

TRINITY NEWS

WEEK 52.
December 24, 2023
Advent 4

A Reading from a sermon of John Henry Newman preached before the University of Oxford in 1843

Little is told to us in Scripture concerning the Blessed Virgin, but there is one grace of which the evangelists, in a few simple sentences, make her the pattern of faith. Zechariah questioned the angel's message, but Mary said, 'Behold, the handmaid of the Lord; be it unto me according to thy word.' Accordingly Elizabeth, speaking with an apparent allusion to the contrast thus exhibited between her own highly-favoured husband, righteous Zechariah, and the still more highly-favoured Mary, said, on receiving her salutation, 'Blessed art thou among women, and blessed is the fruit of thy womb. Blessed is she that believed for there shall be a performance of those things which were told her from the Lord.'

But Mary's faith did not end in a mere acquiescence in divine providence and revelations: as the text informs us, she 'pondered' them. When the shepherds came, and told of the vision of angels which they had seen at the time of the nativity, and how one of the announced that the infant in her arms was the 'Savior, which is Christ the Lord,' while others did but wonder, 'Mary kept all these things, and pondered them in her heart.' Again, when her son and Savior had come to the age of twelve years, and had left her for awhile for his Father's service, and had been found, to her surprise, in the temple amid the doctors, both hearing them and asking them questions, and had, on her addressing him, vouchsafed to justify his conduct, we are told, 'His mother hept all these sayings in her heart.' And accordingly, at the marriage feast in Cana, her faith anticipated his first miracle, and she said to the servants, 'Whatsoever he saith unto you, do it.'

Thus St. Mary is our pattern of faith, both in the reception and in the study of divine truth. She does not think it enough to accept, she dwells upon it; not enough to possess, she uses it; not enough to assent, she develops it; not

To page 2

From page 1

enough to submit the reason, she reasons upon it; not indeed reasoning first, and believing afterwards, with Zechariah, yet first believing without reasoning, next from love and reverence, reasoning after believing. And thus she symbolizes to us, not only the faith of the unlearned, but of the doctors of the Church also, who have to investigate, and weigh, and define, as well as to profess the gospel; to draw the line between truth and heresy; to anticipate or remedy the various aberrations of wrong reason; to combat pride and recklessness with their own arms; and this to triumph over the sophist and the innovator.

This week:

- December 25, Christmas morning service, 10:00 a.m.
- December 31, Regular morning service.

January- February 2024:

- January 1, Feast of the Holy Name, 10:00 a.m.
- January 6, Wedding, 4:00 p.m.
- January 7, Wedding, 3:00 p.m.
- January 18, Wedding, 2:00 p.m.
- January 18, Thursday. Healing service. (every 3rd Thursday of the month)
- January 20, Wedding, 2:00 p.m.
- January 21, Wedding, 3:00 p.m.
- January 28, Annual General Meeting, 11:00 a.m.
- January 28, Wedding, 2:30p.m.
- Confirmation Class
- February 13, Shrove Tuesday/ Pancake Supper, 5:30 p.m.
- February 14, Ash Wednesday

SAINTS:

Stephen, Deacon, First Martyr, 26 December. In the book of the Acts of the Apostles, Stephen is described as one of the seven deacons whose job it is to care for the widows in the early Church in Jerusalem. His eloquent speech before the Sanhedrin, in which he shows the great sweep of Jewish history as leading to the birth of Jesus, the long-expected Messiah, and his impassioned plea that all might hear the good news of Jesus, leads to his inevitable martyrdom by being stoned to death. As the author of Acts, Luke's description of Stephen bears direct parallels to that of Christ: for example, the passion; being filled with the Holy Spirit; seeing the Son of God as the right hand of God, as Jesus promised he would be; commending his spirit to Jesus, as Jesus commended his to the Father; kneeling as Jesus did in Gethsemane and asking forgiveness for his persecutors. Witnessing to Jesus by acting like Jesus in every way is thus seen by Luke as of the essence of the Christian life.

John, Apostle & Evangelist, 27 December. Whether or not John the Apostle and John the Evangelist are one and the same, the Church honours on this day the one who proclaims Jesus as the Word made flesh and who is 'the disciple whom Jesus loved'. John was one of the sons of Zebedee, along with James and Peter, who followed Jesus. John was there at the Transfiguration of Jesus on the holy mountain; he was there with Jesus at the last supper; he was there with Jesus in his agony in the garden; he was there with Jesus and his mother, standing at the foot of the cross; he was there with Jesus as a witness of his resurrection and 'he saw and believed'. John was a witness to the Word, he proclaimed the Word and he lived and died witnessing to the Word made flesh, Jesus Christ, who loved him and whom he loved.

The Holy Innocents, 28 December. Herod 'the Great' was appointed King of the Jews by the Roman authorities in Palestine and he proved to be ruthlessly efficient in his thirty-three years of dealing with his subjects. In Matthew's gospel, he tried to persuade the Magi, to whom he played the host on their journey seeking the one 'who has been born king of the Jews', to bring word of where they had found him. His desire was to eliminate Jesus and, when he realised that the Magi had tricked him and left the country, Herod poured out his wrath on all the male infants in the land. These were God's 'innocent' ones, paralleling the story of Pharaoh slaughtering the Hebrew children in Egypt.



Humility is the one grace that cannot be counterfeited.

[Charles Henry Brent, *Adventure for God*]

