

Thought for the week Second Sunday in Advent

Lord Jesus Christ,
our Divine Physician,
we ask you to guard and protect us
and all people from the
coronavirus and all serious illness.

For all who have died from it ,
have mercy;

For all who are ill now,
bring healing;

For all searching for a remedy,
enlighten them;

For medical caregivers, helping the sick,
strengthen and shield them;

For all working to contain the spread,
grant them success;

For those afraid,
grant peace of mind.

By your grace,
may you turn the evil of disease
into moments of consolation and hope.

We abandon ourselves into your
infinite mercy.
Amen.

The opening of St Mark's Gospel can leave us feeling short-changed as the evangelist plunges into a proclamation of the Good News story with a minimum of introduction – no angels, shepherds, crib or manger for Mark: just a brief reference to the Hebrew Scriptures, the bare bones about John the Baptist, and we are off into a seemingly breathless account of Jesus's adult ministry.

Yet, whenever I read or hear the opening words of this Gospel, I am reminded of an inspirational series of talks I heard by the late Russian Orthodox Metropolitan of Souzah, Anthony Bloom. He shared with us his own remarkable conversion story: as a young man in his mid-to-late teens, he was at a youth camp one Summer. He was dismayed to learn that a priest had been invited to talk to the young people there; as serious unbelievers, he and his friends were suitably indignant, and attended only out of a sense of duty and courtesy. The young Anthony found what he heard utterly unconvincing and even repellent, but being a young man of intellectual integrity he decided to read the Gospel story in order to "prove" to himself that what the priest had said was so much rubbish. He chose to read Mark's Gospel simply because it was the shortest. In his own words:

"Before I reached the third chapter of the Gospel, I suddenly became aware that on the other side of my desk there was a Presence. And the certainty was so strong that it was Christ standing there, that it has never left me" (School for prayer, p. xii).

Few of us will have had such profound and unexpected mystical experiences, and yet if we listen to Mark's opening words attentively, we may be drawn more deeply into the mystery he is about to narrate. Skilled story-teller that he is, Mark whets our appetite for meeting this 'someone' who will follow John and baptise with the Holy Spirit. With an astonishing economy of style, the very next verse after the end of today's reading brings Jesus centre stage for his own baptism by John, followed by his temptation in the wilderness and, the beginning of his earthly ministry.

Quite why Mark chose to narrate in this way is not known, but it seems to me that his style invites us to participate in the scenes in our imaginations. If we allow ourselves to be present to what is happening, God may communicate with us directly. Perhaps we, like Anthony Bloom, will become aware of the Presence of Christ Jesus standing there, inviting us to more.

A Parishioner



Prayers Please

Maddy Sharman has asked for our prayers.

Vera Bird has asked for our prayers for her Great, Great Grandson Harry

Please pray for Cecilia Fung, the mother of Fr Jojo. She has had a stroke.

Please pray for Timothy Kehoe, who is very ill.

Prayers please for Antonita's nephew Peppin who has been readmitted to hospital due to the coronavirus.

Please pray for Caroline Mikhail (daughter – in - law of Jane and Ramsay Mikhail) who suffered a stroke.

Please pray for Peter Halter's sister Jean who has macular degeneration and for Jean's great grandson Rogan who is 8 and has leukaemia. Rogan continues to need our prayers.

Please pray for Ted Cotter (brother of Philomena) who has cancer and is undergoing chemotherapy.

Please pray for children under stress.

Please pray for the residents and staff at the two nursing homes in our parish, Abbeycrest and St Luke's.

Please pray for all victims of the Coronavirus.



Please also remember in your prayers those whose anniversaries occur at this time including;

Mrs Mary O'Dowd, Peter John Fay, David Bourne, Zemica Priscilla Fernandes, Mr and Mrs Myers, Roger Carroll, Jason Woodward, Lesley Farquhar, Gwen Payne, John and Fiona Gallagher, Shelila Mary Westcar, Mat and Chris Fagen and Family.