

Sunday, 29th March 2020

5th Sunday of Lent.

Today, here in England we rededicate ourselves and our country to Mary. Once again, England will truly be the Dowry of Mary.

Perhaps something good can come out of pain anguish and anxiety of the Coronavirus epidemic as we take care of our neighbours, own needs and the needs of those in our wider community; the needs are both physical and spiritual. Even if we are self-isolation and can't do the shopping for others, we can telephone and chat with them to relieve the boredom and isolation; and, we certainly can pray for them.

In today's Gospel we hear how Christ said, "I am the resurrection and the life" ... we must believe this statement of truth for God is truth. To bring our faith into action perhaps today, and each day of the crisis, we could pray the Angelus (you can find it in any Simple Prayer book or on-line or join in the Divine Office so dedicating each part of the day to God.

The Angelus is a prayer centred around the Annunciation, when the Blessed Virgin Mary was visited by the Archangel Gabriel and freely assented to become the Mother of Jesus Christ by the action of the Holy Spirit. Like her, let us say 'Yes' to whatever God wants from us!

Well, this morning for very first time, I joined an online prayer group: following the liturgy of Morning prayer on screen and joining in the psalms and prayers reading from my phone. I joined the small community at Walsingham in Norfolk, England's Nazareth, the National Shrine of Our Lady.

Unfortunately, for copyright reasons, the hymn they sang was different from the one on my phone. I might just have to dust of and set the page markers in my Breviary to come into line with them but, non-the-less, it was a magnificent communal prayer. Close your eyes and you could be in the most magnificent cathedral or in the smallest monastic chapel. God was present.

Today, and on the days to come, we have the opportunity and, dare I suggest, the need to make a Personal Promise ... our personal promise brings us closer to Mary, the first disciple of Christ. In this we unite in her joy by following her openness to God's call. The Angelus Promise is the prayer of this personal promise. In it we proclaim our own "Yes" in union with Mary through the words of the Annunciation.

THE ANGELUS PROMISE

The Angelus Promise is a spiritual exercise created to assist you to embrace the message of Our Lady, as expressed in the Angelus. It invites you to "share in the joy of the Annunciation" by following Mary's openness to God's call, through her faith-filled "yes". Through your own faith-filled "yes", the Lord will work wonders in your life.

R: The Angel of the Lord declared unto Mary

V: And she conceived by the Holy Spirit

As God once chose Mary to become the Mother of His Son through the message of an angel, so He chooses me this day, and invites me through the ministry of the Church or the example of another, to seek and do His Will at this moment in my life.

Hail Mary full of Grace...

R: Behold the handmaid of the Lord

V: Be it be done unto me according to thy Word

Mary's response to her invitation, "let it be done to me according to your Word", opened her heart to God's grace and all things became possible. Let my "yes" today take away fear, as I embrace God's Will, and like Mary "ponder these things in my heart".

Hail Mary full of Grace...

R: And the Word became flesh (*Bow or genuflect*)

V: And dwelt among us

At a moment in history, Mary's faith-filled "yes" conceived Him, first in her heart, which then led to the birth of our Saviour. Through accepting Him in my heart, enable me to recognise my role in bringing Christ to my sisters and brothers today. Hail Mary full of Grace...

R: Pray for us most holy Mother of God

V: That we may be made worthy of the promises of Christ

Let us pray:

O Holy Mother of God, pray for us, and assist us as we dedicate ourselves this day. Your Yes at the Annunciation brought our Saviour Jesus into the world, and you invite us to contemplate the great mystery of the Incarnation, sharing your joy in announcing that "the Word was made flesh and lived among us." May our yes, this day, open our hearts to serve our sisters and brothers in this your Dowry, that they too may share our joy in the Good News that God walks among us. We make this prayer through Christ our Lord.

Amen.

At noon today, I shall make the Angelus promise in church and then offer the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass, praying the Mass for your intentions and the welfare of our country. Even in solitude the Mass is always a communal celebration. It unites every Christian throughout the world for the Church is One, Holy, Catholic and Apostolic, the greatest gift of love that the Lord has left us: to see us through these days and every day.

If you have the facilities follow the mass on-line; accept Christ's sacrifice for us and offer God all the sacrifices we are being obliged to make.

Download 'Universalis' app (you can have a month's free subscription or load) or read an edited version in your browser, completely free of charge; and, take part in the daily, universal prayers of the church; take to heart the commentaries it provides for the Readings at Mass; enjoy the Spiritual Readings it provides; and, bring a structure to your day that will stand us in good stead long after the pandemic has been confined to the history books.

Fr. Kevin