



Our last newsletter began with news of the planned visit of Fr Paul Turner, an internationally renowned liturgist and, by appointment of Pope Francis, a Consultor for the Dicastery for Divine Worship and the Discipline of the Sacraments. I am delighted to say that these days proved to be very successful and Fr Paul thoroughly enjoyed his time in Clifton Diocese. Fr Paul spent two days in the cathedral with us – the first, on 10 December, with our priests, talking about *Ars Celebrandi*, the Art of celebrating the Liturgy, and this allowed plenty of time for questions and discussion. We enclose a short report from Fr Richard Elson, Director of Ongoing Formation for Priests, on the content of Fr Paul’s input. The second date, 12 December, was specifically for our liturgical ministers and was entitled *Renewing our Liturgical Ministries* – looking at Ministry itself and then turning especially to our Readers and Extraordinary Ministers of Holy Communion. We enclose a full report and thank Paul Hill and Gill Huggins for their input.

Keeping our Diocesan engagement with the Synodal Way in mind, we offer a thoughtful reflection on ‘Synodality in the Advent journey’ from Sarah Adams, Director of Adult Education and Evangelisation.

Christmas is fast approaching and as we journey through, or perhaps ‘gallop through’, Advent we might try to ‘Listen with our Hearts’ and first direct our minds and hearts Christ’s second coming at the end of time, and then to the anniversary of our Lord’s birth at Christmas. The final days of Advent, from December 17 to December 24, focus particularly on our preparation for the celebrations of the Nativity of our Lord (Christmas). Once again we again include information about the Christmas tree and the Christmas crib – both of which are a familiar part of Christmas for the secular world as well as for practicing Christians. Perhaps it is even more important today to emphasise that Christ is at the heart of Christmas, now that it seems that less than half of the population of England and Wales will describe themselves as Christian. As Christians we are called to see and give witness to what lies at the heart of our celebration. The Lord of heaven and earth, the maker of the stars has become a child for us! Rather than extending our celebrations by starting early, let us remember that the Church gives us a Christmas Octave (eight days, from 25 December to 1 January). Each day of the Octave is in itself a ‘Christmas Day’. The Christmas Season itself doesn’t end on Boxing Day, or when the decorations come down on the ‘12<sup>th</sup> night’, it ends on the Feast of the Baptism of the Lord, the Sunday after the Epiphany, so why not celebrate the Epiphany in some way - maybe an Epiphany dinner or Epiphany Carol Service – or even an Epiphany Carol Service followed by an Epiphany dinner or party?

Meanwhile a reminder that, on the theme of preparing for liturgy, if you haven’t yet read Pope Francis’ Apostolic Letter *Desiderio Desideravi*, it is well worth doing so. He speaks of the need for liturgical formation for the entire gathered assembly, emphasizing that the liturgy is the guaranteed place of a real encounter with Christ, a privileged theological source and the summit towards which the activity of the Church is directed. He ends with an appeal: “Let us abandon controversy to listen

together to what the Spirit says to the Church; let us preserve communion, and continue to be amazed by the beauty of the Liturgy". Just click here for the letter.

### Ars Celebrandi – with Fr Paul Turner (in box)



On Thursday 10<sup>th</sup> November, Fr Paul Turner spoke to the priests of the diocese as part of the programme of Ongoing Formation for Priests. The topic for the day was "The Art of Celebration – the art of celebrating". The contents of his talks were mainly based on his recent book "Ars Celebrandi", which was written during the lockdown of 2020. In addressing this topic of liturgical presiding, Fr Paul offered us more than just a 'how to' guide through the liturgy. Rather he pointed to a foundational vision for the *Ars Celebrandi* – a way of thinking about it – with a keen insight into the inner disposition

necessary to celebrate the liturgy authentically and well. This foundational understanding was then woven into a well-grounded interpretation of the rites as they are now given to us, which led to practical, concrete and detailed recommendations about how to preside.

Fr Paul helped us to reflect on styles of presiding and on principles that help the presider to foster active participation of the faithful. His talks, and his responses to questions, were well-received by the priests of the diocese, and led to much discussion afterwards.

### Renewing our liturgical Ministries (in box)



On a beautifully mild, sunny day over 60 lay people from across the diocese met together to hear Fr Paul, an expert in all aspects of sacred liturgy, talking about how we might renew our various ministries. Whilst concentrating on Readers and Ministers of Holy Communion Fr Paul acknowledged other important ministries such as Welcoming and Singing.

Fr Paul divided the day into three areas of consideration:

- Being a priestly people
- Acting like priestly people
- Points for Ministers

### Being a priestly people

Fr Paul reminded us that the first document to be promulgated from the Second Vatican Council (1962-65) related to the sacred liturgy (*Sacrosanctum Concilium* – SC). This document and many of

the documents that issued from it in the post-conciliar period take as their focus the first letter of St Peter (1 Peter 2:9), which emphasises the priestly role of all the baptised. Fr Paul showed how this priestly role, with its origins in the priesthood of Aaron (Exodus 29:9; 30:30) now extends to all Christian people by virtue of baptism. The Council Fathers, prompted by the Holy Spirit, emphasised conferment of this priestly role at baptism through the anointing with chrism and incorporation into the Church.

Fr Paul then turned to the General Instruction of the Roman Missal (GIRM) and in particular Chapter III: Duties and Ministries in the Mass. Much of what Fr Paul talked about addressed all the faithful at Mass, not just Ministers (ordained and lay). We were reminded that we are all called to 'participate consciously with devotion and full collaboration' (SC 48) and that we are 'instructed by God's word' and 'nourished at the table of the Lord's body', to give thanks to God and to offer the 'unblemished sacrificial Victim' through and with the priest (95). Moreover, we 'should not refuse to serve the People of God in gladness' (97) and with 'charity towards brothers and sisters who participate ... in the same celebration' (95).

He next turned our attention to paragraph 34 of the Dogmatic Constitution on the Church *Lumen Gentium* (LG), which speaks about our 'spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ', which we bring to Mass and offer to God 'together with the Lord's body', thus consecrating 'the world' itself to God (LG 34). Fr Paul asked us to think about what sacrifices we bring to Mass and echoed St Oscar Romero who used to tell the people that everything they do, if done in the Spirit, is a spiritual sacrifice (cf LG 34). The sacrifices we make during the week are brought by us to Mass and offered to God in the words of the offertory – '...that my sacrifice and yours may be acceptable to God...' asking that the Lord to accept our daily sacrifices, which we offer to Him at the hands of the ordained priest.

### **Acting like a priestly people**

During this part of the workshop Fr Paul focussed on how we act in a priestly manner during Mass. Mass has a 'communitarian' character; dialogue between priest and people, acclamations, bodily posture and gestures, prayers and invocations, which foster and bring about communion. Fr Paul took us through the collects for the 32<sup>nd</sup> and 33<sup>rd</sup> Sundays of Year C and pointed to some ancient liturgies of the Church, from which these collects are taken. When the liturgy was reformed in the 1970s and '80s there was much that was restored from sources dating back 1500 yrs.

*The Universal Prayer (Prayer of the Faithful)* is an act of our baptismal priesthood. We respond to the Word of God by praying for the needs of the Church, for public authorities and the salvation of the world, for those in difficulty and for the local community. The announcements are made by the Deacon, if present, or by a Reader or any of the faithful from the ambo.

*The Preparation of the Gifts* should include not only bread and wine but also sacrifices (usually monetary) made by the faithful (GIRM 73). The censuring of the gifts by the Priest and of the people by a Deacon or Thurifer also emphasises our priestly dignity.

*The Eucharistic Prayer* is offered by the Priest in the name of the people and together we join with Christ in 'confessing the great deeds of God and in the offering of Sacrifice' (GIRM 78).

*Holy Communion* GIRM (85) states that the Priest *must* receive Communion from hosts consecrated at the same Mass, however it is *desirable* for the people to do the same.

### **Points for Ministers**

Fr Paul first turned his attention to the role of Reader emphasising how it is God who speaks when we read from the Lectionary. Preparation for reading is essential so we can speak in a loud, clear

voice, which corresponds to the genre of the readings (GIRM 42). Readers may carry the Book of the Gospels (not a Lectionary) to the sanctuary if no Deacon is present. The ambo should only be used for reading from the Lectionary, proclaiming the Gospel, the homily and for the Universal Prayer.

*Extraordinary Ministers of Holy Communion* Fr Paul spent some time reflecting on the vocabulary we often use to describe Eucharistic worship. He highlighted that as Ministers of Communion we may be called upon to administer Holy Communion to the sick and dying and to occasionally distribute communion at Services of the Word with Holy Communion; we are not Extraordinary Ministers of the Eucharist, but Extraordinary Ministers of Holy Communion. A point of interest is who administers the Chalice during Mass. If a Deacon is present he should stand beside the Priest to administer the Chalice (GIRM 94) and not be given consecrated hosts to distribute.

Fr Paul then addressed some of the practicalities when administering Communion, particularly the correct posture, reverences, and what to do in the event of accidents. He also reminded us of vigilance in making sure communicants consume the Host.

Fr Paul ended the workshop by looking at taking Communion to the sick and dying and what a privilege it is to say the prayers for the dying and to give them Holy Communion for the last time (Viaticum).

The day was informative, participative and instilled a sense of renewal in our various ministries. Above all Fr Paul inspired us to look again at the beauty and dignity of the Liturgy.

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### **‘Listening with the Heart’ - Synodality in the Advent Liturgy (in box)**

Many, if not all of us, will be familiar with the story of Samuel, the young boy, who was sleeping in the Temple when he was called to his ministry. Samuel heard a voice but did not recognise it as coming from God. Three times the Lord called him but it is Eli, the Priest of the Temple, who first understands that it is God calling Samuel and tells him to go back to sleep and when he hears the voice again, to respond with the words. “Speak Lord, your servant is listening.” And so, Samuel went back to sleep and the Lord called, ‘Samuel, Samuel!’ This time Samuel answered as Eli had told him, “Speak, for your servant is listening.’

When we do not expect the Lord to speak to us, we will not recognise his voice when it resonates with us. We look for more familiar voices and there are plenty of those clamouring for our attention. The cacophony of noise in our midst can cause us to feel confused and bewildered. Sometimes listening to the inner voice can become the convincing voice – the one which is easiest to follow. It can be a loud voice, which sounds authoritative, to which we feel we must respond regardless of its authenticity. Learning to listen and discern God’s voice takes time but it is the only way we will be ready to respond to any invitation that God offers us.

The invitation to listen and to discern the voice of God lies at the heart of the synodal journey which Pope Francis has invited us to make as a Church. We are, as our own diocesan synodal synthesis expresses, to ‘listen with the heart’. This synodal journey is not and never was a one-off event. The meetings which we have held in our parishes and around the diocese were not meant to stop – rather the synodal journey is one which invites us to grow as a listening people, sharing, listening, and discerning the movement of the Holy Spirit who resides in each and everyone of us by virtue of our

baptism. For many this is a completely new experience, a new way of being Church and, of course, it will take time to embed as a way of being with one another, accompanying one another to live out our call to proclaim the Gospel.

The season of Advent is a wonderful opportunity for us to grow in our capacity to listen. As the season of 'waiting' we are encouraged to, and invited to a fresh interior listening, a perpetual silent night of waiting for the Lord. How hard it can be, in the busyness of our lives, to make space for some 'silent night' time as a way of preparing for the most sacred of silent nights. Silence before the Lord is a great act of trust and love. It disciplines the heart and assumes that what I have to say is never going to be more important than what God has to say. It is why, when we listen to each other, our starting point is to honour God's presence in the other.

Central to the Advent season is the figure of Mary, the listener par excellence. Mary's listening is what we might call 'deep listening'. There is nothing superficial or simple about her listening, despite her young age. Mary listens with attention, her open and warm heart is welcoming, attentive and available to God. She may initially be fearful, but with great humility she listens to God, perceiving the greatness of the Most High. Mary ponders things in her heart, constantly alert to what is happening around her, seeking to understand. In her great Magnificat, Mary glorifies God, recognizing God's greatness and her own humbleness but also in her prayer, Mary encounters the truth of God about her: "They will call me blessed", not because of her, but because of the great things that God has done in her. In the Gospel of Luke, Mary allows God to talk to her and this word penetrates her heart with an interior richness that is only grown in silence and contemplation.

Our experience of Zechariah is quite different but, nonetheless, like Mary he can guide us in our desire to deepen our capacity for listening with the heart. When we encounter Zechariah, the husband of Elizabeth, he is performing his liturgical duties in the Holy of Holies, burning the incense and offering prayers to God. Along with the traditional prayers for the day, he sends up his own prayer, the prayer of his heart and the hunger of his soul. It is a prayer which he has prayed a thousand times over, but he does not expect much to happen. It is his way of dealing with the disappointment of being childless. On the occasion we meet him, he is in the middle of this prayer when an angel appears and says. "Your prayer is heard." Zechariah is astounded because although he has been praying constantly, it has been without much conviction or expectation. When God intervenes in his life, instead of being full of joy he reacts with fear and disbelief. Despite what the angel says, Zechariah remains unsure and questions the angel, "How can I be sure? My wife and I are very old.". The angel replies, "I am Gabriel, who stands in the presence of God." Gabriel might just have said, God has sent me. How dare you argue with me?" For Zechariah, his courage seems to fail him at this most precious moment – instead of listening to the voice of God, he seems to be hearing the voice of his own fear – this news is too good to be true, so he cannot believe it. While he had the courage to whisper the prayer of his heart, the life-changing moment that came to him was overwhelming and he could not accept it – he could not trust that nothing is impossible for God. The result – he loses his capacity to speak and is left to ponder his own vulnerability until Elizabeth gives birth and names the baby John.

How much can we relate to Zechariah? Do we also pray but half-heartedly, not really believing that what we desire from the depths of our heart, can be met? Do we make that space in ourselves to truly allow God to enter our life and change it? How often do we pray expecting God to answer? How often do we feel so familiar with a prayer or piece of scripture or the Mass that we don't think to take it seriously? If God said to you, "Your prayer has been heard," what would that mean for you? What is the "too good to be true" news in your life?

Becoming a listening Church starts with each one of us developing our personal capacity to pray and to invite God into our lives. When we pray with others, it is about believing that the Holy Spirit is with us always. God is always there. We can be open, welcoming and humble with one another or we can be anxious and unsure, but God is there, just as God is there with Mary and Zechariah. This Advent, let it be a season of silent night listening for us.

### The Christmas Season (in box)



You will find information on the Christmas tree and the Christmas crib [here](#) along with rites for the [Blessing of a Christmas Tree](#) and a [Nativity scene](#) (some of these blessings will also be found in Appendix Seven of the Liturgical Diary), and something about the [Epiphany of the Lord](#) and the [Epiphany Blessing of homes](#). You will also find an [Epiphany Carol Liturgy](#) and the [Epiphany Proclamation](#). The Epiphany Proclamation may be sung, ideally by a cantor, on the Feast Day itself - you will

find the music file [here](#). This Proclamation dates back to the time, before calendars were common, when most people did not know the dates for the coming Liturgical year. On Epiphany Sunday, then, the upcoming dates would be 'proclaimed' after the gospel.

### Dates for your diary:

Finally, some reminders of important dates for your diary for the coming year: Ash Wednesday, which is a day of fasting and abstinence, will be on 22 February and the Rite of Election and Call to Continuing Conversion - when the bishop meets with all those who will be baptised or received into full communion with the Catholic Church at Easter and their names entered into the Book of the Elect - will be held, in the cathedral, on Saturday 25 February at 11am. Easter Sunday, the Sunday of the Resurrection, will be celebrated on 9 April.

### Art & Architecture – a reminder

Please remember that the Art & Architecture Committee of the Liturgy Office is here to help you, especially with guidance on matters of liturgical Art & Architecture. If you are considering any changes to your parish which will affect the liturgical and devotional life of the parish it is important that you contact the Liturgy Office for guidance and permission where necessary. If you are in doubt as to the necessity of contacting us, just contact us anyway. Please refer to pages 159 and 160 of this year's Liturgical Diary for details, see <https://cliftondiocese.com/wp-content/uploads/2019/10/Art-Architecture.pdf> or just contact us at [liturgy@cliftondiocese.com](mailto:liturgy@cliftondiocese.com)

### ...and finally.

Please keep an eye on what is happening on the Liturgy Office section of the website: <https://cliftondiocese.com/liturgy-office/>. There is a mine of information here on all things liturgical, including suggested Bidding Prayers for each Sunday and Holy Day under the 'Prayer of the

Faithful' tab. If there is something on liturgy that you would like to see, but can't find, please just email [liturgy@cliftondiocese.com](mailto:liturgy@cliftondiocese.com)

### **Diary – pic as before**

The Liturgical Diary is now available in parishes and online. The cost remains unchanged and, at £6.50 per copy, is excellent value. It contains, in addition to all the information about Liturgical texts for Mass and the Liturgy of the Hours each day, little hagiographies of the saints celebrated throughout the year. There are explanatory items about the liturgical seasons and feasts celebrated and a number of blessings for use throughout the year along with a year planner for 2023.

### **Directory – pic and text as you wish**

**With best wishes and prayers for a very blessed Advent and Christmas Season**