



Anglican Catholic Church



Diocese of the United Kingdom

Catholic Faith † Orthodox Worship † Apostolic Order

October 2018

My dear friends and colleagues,

October brings the feast of Saint Francis of Assisi, to this day one of our favourites and someone who, during his lifetime, knew that he was greatly adored. He was sometimes tempted to believe the compliments so often given to him. It was the kind of stuff to make your head swell. But Francis found a way to handle such praise. When he felt his ego growing from the adoration of the people, he would ask a fellow monk to sit down with him and tell him of faults that he needed to work on.

From the Archdeacon's desk



Jesus often told parables regarding what the kingdom of God is like. He said it is “like a treasure hidden in a field, which someone found ... then in his joy he sells all that he has and buys that field”. It is a treasure so great and wonderful that it is worth sacrificing everything else to receive it. That is what we receive when, like Francis, we sacrifice our egos and turn them away from self and toward God. The amazing thing is, we are offered that treasure at no other cost than loving the Lord and putting ourselves in service to God. Surely an offer we can't refuse. So perhaps we might spare a few moments on the 4th to reflect on the example Saint Francis has left for us.

I do take exception to the description that I have often heard that our style of worship is “old hat”. In fact our Mass offers timeless and true worship to a God who is not the subject of trendiness. The problem with trendiness in worship is that there is too much emphasis on “me feeling good” and on “selling”. In religion, as in consumer products, such an emphasis may, just may, result in volume, but often at a loss of attention to the quality of the product itself. For sales to be successful there must be a product worth selling. When what is on offer is a mostly content-free, “user-friendly” entertainment session, directed at the audience, rather than a genuine act of worship directed toward God, and when what little content there is has been subjected to “rethinking” and dumbing down, then, regardless of the effectiveness of the sales programme, there is no worthwhile product to sell.

With every blessing

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Archdeacon

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Can't get to Mass?

Very much to be commended is one of the less well-known practices of the Catholic Faith – that of Spiritual Communion. This is simply the practice of wanting to receive Holy Communion in a spiritual manner. Saint Thomas Aquinas defined spiritual communion as “an ardent desire to receive Jesus in the Holy Sacrament and a loving embrace as though we had already received Him”. Spiritual Communion prolongs the effects of our previous Communion and prepares us for the next. Many Christians are only able to receive Our Lord in the Eucharist on Sundays, and sometimes not even then. Even though many parishes have weekday or daily Masses, work schedules often make it impossible to attend. A Spiritual Communion can be made at any time of the day or night, as many times as one wishes.

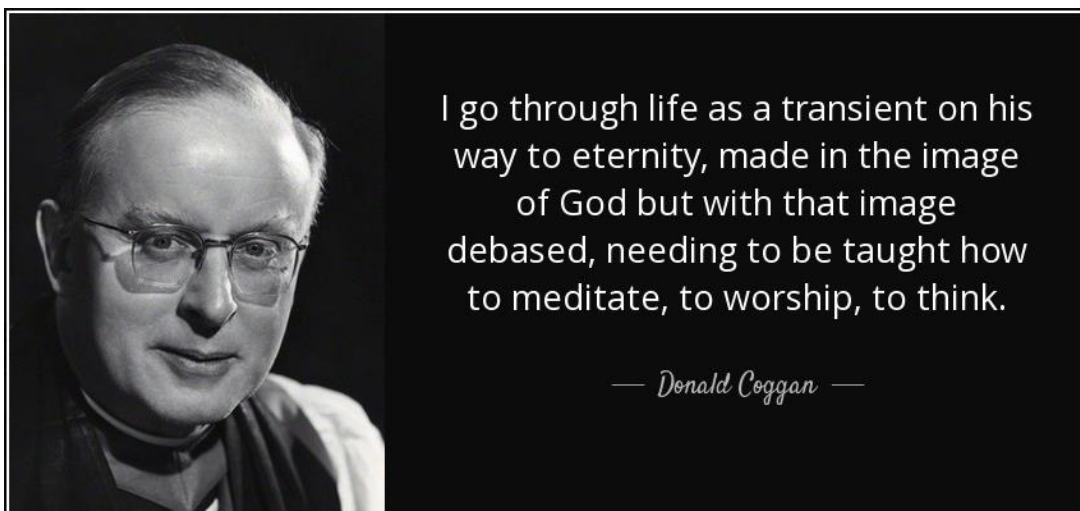
Saint Jean-Marie Vianney once said “When we feel the love of God growing cold, let us instantly make a Spiritual Communion. When we cannot go to the church, let us turn towards the tabernacle; no wall can shut us out from the good God.”

When making a spiritual communion, you can choose to use a formal prayer or your own words. The important thing is that you truly have a desire to receive Our Lord. If you cannot think of any suitable words, perhaps the following prayer, composed by Saint Alphonsus Ligouri might help:

My Jesus,
I believe that You are present in the Most Holy Sacrament.
I love You above all things, and I desire to receive You into my soul.
Since I cannot at this moment 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.

Don't make too little of humbly admitting your need for God either. It is the key to becoming truly wealthy, for no other riches are as real and everlasting as the wealth of the kingdom that God opens for us. We cannot begin to imagine anything more valuable.

We can get so wrapped up in worldly matters that we have little or no time for matters of God and God's kingdom. Our affection for worldly affairs can keep us separated from God. But God wants us to enter his kingdom of joy and peace, where love never fails. And it is our decision to make. God will not stop us from being self-centred and full of vanity and pride. That is our choice. God allows us the freedom to be as hard-hearted as we choose to be. But we will not be blessed for choosing our own wilful way. Arrogance and pride will keep us strangers to the kingdom and prevent us from gaining access. Entry to the kingdom of God is reserved for the poor in spirit – for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. May Our Lady and all the Saints pray for us on life's pilgrimage.



(At the risk of self-indulgence I will sometimes use as a “profile pic” some Isle of Sheppey scenes viewed either “from my desk” or within a few minutes of it!)