



THE ARCHANGEL

St. Michael's School and Parish • Harts Lane • Burghclere • RG20 9JW

No. 40

May 2021

Future Projects

The month of May is dedicated to our Lady. Let us be sure to mark this time with a renewed emphasis on a personal and family devotion to our heavenly mother, Mary. A strong family devotion to our Lady is one of the essential ingredients in the development of a priestly or religious vocation within the family setting. Most priests and religious testify to their parents' strong Marian devotion which they sought to pass on to their children.

Devotions in general, such as those of First Fridays and First Saturdays, help to maintain the tempo of our spiritual fervour. They play an important part in deepening our understanding and dependency on Jesus and Mary. In particular, they allow us to cultivate a personal relationship with Him who is our Saviour and Her who is our Mother.

How frustrating it becomes, therefore, when access to our Lord and our Lady is limited and difficult. This is certainly the case at St. Michael's, where the chapel is embedded inside the school and therefore often inaccessible. Moreover, the school chapel is small and cramped. Children are many and spaces are few. Finally, the chapel is in poor structural condition and, despite extra bracing and support, remains under regular surveillance by a structural engineer.

St. Michael's future is now dependent on the construction of a new church building, modest in size and sufficient to address the needs of a growing parish that has developed over the past decade around St. Michael's School.

The New Church Project has, indeed, already begun. This month we will present a pre-planning request to finalise and submit the formal planning application in June. Details of the project will then be available to the parish and public.

The construction of a new church is a tremendous undertaking. It comes with many risks despite the intricate planning and preparation that has been in motion for almost a year. It is an enterprise that is nevertheless necessary if we are indeed serious about our Catholic faith.

Limited means and incessant financial difficulties can make us complacent in those things we value above all else: God's glory and the sanctification of souls. We are at risk of settling into a status quo of mediocrity which allows us to be satisfied with a chapel setting that provides space for the reception of the sacraments but lacks the space, dignity and character necessary to the Divine Liturgy. As one old priest once said: we can too readily allow Christ to remain in the stable forever!

When I was in Detroit, USA, I marvelled at the beautiful churches dotted around the once-immigrant (and sadly now-abandoned) neighbourhoods. The different immigrant communities rivalled each other in offering to God the most beautiful house possible. Composed mainly of poor families, they nevertheless scraped and saved to contribute to their future place of worship. Their churches stand today as symbols of the vitality of the poor man's faith which dictated that no sacrifice was too great in building a worthy home for the Divine Guest in whose company they wished to live their lives.

This is the spirit that we should emulate. We should be determined to offer God the first place in our lives and, as far as possible, in our livelihoods too. Churches everywhere are monuments to the faith, love and liberality of pious faithful.

Our New Church Project is thus an occasion to test the true vitality of our faith. We are often ready to sacrifice for survival and maintenance, but deeper love seeks to go above and beyond. Are we satisfied that our Eucharistic Lord continue to reside in a converted play area? I remember well painting the walls of our present chapel in 1991. Representations of Bob Marley and Michael Jackson are still hiding behind the painted altar wall!

In the days of King David, when the ark of the covenant was housed in a cloth tabernacle, Scripture tells us: "And it came to pass when David sat in his house, and the Lord had given him rest on every side from all his enemies, he said to Nathan the prophet:

Dost thou see that I dwell in a house of cedar, and the ark of God is lodged within skins?" (2Kings 7:1-2)

Earlier in his life, he had written in Psalm 68: "The zeal of thy house hath consumed me!" Surprisingly, David was not allowed to build the first Temple because, God said, he had been a man of war. Notwithstanding, David purchased the land and collected all the materials necessary for his son and heir to execute the project.

David's spirit should be our own. All of us, priests and faithful, should look to see what we can sacrifice to bring about the construction and furnishing of a house worthy of the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass and of the Divine Victim who resides therein. We can delay home improvements. We can settle for a cheaper holiday. We can buy less. It is important, too, to associate our children in the process. No jam or no butter for a month and similar sacrifices allow them to bring their own pennies to the project. They are, after all, building their future church.

There is no doubt that God will reward our sacrifices, but the extent of His reward often depends on the faith we deploy in giving. The sacrifices we make will be returned a hundredfold, not only in bringing about the construction of a new church but also in terms of spiritual and temporal graces. God will never be outdone in generosity.

How wonderful it will be to have easier and more regular access to the Blessed Sacrament! I think, particularly, of our families. The new church will have an altar dedicated to St. Joseph, with a statue and place for candles that will serve for the many novenas offered for his protection and help. At present, there is only a tiny statue practically hidden from view. We really do need to make our heavenly patrons welcome!

A prayer card will soon be printed to ask for divine aid in the great task that we, priests and faithful, are undertaking. Deo volente, we will celebrate Christmas 2022 in the new Church of St. Michael Archangel.

Fr. John Brucciani, Prior

Damaged Goods

We adore the majesty of God by offering Him the best we have to give. In every aspect of our lives, therefore, we must attend to these "first fruits". But the Lord God Almighty deserves far more than what he receives from Catholics at present. Our own religious apportionment notwithstanding, as we scan the miserly fields throughout the Church, we blush on behalf of the Mystical Body. In the aggregate, a heap of damaged goods is what is laid before the altar of God. And nowhere is this more apparent than in the quality of today's clergy themselves.

In Old Testament times, God's regulations for the Jewish priesthood were inflexible. If His demands were enigmatic, it was because they were designed to signify for us the otherworldly perfection of His Son's priesthood and foreshadow His expectations for future priests participating in that selfsame office.

Established in the days of Moses, the priesthood was fixed in the House of Aaron, and was thus hereditary. . . . After the Babylonian Exile strict genealogical proof of priestly descent was . . . rigidly demanded, and any failure to furnish the same meant exclusion from the priesthood (Ezra 2:61 sq.; Nehemiah 7:63 sq.). Certain bodily defects, of which the later Talmudists mention 142, were also a disquali-

fication from the exercise of the priestly office (Leviticus 21:17 sqq.). ("Priesthood", The Catholic Encyclopedia)

Aside from the priest's biological qualifications, there were curtailments to his conduct as well: the priest had to have an "unblemished earlier life", could not be with his wife during the active discharge of his office, and was forbidden any "outward signs of sorrow" in times of mourning. (Ibid.)

Under the new dispensation, we might assume that Holy Mother Church has compassionately tempered these preconditions, at least those biological. On the contrary, she has simply reapplied the received strictures to a new context. Instead of the House of Aaron, her priests now come from only lawful unions within the tribe of the baptized. Bodily defects too are disqualifying: forms of mutilation, weakness, and deformity which might inhibit proper exercise of the ministry or invite ridicule upon the Church. (See Prummer, Handbook of Moral Theology)

But the moral demands are far more exacting. St. John Chrysostom, with his characteristic rhetorical flair, illustrates the Church's expectations:

Let those [candidates] only stand forth who are as high above the others in virtue as Saul was in

stature over the men of the Hebrew nation. It is not enough for the priest to stand head and shoulders above the rest; rather the distance between men and animals is that which should exist between the pastor and the sheep; if not greater, because far greater things are at stake. . . . (Patrologia Graeca, 26.623)

Set to more sober language, the Council of Trent captures the same sentiment:

There is nothing that leads others to piety and to the service of God more than the life and example of those who have dedicated themselves to the divine ministry. . . . Wherefore, clerics, called to have the Lord for their portion, ought by all means so to regulate their life and conduct that in dress, behavior, gait, speech, and all other things nothing may appear but what is dignified, moderated, and permeated with piety. (Schroeder, The Canons and Decrees of the Council of Trent)

St. Paul warns St. Timothy, his brother in the episcopacy, to be on the watch for unworthy men aspiring to the sacred ministry. (Cf. 1 Tim. 5:22) Of course, it is not the place of a layperson to exercise the same vigilance here as a bishop. But do the faithful feel a proportionate anxiety over the Church's priestly prospects?

On the one hand, Catholic piety harbours the utmost admiration for the office. On the other, Catholics have grown so accustomed to unbecoming priests that many now associate the clerical state with—to put it mildly—the eccentric. It may be that the faithful can no longer comprehend the scandalous nature of this incongruity.

When a priest is called “Father”, what is that saying? Contained therein is an implicit plea that he live up to this ideal for the sake of his spiritual children. The Church herself demands nothing less, and this is precisely why she has barred unsuitable candidates from such responsibility.

The Catholic priesthood “exists primarily for the good of religious society”. (“Ecclesiastical and Religious Vocation”, The Catholic Encyclopedia) In other words, as reads the title of Abp. Fulton Sheen's book, “a priest is not his own”. The man is ordained to an office of sacrificial service to his children in need, a vast family indeed. The slightest sign that he cannot shoulder this burden—let alone the burden of a single nuclear household—ought to be utterly disqualifying. Let us be frank: if our priestly candidate would make a lacklustre husband and father, he would make a horrendous priest! If he has not the virtue to suffice for an earthly bride and children, how could he possibly suffice for the mystical bride and her hallowed children?

The priestly vocation calls for men of the highest order in grace, yet for generations now churchmen have been ordaining the conspicuously incompetent instead. Nevertheless, there are worthy prospects out there, and we Catholics ought to do whatever is in our power, by fervent prayer above all, to assure their elevation to the altar. For we are in dire need of their paternal care. As only a good father can awaken his children to the pressing duties of life, only an exemplary priest can awaken his to the ineffable value of sacrificial living . . . that they may offer God the best they have to give. ❖

A parishioner, recently received into the Church, requested publication of the following note of thanks.

Dear Roman Catholic Community of St Michael's School

My family would like to extend their heartfelt thanks for all the kind wishes, prayers and good intentions shared with us as we each joined the Roman Catholic Church.

We would like to extend our special thanks to Luke and Eduardo who graciously sponsored my boys on their Baptism journey. They were a constant source of knowledge and reassurance to them during this profound experience for them. My thanks also to their parents for making the boys available over the Easter Vigil so that they could carry out their sponsorship duties so well. Their respective families have every reason to be very proud of them.

We would also like to send a special thank you to those families whose supportive words and contributions to our Catholic cause, library and our religious pieces are deeply appreciated.

I would also like to thank Fr. Brucciani for his constant patience, good humour and especially his powerful catechism that has brought the boys and me safely into the Roman Catholic Church. Thank you also for guiding me through my first communion. It was a very special week for the our family, to say the least - we have been truly blessed!

Joining the St Michael's School community has been a joyful blessing – it has been a rare and precious experience particularly against the background of the challenging world in which we all find ourselves.

Thank you all for your kindness and support on our Christian journey. We look forward to meeting you all in the fullness of time.

May God bless you and keep you all safe from harm.

-Signed-

"God does not call the equipped. He equips the called. "

THANK YOU!

... for your recent generosity. Here are the totals collected last month for various good causes.

- Clothing bin - £205 (cash for clothes)

CONFIRMATIONS CANCELLED

Due to ongoing restrictions and the need for foreign travelers to quarantine upon entry to the UK, the bishop is not able **to visit and give the sacrament of confirmation. Another date will be fixed, but, at the present time, we do not know when.**

Saturday
3rd July
1 pm

SAVE
the
DATE

Depending on restrictions ...



**5th Precept: Providing
for the needs of the
Church**

*Maintenance and upkeep of
priests and priory*

*For alms deliver from all sin, and from death, and will
not suffer the soul to go into darkness.*



Liturgical Calendar and Mass Times - May

1	St. Joseph the Workman (1st Saturday)	7:30 / 12:00
2	Fourth Sunday after Easter	6:30, 7:30
	2nd Collection for Seminarian Fund	9:00, 11:00, 17:00
		18:00 Benediction
3	Feria	7:15
4	St. Monica, Widow	7:15
5	St. Pius V, Pope & Confessor	7:15
6	St. John Before the Latin Gate	7:15
7	St. Stanislaus, Bishop & Martyr	7:15
8	Our Lady, Mediatrix of All Graces	7:30 / 12:00
9	Fifth Sunday after Easter	6:30, 7:30
		9:00, 11:00, 17:00
		18:00 Benediction
10	St. Laurence, Deacon and Martyr	7:15
11	Ss Philip & James, Apostles	7:15
12	Vigil of the Ascension	7:15
13	The Ascension of the Lord (Holy Day)	6:30, 7:30, 9:00, 19:00
14	Feria after Ascension	7:15
15	St. Jean Baptiste de la Salle, Confessor	7:30 / 12:00
16	Sunday after the Ascension	6:30, 7:30
		9:00, 17:00
		18:00 Benediction
17	St. Pascal Baylon, Confessor	7:15
18	St. Venantius, Martyr	7:15
19	St. Peter Celestine, Pope & Confessor	7:15
20	St. Bernardine of Sienna, Confessor	7:15
21	Feria after Ascension	7:15
22	Vigil Mass of Pentecost	7:30 / 12:00
23	Pentecost Sunday	6:30, 7:30
		9:00, 11:00, 17:00
		18:00 Benediction
24	Monday in the Octave of Pentecost	7:15
25	Tuesday in the Octave of Pentecost	7:15
26	Ember Wednesday (fasting, abstinence for 3rd order)	7:15
27	Thursday in the Octave of Pentecost	7:15
28	Ember Friday (fasting, abstinence for 3rd order)	7:15
29	Ember Saturday (fasting, abstinence for 3rd order)	7:30 / 12:00
30	Trinity Sunday	7:30; 9:00
		9:00, 11:00, 17:00
		18:00 Benediction
31	Queenship of Mary	7:15

MASS ATTENDANCE REMAINS REGULATED.

Please use the noticeboard booking system to ensure that everyone is spread out across all the Masses. Please also observe as best possible the hygiene requirements of these strange times, out of respect for others.

<https://noticeboard.sanctusmichael.com/stmichaels/>