁹ and being made perfect he became the source of eternal salvation to all who obey him, ¹⁰ being designated by God a high priest after the order of Melchiz’edek.

Reflection

THE CONTRAST between the Jewish High Priest - 'chosen from among men' and 'appointed to act on behalf of men in relation to God, to offer gifts and sacrifices for sins' – and Jesus, the Son of God, appointed by God himself is sharply drawn. The High Priest, chosen by his peers for the task, is temporary, beset by his own weakness, and therefore having to offer sin-offerings on his own behalf as well as on behalf of others. Like Aaron, the earthly high priest is chosen from among the living (Sirach 45:16). We see this process of selection in Lev 8:2 with reference to Aaron and his sons and similarly in Num 8:6 with reference to the Levites. By contrast, quoting Ps 2:7 and Ps 110:4, the writer speaks of Jesus the High Priest as God's Son, appointed by him, and as a priest after the order of Melchiz'edek. We shall hear more about Melchiz'edek later on, but for now we note that whereas there are generations of priests after Aaron's line, Melchiz'edek was a one-off. The order of Melchiz'edek, because it is unique, is therefore an eternal model. From this follows, the High Priesthood of Christ is unique and eternal. He is not chosen from among mortals, his offering is once and for all, and his offering for sin is not on his own behalf, because, of course, he is without sin.



Tuesday 19th January

St Wulstan, Religious, Bishop

St Wulstan (1008-1095), also known as 'Wulfstan', was a Benedictine monk at Worcester, eventually becoming Bishop in 1062. Uniquely amongst bishops, he retained his See through and beyond the Norman Conquest. Wise and benevolent, he rebuilt the cathedral, reformed the diocese, and tried to stop the Bristol slave trade, in which English slaves were sold to Norse traders in Ireland.

Collect

FILL us, we pray you, Lord our God, with that spirit of charity which burned in the heart of Saint Wulstan, your Bishop: that, as he honoured you by faithful service of your poor, so by the help of his poverty we may live lives of service and of charity, and attain to the blessed life of your kingdom. 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.

Reading

Hebrews 6:10-20

The Certainty of God's Promise

God is not so unjust as to overlook your work and the love which you showed for his sake in serving the saints, as you still do. ¹¹ And we desire each one of you to show the same earnestness in realizing the full assurance of hope until the end, ¹² so that you may not be sluggish, but imitators of those who through faith and patience inherit the promises.

¹³ For when God made a promise to Abraham, since he had no one greater by whom to swear, he swore by himself, ¹⁴ saying, 'Surely I will bless you and multiply you.' ¹⁵ And thus Abraham, having patiently endured, obtained the promise. ¹⁶ Men indeed swear by a greater than themselves, and in all their disputes an oath is final for confirmation. ¹⁷ So when God desired to show more convincingly to the heirs of the promise the

unchangeable character of his purpose, he interposed with an oath, ¹⁸ so that through two unchangeable things, in which it is impossible that God should prove false, we who have fled for refuge might have strong encouragement to seize the hope set before us. ¹⁹ We have this as a sure and steadfast anchor of the soul, a hope that enters into the inner shrine behind the curtain, ²⁰ where Jesus has gone as a forerunner on our behalf, having become a high priest for ever after the order of Melchiz'edek.

Reflection

THE EPISTLE to the Hebrews holds before us the holiness of God, 'the unchangeable character of his purpose'. It encourages us not to be sluggish but to be 'imitators of those who through faith and patience inherit the promises'. There is no going back to how things were – no second repentance is possible. Instead, we need to keep moving on 'to seize the hope set before us'. The writer identifies two unchangeable things. The first is God's word and the second is God's oath. In fact these two things really amount to the same: God's word is so trustworthy that it has the status of an oath. God's oath is trustworthy because he can swear by nothing greater than himself because he is supreme. God's faithfulness can be tracked back to the promise he made to Abraham, a promise reinforced by his word and his oath. Our hope in God has this as its context but is now focused on Jesus who goes beyond the curtain to act as the High Priest. The curtain is what conceals the Holy of Holies from our view – as with the Jewish Temple – and, for our purposes, it is the boundary between death and life which Jesus has crossed through his death and resurrection. As for Melchiz'edek, we heard a bit about him yesterday and we shall be hearing more about him tomorrow.

Wednesday 20th January

Reading

Hebrews 7:1-3, 15-17

The Priestly Order of Melchizedek

7 For this Melchiz'edek, king of Salem, priest of the Most High God, met Abraham returning from the slaughter of the kings and blessed him; ² and to him Abraham apportioned a tenth part of everything. He is first, by translation of his name, king of righteousness, and then he is also king of Salem, that is, king of peace. ³ He is without father or mother or genealogy,

and has neither beginning of days nor end of life, but resembling the Son of God he continues a priest for ever.....

¹⁵ This becomes even more evident when another priest arises in the likeness of Melchiz'edek, ¹⁶ who has become a priest, not according to a legal requirement concerning bodily descent but by the power of an indestructible life. ¹⁷ For it is witnessed of him,

**'You are a priest for ever,
after the order of Melchiz'edek.'**

Reflection

WE HEAR about Melchiz'edek not only in the Letter to the Hebrews but also during the Mass in the Roman Canon. The story which begins this passage comes from Genesis 14, here as found in the Septuagint, the Greek version of the Old Testament. At this point in the Genesis story Abraham is still called 'Abram' and he acknowledges the priestly blessing from the Melchiz'edek by paying tithes to him. As we discover with the Old Testament priesthood as it emerges after Moses' meetings with God on Mount Sinai, the priesthood is sustained by a tithing population. At the end of the reading we have another mention of Melchiz'edek, the quotation from Ps 110:4 where he is cast as a Messianic figure. The Church, following Hebrews, sees the priesthood of Melchiz'edek as foreshadowing that of Christ, not only because of the Messiah imagery, but because in both cases priesthood involves the offering of bread and wine. This takes us beyond the animal sacrifices and sin-offerings of the Temple. There are extra layers of symbolism in that Melchiz'edek is given various titles: 'King of righteousness', 'King of Salem', and 'King of Peace', all of which are appropriate titles for Christ. Furthermore the mysterious figure from pre-history is said to be without father or mother or genealogy. Like Christ he has no beginning and no end.

Thursday 21st January

St Agnes, Virgin, Martyr

St Agnes (*ob.* c.304) came from a noble Roman family and, according to legend, was about 13 when she suffered martyrdom. She was stabbed in the throat when she refused to marry a pagan. *Agnes* in Greek means 'chaste' and is related to the Latin word *agnus*, a lamb, both of which are apt associations for one who was innocent, vulnerable, and young.

Collect

ALMIGHTY ever-living God, who choose what is weak in the world to confound the strong: mercifully grant, that we, who celebrate the heavenly birthday of your Martyr, St Agnes, may follow her constancy in the faith. 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.

Reading

Hebrews 7:25 - 8:6

Mediator of a Better Covenant

²⁵ Jesus is able for all time to save those who draw near to God through him, since he always lives to make intercession for them.

²⁶ For it was fitting that we should have such a high priest, holy, blameless, unstained, separated from sinners, exalted above the heavens. ²⁷ He has no need, like those high priests, to offer sacrifices daily, first for his own sins and then for those of the people; he did this once for all when he offered up himself. ²⁸ Indeed, the law appoints men in their weakness as high priests, but the word of the oath, which came later than the law, appoints a Son who has been made perfect for ever.

8 Now the point in what we are saying is this: we have such a high priest, one who is seated at the right hand of the throne of the Majesty in heaven, ² a minister in the sanctuary and the true tent which is set up not by man but by the Lord. ³ For every high priest is appointed to offer gifts

and sacrifices; hence it is necessary for this priest also to have something to offer. ⁴ Now if he were on earth, he would not be a priest at all, since there are priests who offer gifts according to the law. ⁵ They serve a copy and shadow of the heavenly sanctuary; for when Moses was about to erect the tent, he was instructed by God, saying, 'See that you make everything according to the pattern which was shown you on the mountain.' ⁶ But as it is, Christ has obtained a ministry which is as much more excellent than the old as the covenant he mediates is better, since it is enacted on better promises.

Reflection

WE HEARD earlier in the argument (Heb 2:10) that it was 'fitting that he, for whom and by whom all things exist, in bringing many sons to glory, should make the pioneer of their salvation perfect through suffering'. We now hear that it is 'fitting that we should have such a high priest, holy, blameless, unstained, separated from sinners, exalted above the heavens' (Heb 7:26). In other words, it was fitting for God that Jesus should be made perfect through suffering and fitting for us that Jesus be a sinless High Priest. We discover through this something of the mystery of suffering. Suffering is not just what happens to us: there is suffering in the heart of God. God was and is never imperfect but his perfection is partly explained by the suffering which in Christ he freely chose to undergo. As for the role of High Priest, we learn from the Torah, the Jewish Law, what the task of the High Priest is. He is a mediator, one who makes sin offerings on behalf of the people and on his own behalf. The High Priest, thus understood, was temporary: there was a succession of them. He is also a flawed human being: his sin offerings are partly on his own behalf and not a perfect offering for the people. So not only are there, over the course of time, many high priests, but there are whole cycles of sacrifice, involving less than perfect means – the blood of bulls and goats – to achieve at best temporary ends. Nonetheless, this system of sacrificial worship was a copy – an imitation, a type, a shadow – of the heavenly worship. What the system needed, and what it found in Jesus, was a perfect High Priest who could make the offering just the once. Furthermore it becomes a perfect offering, using the perfect means. The perfect sin-offering, the perfect atonement – at-one-ment – is the God-Man Jesus offering his own life, made perfect – that is, complete – through suffering. We edge towards an understanding of this awesome mystery but, as is the case with mysteries, we cannot finally grasp it. It is truly awesome because we cannot grasp it.

Friday 22nd January

St Vincent, Deacon, Martyr

St Vincent (*ob. c.304*) was a deacon in Saragossa, Spain. He was brutally tortured and martyred at Valencia in the Diocletian persecution. His bravery and virtue were widely admired and sermons exist in which both St Augustine and St Leo praise him. He is the proto-martyr of Spain.

Collect

ALMIGHTY ever-living God, mercifully pour out your Spirit upon us: so that our hearts may possess that strong love by which the Martyr Saint Vincent triumphed over all bodily torments. 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.

Reading

Hebrews 8:6-13

A New Covenant with the House of Israel

Christ has obtained a ministry which is as much more excellent than the old as the covenant he mediates is better, since it is enacted on better promises. ⁷ For if that first covenant had been faultless, there would have been no occasion for a second.

⁸ For he finds fault with them when he says:

**'The days will come, says the Lord,
when I will establish a new covenant with the house of Israel
and with the house of Judah;
⁹ not like the covenant that I made with their fathers
on the day when I took them by the hand
to lead them out of the land of Egypt;
for they did not continue in my covenant,
and so I paid no heed to them, says the Lord.**

¹⁰ This is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel

**after those days, says the Lord:
I will put my laws into their minds,
and write them on their hearts,
and I will be their God,
and they shall be my people.**

**¹¹ And they shall not teach every one his fellow
or every one his brother, saying, 'Know the Lord,'
for all shall know me,
from the least of them to the greatest.**

**¹² For I will be merciful toward their iniquities,
and I will remember their sins no more.'**

¹³ In speaking of a new covenant he treats the first as obsolete. And what is becoming obsolete and growing old is ready to vanish away.

Reflection

WE REFER to the Old Testament and the New Testament, the two parts of the Bible. At Mass we read more of the New than of the Old, despite the fact that the Old is about three-quarters of the Bible and the New only about a quarter. 'Testament' is simply an old word for 'covenant' and a 'covenant' is a solemn and binding agreement. When we look through the 'Old Testament', the Hebrew Scriptures, we discover that there is more than one 'covenant' within it. There was a covenant with Noah, a covenant with Abraham, a covenant with Moses, a covenant with David. And more besides. Nonetheless, it is the covenant with Moses which most concerns us, and this is what the Letter to the Hebrews calls 'the first covenant'. God leads his people from slavery in Egypt to freedom in the Promised Land – from death to life. The covenant is negotiated primarily on Mount Sinai – the Ten Commandments and the whole system of priesthood and sacrifice are given to Moses there – and much of the Hebrew Scriptures is viewed through the prism of obedience and disobedience. Disobedience – the failure of the people to be able to keep their side of the bargain – is the rationale given for the collapse of kings, for exile, subjugation by foreign empires, and tragic outcomes of one kind or another, especially with regard to Jerusalem, the Temple and capital. Contained within the Old Testament are promises of renewal and redemption, new outcomes. What Hebrews quotes here is from the prophet Jeremiah (31:31-34), as given in the Septuagint, the Greek version of the Old Testament. It is a very clear statement of the hope of salvation – a glorious future for God's people after

the calamity of the Jewish Exile in Babylon. Christians interpret that glorious future not in terms of the rather chequered history of Judaism after the Return from Exile, a history of subjugation by one empire after another, but in the coming of Christ, not as a conquering warrior-king but as one who establishes a new covenant, a new agreement.

Saturday 23rd January

Reading

Hebrews 9:2-3, 11-14

Let us be confident in approaching the throne of Grace

A tent was prepared, the outer one, in which were the lampstand and the table and the bread of the Presence; it is called the Holy Place. ³ Behind the second curtain stood a tent called the Holy of Holies... ¹¹ But when Christ appeared as a high priest of the good things that have come, then through the greater and more perfect tent (not made with hands, that is, not of this creation) ¹² he entered once for all into the Holy Place, taking not the blood of goats and calves but his own blood, thus securing an eternal redemption. ¹³ For if the sprinkling of defiled persons with the blood of goats and bulls and with the ashes of a heifer sanctifies for the purification of the flesh, ¹⁴ how much more shall the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered himself without blemish to God, purify your conscience from dead works to serve the living God.

Reflection

WE HAVEN'T finished yet with Hebrews: there are another couple of weeks of readings at weekday Mass from that dense theological treatise, more a sermon than a letter. Nevertheless today's reading is a suitable place to take stock. We are comparing the apparatus of the Holy Place and its ceremonies and customs with what is achieved by the Priesthood of Christ. The Jewish Temple had a series of courts, each leading to a more exclusive enclosure – rather like, if you go to the Buckingham Palace Garden Party, you find that within the hallowed precincts there are further enclosures into which only certain people are admitted. The most exclusive enclosures in the Jerusalem Temple were the Holy Place and, beyond that, the Holy of

Holies, where only the High Priest could go, and then only once in the year, on the Day of Atonement. Christ the High Priest enters the Holy Place just once – once and for all – and the redemption he achieves is not through animal sacrifice but through the shedding of his own blood. The further contrast is that the annual Atonement sacrifice serves for the purification of the flesh, whereas the sacrifice of Christ purifies our consciences, and re-vivifies us in God's service. The annual sacrifice was flawed. The eternal sacrifice of Christ is without blemish. Some of this symbolism helps us to understand our own Church architecture, or better still, the architecture serves to remind us of the theology. Our altars, at St Mary's and St Patrick's, are set within a sanctuary, the 'Holy Place'. That is where the sacrifice of the Mass is celebrated – about which there will be more to say. Beyond and behind the altar, in both churches, is the Tabernacle – the word is the same as 'tent' – the Holy of Holies, where Christ is eternally present to his people. His presence is marked for us by a light which is kept burning, a light shining in the darkness and not overwhelmed by it.