



CATHOLIC CHAPLAINCY TO THE LIVERPOOL UNIVERSITIES

The University Church of St Philip Neri Church ~ "The Oratory Church"

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9th February 2025

Fifth Sunday in Ordinary Time (Year C)



"But at your word I will let down the nets (Lk 5:5)"

Events for Students and University Members:

Masses & Services This Week:

Monday: 8.15 Mass at the *Missionaries of Charity* house, 55 Seel street L1 4AZ, – students are always welcome!

Tuesday: Morning Prayer 8am, followed by Breakfast *
Mass 5.30pm*

Wednesday: Lunchtime prayer at Faith Express, 1pm
5.30pm Mass **at the chaplaincy** *

Thursday: 5.30pm Adoration *

Sunday: Confession 5.15pm-5.35pm; Mass 6pm

*events in the chaplaincy; enter via the Blackburne Place entrance

**Tuesday: Morning Prayer 8am in the Chaplaincy,
Followed by breakfast. All welcome!**

Faith Express: Wednesday lunchtime: Join us for lunch (bring your own!) and a reflection on the Sunday Gospel, preceded by Prayer during the Day. 1pm.

Saturday Visit by Manchester CathSoc

Following our visit to Manchester Chaplaincy in November, we will be hosting Manchester University CathSoc this Saturday. They will be arriving around 11.30. We will have Mass with them in the Chaplaincy at 12noon, followed by lunch, then join them in a walk into town. Come and help give them a big welcome!

Retreat Weekend: 21st-23rd Feb, at St Joseph's, Freshfield.



Our annual weekend away is just 2 weeks away. Just a couple of places left! Prayer, social time and

input from our leaders, Sister Angela Marie OP & Sr Bernadette Marie OP. Cost for students: £45
Open to students of UoL, LJMU & LIPA.

Tuesday Evening: House Prayer & Fellowship 6.30pm in the Student House

On Thursday 13th Feb Fr **Taras Khomych**, lecturer in Theology at Hope University and Chaplain to the Ukrainian Greek Catholic community will be joining us to give us a presentation on the **Jesus Prayer**, after Adoration.



On Thursday 20th February, Mr **Chris Reynolds** from **Stella Maris**, will be joining us for the evening. **Stella Maris** is the largest ship-visiting network in the world.

STELLA MARIS We improve the lives of seafarers and fishers through our network of local chaplains and seafarer centres, expert information, advocacy, and spiritual support. This is not a fundraising visit – just a chance to share with us what they do!

Update on paying by card or at the Philip Neri Online Shop – unfortunately this facility is not available at the moment; we hope to have thing up and running again in due course, but for now, please pay either by bank transfer (Fr Neil, Kasia or Arran can give you details) or by cash.

'The Golden Mean'

A Reflection by Chaplaincy Assistant Arran Kearney

I have been recently struck by the lives of two different Saints, whose feast days we have marked these past few days. We celebrated the great St. Thomas Aquinas on January 28th – and just yesterday we marked the day of a much more recent and lesser-known figure, St Josephine Bakhita, who was only canonized in the year 2000. I have found both to be excellent sources of instruction on what St Aquinas calls the 'Golden Mean.'

This Mean describes the inward conflicts that we have regarding Desire. Desire is an all-encompassing term; it is about appetites certainly, but then there are also emotional desires that we have, and things that we want to do in life. The Golden point is when all of this is brought into balance, and a person is better able to move through life within the constant, steady state of the Good. It is here, we sense and feel and know, that God dwells – it is here that we feel the joy and happiness of life. Now, importantly, this Mean is sort of like a core within us; an indwelling, abiding thing that brings us in touch with the need of the Soul for closeness to God. It can't bring us paradise on earth. Bad things still happen, suffering still occurs, sin still rears its undaunted head – these are the facts of our existence. But what it can bring is Temperance, the Cardinal Virtue. It can bring us the ability to, for example, meet with disaster, the desire to give into despair, or triumph, the desire to succumb to your own arrogance, and "treat those two imposters just the same." A closeness to God, and indwelling Joy in His Presence: this can carry us through the rises and pitfalls of life, with all they demand of us, and still keep us upon a steady course, advancing towards the eternity that lies beyond this broken world.

All that's very poetic, and we must thank Aquinas for recognising and bringing to fulfilment the reasonings of the classical thinkers. However, St Josephine Bakhita is also worthy of celebration, because she lived all of this out, and discovered that Mean which we are all looking for. She had a very poor start to life in her home country of Sudan. Having been sold into slavery at a young age, she was bought and bartered by various masters and mistresses across West Africa and the Middle East in the later part of the 19th century. She was eventually taken to Venice, and it



was here that she met an order of Canossian Sisters, who secured her freedom. It was here, as she describes, that she knew God for the first time. She had always known of Him, but her suffering had denied her access to Him – this display of kindness from the Sisters allowed her to feel that indwelling Joy for the first time.

She determined to join the convent, and did so. She became renowned later in life for her remarkable outlook. Taking in the hardship and cruelty of her childhood, and measuring it against the happiness she had found in God, she declared that, if she could meet her enslavers again, then she would thank them. Those trials they had inflicted upon her had not made her bitter; they had pushed her down a certain path where, when at last she encountered true kindness from the Sisters in Venice, she had been able to recognise it for what it was: an expression of divine love, brought to her through human beings. This is the Golden Mean – Aquinas would have greatly approved. Passing through this brief life St Josephine had come to accept all that disaster and triumph as being one in the same – experiences that could lead her but further deeper in her relationship with God.

I feel that we who are of faith are often most inclined to give undue precedence to our misfortunes and hardships – particularly our sins. We hear in the Gospel today how Simon Peter, seeing the power and presence of Christ, can only say "Depart from me, for I am a sinful man, O Lord." It seems the humble, the pious thing to say. Confronted with this power of which he knows himself to be unworthy, Simon Peter tries to push it away, not wishing Jesus to be 'tainted' as it were, by his sinfulness. But maybe, underneath all that, it is just that the disciple is scared to let go of the things he knows – that sin which he ostensibly hates, but with which he is so familiar, and which he leans on like a crutch, to excuse himself from committing to God completely. St. Thomas Aquinas does not believe that Temperance is an easy Virtue to capture – it is difficult. We can shy away from it, and use our sin, our misfortune, as a means of shielding ourselves from God's call. Let us not do that! St Aquinas was a human being just like yourself, as was St Josephine. We celebrate the Saints precisely because they were ordinary people who walked an extraordinary road. That road to eternity is laid out for us as well, and the Saints have laid down the flagstones upon which we are called to walk. Even now they are pointing the way, and calling on us to follow.