

SOLEMNITY OF CHRIST THE KING

25th November 2012

St. Mary's, Belford Road, Fort William PH33 6BT Tel. (01397) 702174

www.stmarysfortwilliam.org



"Christ before Pilate" by Mihaly Munkacsy

Noticeboard

Sunday Masses: Vigil Mass, Saturday, 6 p.m.
Sunday Morning Mass, 10.30 a.m.

Weekday Masses: 10.15 a.m.

Sacrament of Reconciliation:

Saturday: 9.45 to 10 a.m.
4 to 4.30 p.m.
5.30 to 5.50 p.m.

Friday is the Solemnity of St. Andrew, Patron Saint of Scotland. Next Sunday is the First Sunday of Advent.

On this **Feast of Christ the King** we recommit ourselves to Christ and his kingdom. "His sovereignty as an eternal sovereignty which shall never pass away, nor will his empire be destroyed." (*Daniel 7:14*)

We pray for our Faithful Departed, especially those whose anniversaries are about this time: **Molly Cameron, Edward Archibald, Rose Gardetto, Ina MacDonald, William MacPherson, Chris MacLellan, Patrick Curran and John Kerr.** May their souls and the souls of all the Faithful Departed through the mercy of God rest in peace.

We thank you for your generous support of the Diocese's **Pastoral Fund**. Last Sunday's collection came to a very respectable £385.26

Holy Communion will be taken to the housebound from Monday to Wednesday of this week.

The new **offering envelopes** are now available at the back of the church. We sincerely thank those who help the parish by opting for Gift Aid. There are many unused envelopes, should any parishioners who pay income tax like to be part of that.

More **Christmas candles** are available for sale at the back of the church. One of the parishioners ordered a Crib, which has now arrived.

Regarding **Christmas**, we will do as we did last year and have the Mass of Christmas Night at 10 p.m., replacing Midnight Mass. Mass on Christmas morning will be at 10.30 a.m. The Blessing of the Crib and the Children will take place on Sunday, 23rd December. This year it will be *after the Sunday morning Mass*, to save people coming out again on what may well be a very cold and icy day. Different charities have written asking for help at Christmas. This year we will have a special Christmas collection for two of them: Aid to the Church in Need and WaterAid.

"No Saints, Please, We're European!"



This is a two-euro coin that may or may not be minted in Slovakia next year to commemorate St. Cyril (aka Constantine) and St. Methodius, the Apostles of the Slavic peoples and the Patrons of Eastern Europe. When we compare this with a Slovakian coin depicting the saints before joining the euro-zone, we see that the haloes of both saints have now been removed from this proposed design. This is at the demand of the EU authorities in Brussels! "Air brushing" as regards Europe's Catholic and Christian heritage can affect even a coin. Many of us were brought up to share the European ideal. Our feelings included veneration for one of the founding fathers of Europe: the French statesman Robert Schuman, a saintly man whose cause for canonisation is now well advanced. How would he feel about what Slovakia, one of the most devoutly Catholic countries in Europe, is now being told to submit to? Public reaction in Slovakia has been so strong that we now have a stand-off between that country and Brussels.

Women of the Bible REBECCA

Rebecca was the wife of Isaac, the son of Abraham and Sarah. After Sarah's death, Abraham sent the oldest of his servants to his ancestral land in upper Mesopotamia. He was determined that his son marry one of his own people and not a native Canaanite. Chapter 24 of Genesis tells us about the servant's journey and the success of his mission. It also gives us some insight into the customs of the time and culture. Courting was done by a servant who represented the father of the groom; a "bride price" was offered; negotiations were carried out with the family of the young woman. However, one choice was allowed her: she could stay for the feast that followed the marriage agreement (which lasted several days), or she could choose to leave immediately for the home of her new "in-laws". Rebecca opts to leave at once. The servant's first encounter with her had been very favourable indeed. She was, of course, very beautiful. But she was also kind, for she fetched water for the servant and his camels as he rested at a well before reaching her home.

It seems as if Rebecca's and Isaac's first contact with each other was a case of love at first sight. He immediately took her to his tent as his wife. She eventually gave birth to twins, Esau and Jacob. Esau grew up to be his father's favourite, being a real outdoor type of person. Jacob was quieter, more intelligent, preferring to remain in the camp. He was his mother's favourite. Nowadays people might speak of the twins as "macho" versus "nerd".

Rebecca was determined that Jacob succeed his father as the leader of his people, even if this involved trickery. A man's successor was ratified through his blessing: once given the leadership could not be revoked. Jacob would go to his father, pretending to be Esau. Isaac was by this time blind. Esau was a hairy man, so Rebecca covered Jacob's arms and neck in the skin of young goats. Sure enough, Isaac was tricked into blessing the wrong son.

Now this deception could be justified because Esau had given his birthright to Jacob for a plate of soup! (Genesis 25: 29-34) This insouciance was the case for the defence, so to speak. Esau enters Jacob's tent shortly after Jacob's visit and the ruse is soon exposed, to the distress of Isaac and the fury of Esau, who still saw himself as the rightful heir despite the soup episode. He swears revenge, and Jacob has to leave the camp for fear of his life. It was during his flight that Jacob had his famous dream. (Genesis 28:10-22) Later, the twins would be reconciled. From Jacob's twelve sons would come the tribes of Israel. The Book of Genesis does not record Rebecca's death, but tradition has it that she is buried alongside Isaac in the cave in the plot of land first bought by Abraham.



Rebecca brings water to Abraham's servant

WHAT IS FAITH?

Before journeying into faith in the New Testament, let us pause and look at some Catholic theology. There are two Latin terms: *Fides quae* and *Fides qua*. Because Latin is being used, our first reaction may be to switch off and leave it to the theologians. The terms actually describe something that is fairly straightforward.

FIDES QUAE is what we believe in. Our copy of the Apostles' Creed is a summary of that. It is objective truth: it exists of its own right, and is independent of what we might think or feel. It is important to remember always that this is truth revealed by God and that supremely in Christ. At the heart of *Fides quae* is the God in *WHOM* we believe, the God who is Holy Trinity and the infinite perfection of person and relationship.

FIDES QUA is our response to that. It is a free response. We are not brainwashed, despite what some people might say! After all, God did create us with free will. Are atheists not proof of that? Faith does not contradict reason: We are not asked to believe that two and two equals five. It is not just an intellectual matter. It is not a case of someone saying: "I believe that there is a God." and be satisfied with that. That is Deism, very different from the response of faith that involves the *totality* of the human being. Faith is to do with mind, yes, but also with heart and soul. It involves our connection with others: "No man is an island", to quote John Donne. We actively share faith with fellow believers. We witness to faith for the sake of non-believers.

The way we live and interact with others communicates the authenticity, the credibility our belief, and so faith must always walk hand in hand with hope and love. The practice of faith in prayer and sacrament is itself a powerful message, as long as that practice is free of exclusivity, judgement and hardness of heart as regards others. We live in time as well as in space: faith has its roots and its history, faith entrusts our future to a personal and loving God, but faith is lived out in the present, and each day is filled with prayer. To be truly alive, faith must be witnessed in an unthreatening way: thus it can touch the lives of others, for many people today are searching for that thing that human nature hungers for: "What truly gives *meaning* to my life?"

Are we born with this marvellous dynamic called "faith"? The answer is "No!" It is a gift of God, only possible through the gift and the work of the Holy Spirit.

AND ALSO

The following conversation took place some time ago between one of the servers and Fr. MacKinnon.

Server	Will you remember me tomorrow?
Fr. McK	Yes.
Server	Will you remember me next week?
Fr. McK	Yes.
Server	Will you remember me next year?
Fr. McK	Yes.

And so on. Then the server changes tack, and says:

	Knock, knock!
Fr. McK	Who's there?
Server	You've forgotten me already!

Touché, MacKinnon!