

# Parish of Blaris

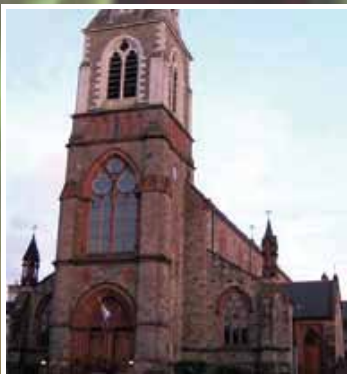
Sunday 23 January 2022  
The Third Sunday in Ordinary Time

*'This text is being fulfilled today even as you listen.'*  
Luke 4:21

**ST. PATRICK'S CHURCH  
LIVE WEBSTREAMING OF MASSES  
MONDAY - SATURDAY: 10.00AM  
SUNDAY: 10.00AM & 12 NOON**

**NEW ARRANGEMENTS RE. WEEKDAY MASSES,  
ST. PATRICK'S CHURCH CAN BE FOUND IN  
BULLETIN NOTICES**

Please note many parishes in the Diocese have webcams installed which provide live coverage of various Masses taking place daily throughout the Diocese. These can be accessed by visiting [www.downandconnor.org](http://www.downandconnor.org) Links to Parish Webcams. Live Church webcam links: CHURCH SERVICES. TV & MCN MEDIA CHURCH WEBCAMS



Fr. Dermot McCaughan, PP: 028 9266 2341  
Fr. Eamon Magorrian, CC: 028 9266 2348  
Fr. Eddie McGee, Assistant Priest

Parish Office Opening Hours:  
Monday-Friday 10.30am-4.00pm.  
Closed 1.00pm-2.00pm.

Parish Office: 028 9266 0206 Fax: 028 9266 5690  
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## INTRODUCTORY RITES

*Congregation stands*

**Entrance Hymn or  
Entrance Antiphon**

**Cf. Ps 95:1, 6**

**All:** O sing a new song to the Lord;  
sing to the Lord, all the earth.  
In his presence are majesty and splendour,  
strength and honour in his holy place.

## GREETING

**Priest:** In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit.

**All:** Amen

**Priest:** The Lord be with you.

**All:** And with your spirit.

## PENITENTIAL ACT

**Priest:** Brothers and sisters, let us acknowledge our sins, and so prepare ourselves to celebrate the sacred mysteries.

**Priest:** Lord Jesus, you healed the sick:  
Lord, have mercy. **Lord, have mercy.**

**Priest:** Lord Jesus, you forgave sinners:  
Christ, have mercy. **Christ, have mercy.**

**Priest:** Lord Jesus, you gave yourself to heal us and bring us strength:  
Lord, have mercy. **Lord, have mercy.**

**Priest:** May almighty God have mercy on us,  
forgive us our sins,  
and bring us to everlasting life.

**All:** Amen

## GLORIA

**All:** Glory to God in the highest,  
and on earth peace to people of good will.

**We praise you, we bless you,  
we adore you, we glorify you,  
we give you thanks for your great glory,  
Lord God, heavenly King,  
O God, almighty Father.**

**Lord Jesus Christ, Only Begotten Son,  
Lord God, Lamb of God, Son of the Father,  
you take away the sins of the world,  
have mercy on us;  
you take away the sins of the world,  
receive our prayer;  
you are seated at the right hand of the Father,  
have mercy on us.**

**For you alone are the Holy One, you alone are the Lord,  
you alone are the Most High, Jesus Christ,  
with the Holy Spirit, in the glory of God the Father.  
Amen.**

## THE COLLECT

**Priest:** Let us pray.

*Pause for silent prayer*

**Priest:** Almighty ever-living God,  
direct our actions according to your good pleasure,  
that in the name of your beloved Son  
we may abound in good works.  
Through our Lord Jesus Christ, your Son,

who lives and reigns with you in the unity of the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever.

**All:** Amen.

## THE LITURGY OF THE WORD

*Congregation Sits*

### FIRST READING

A reading from the book of Nehemiah **8:2-6. 8-10**

Ezra the priest brought the Law before the assembly, consisting of men, women and children old enough to understand. This was the first day of the seventh month. On the square before the Water Gate, in the presence of the men and women, and children old enough to understand, he read from the book from early morning till noon; all the people listened attentively to the Book of the Law.

Ezra the scribe stood on a wooden dais erected for the purpose. In full view of all the people – since he stood higher than all the people – Ezra opened the book; and when he opened it all the people stood up. Then Ezra blessed the Lord, the great God, and all the people raised their hands and answered, 'Amen! Amen!'; then they bowed down and, face to the ground, prostrated themselves before the Lord. And Ezra read from the Law of God, translating and giving the sense, so that the people understood what was read.

Then Nehemiah – His Excellency – and Ezra, priest and scribe (and the Levites who were instructing the people) said to all the people, 'This day is sacred to the Lord your God. Do not be mournful, do not weep.' For the people were all in tears as they listened to the words of the Law.

He then said, 'Go, eat the fat, drink the sweet wine, and send a portion to the man who has nothing prepared ready. For this day is sacred to our Lord. Do not be sad: the joy of the Lord is your stronghold.'

The word of the Lord  
**All:** Thanks be to God.

### RESPONSORIAL PSALM Ps 18:8-10. 15. R Jn 6:63

**(R)** Your words are spirit, Lord,  
and they are life.

- The law of the Lord is perfect,  
it revives the soul.  
The rule of the Lord is to be trusted,  
it gives wisdom to the simple. **(R)**
- The precepts of the Lord are right,  
they gladden the heart.  
The command of the Lord is clear,  
it gives light to the eyes. **(R)**
- The fear of the Lord is holy,  
abiding for ever.  
The decrees of the Lord are truth  
and all of them just. **(R)**
- May the spoken words of my mouth,  
the thoughts of my heart,  
win favour in your sight, O Lord,  
my rescuer, my rock! **(R)**

### SECOND READING

A reading from the first letter of St Paul to the Corinthians **12:12-30**

Just as the human body, though it is made up of many parts is a single unit because all these parts, though many, make one body, so it is with Christ. In the one Spirit we were all baptised, Jews as well as Greeks, slaves as well as citizens, and one Spirit was given to us all to drink.

Nor is the body to be identified with any one of its many parts. If the foot were to say, 'I am not a hand and so I do not belong to the body', would that mean that it stopped being part of the body? If the ear were to say, 'I am not an eye, and so I do not belong to the body', would that mean that it is not a part of the body? If your whole body was just one eye, how would you hear anything? If it was just one ear, how would you smell anything?

Instead of that, God put all the separate parts into the body on purpose. If all parts were the same, how could it be a body? As it is, the parts are many but the body is one. The eye cannot say to the hand, 'I do not need you,' nor can the head say to the feet, 'I do not need you.'

What is more, it is precisely the parts of the body that seem to be the weakest which are the indispensable ones; and it is the least honourable parts of the body that we clothe with the greatest care. So our more improper parts get decorated in a way that our more proper parts do not need. God has arranged the body so that more dignity is given to the parts which are without it, and so that there may not be disagreements inside the body, but that each part may be equally concerned for all the others. If one part is hurt, all parts are hurt with it. If one part is given special honour, all parts enjoy it.

Now you together are Christ's body; but each of you is a different part of it. In the Church, God has given the first place to apostles, the second to prophets, the third to teachers; after them, miracles, and after them the gift of healing; helpers, good leaders, those with many languages. Are all of them apostles, or all of them prophets, or all of them teachers? Do they all have the gift of miracles, or all have the gift of healing? Do all speak strange languages, and all interpret them?

The word of the Lord.

**All: Thanks be to God.**

*Congregation stands*

### ACCLAMATION

**Lk 4:18**

**All: Alleluia, alleluia!  
The Lord has sent me to bring the good news to the poor, to proclaim liberty to captives.  
Alleluia!**

## GOSPEL

**Priest:** The Lord be with you.

**All: And with your spirit.**

**Priest:** A reading from the holy Gospel according to Luke

**1:1-4; 4:14-21**

**All: Glory to you, O Lord.**

Seeing that many others have undertaken to draw up accounts of the events that have taken place among us, exactly as these were handed down to us by those who from the outset were eyewitnesses and ministers of the world, I in my turn, after carefully going over the whole story from the beginning, have decided to write an ordered account for you, Theophilus, so that your Excellency may learn how well founded the teaching is that you have received.

Jesus, with the power of the Spirit in him, returned to Galilee; and his reputation spread throughout the countryside. He taught in their synagogues and everyone praised him.

He came to Nazara, where he had been brought up, and went into the synagogue on the sabbath day as he usually did. He stood up to read, and they handed him the scroll of the prophet Isaiah. Unrolling the scroll he found the place where it is written:

The spirit of the Lord has been given to me,  
for he has anointed me.  
He has sent me to bring the good news to the poor,  
to proclaim liberty to captives  
and to the blind new sight,

and to the blind new sight,  
to set the downtrodden free,  
to proclaim the Lord's year of favour.

He then rolled up the scroll, gave it back to the assistant and sat down. And all eyes in the synagogue were fixed on him. Then he began to speak to them, 'This text is being fulfilled today even as you listen.'

The Gospel of the Lord.

**All: Praise to you Lord Jesus Christ.**

*Congregation sits*

## HOMILY

*Congregation stands*

## THE CREED

**All: I believe in one God,  
the Father almighty,  
maker of heaven and earth,  
of all things visible and invisible.**

**I believe in one Lord Jesus Christ,  
the Only Begotten Son of God,  
born of the Father before all ages.  
God from God, Light from Light,  
true God from true God,  
begotten, not made, consubstantial with the  
Father; through him all things were made.  
For us and for our salvation  
he came down from heaven,**

*(bow your head up to the words 'and became man')*

**and by the Holy Spirit was incarnate of the Virgin  
Mary, and became man.**

**For our sake he was crucified under Pontius Pilate,  
he suffered death and was buried,  
and rose again on the third day  
in accordance with the Scriptures.  
He ascended into heaven  
and is seated at the right hand of the Father.**

**He will come again in glory  
to judge the living and the dead  
and his kingdom will have no end.**

**I believe in the Holy Spirit, the Lord, the giver of  
life, who proceeds from the Father and the Son,  
who with the Father and the Son is adored and  
glorified, who has spoken through the prophets.**

**I believe in one, holy, catholic and apostolic  
Church. I confess one Baptism for the forgiveness  
of sins and I look forward to the resurrection of  
the dead and the life of the world to come. Amen.**

## PRAYER OF THE FAITHFUL

*Congregation sits*

## THE LITURGY OF THE EUCHARIST

Offertory Procession

*The gifts of bread and wine which will become the Lord's body and blood are brought to the altar.*

*The celebrant raises the host on the paten saying:*

**Priest:** Blessed are you, Lord God of all creation,  
for through your goodness we have received  
the bread we offer you:  
fruit of the earth and work of human hands,  
it will become for us the bread of life.

**All: Blessed be God for ever.**

*The celebrant pours wine and a little water into the chalice, saying quietly:*

**Priest:** By the mystery of this water and wine may we come to share in the divinity of Christ who humbled himself to share in our humanity.

*The celebrant then raises the chalice above the altar and says:*

Blessed are you, Lord God of all creation, for through your goodness we have received the wine we offer you: fruit of the vine and work of human hands, it will become our spiritual drink.

**All: Blessed be God for ever.**

*Bowing, the celebrant says quietly:*

**Priest:** With humble spirit and contrite heart may we be accepted by you, O Lord, and may our sacrifice in your sight this day be pleasing to you, Lord God.

*Then the celebrant washes his hands, saying quietly:*

Wash me, O Lord, from my iniquity and cleanse me from my sin.

Pray, brothers and sisters, that my sacrifice and yours may be acceptable to God, the almighty Father.

**All: May the Lord accept the sacrifice at your hands for the praise and glory of his name, for our good and the good of all his holy Church.**

## PRAYER OVER THE OFFERINGS

**Priest:** Accept our offerings, O Lord, we pray, and in sanctifying them grant that they may profit us for salvation. Through Christ our Lord.

**All: Amen**

*Congregation stands*

## EUCCHARISTIC PRAYER III

**Priest:** The Lord be with you.

**All: And with your spirit.**

**Priest:** Lift up your hearts.

**All: We lift them up to the Lord.**

**Priest:** Let us give thanks to the Lord our God.

**All: It is right and just.**

### PREFACE (I in Ordinary Time)

**Priest:** It is truly right and just, our duty and our salvation, always and everywhere to give you thanks, Lord, holy Father, almighty and eternal God, through Christ our Lord.

For through his Paschal Mystery, he accomplished the marvellous deed, by which he has freed us from the yoke of sin and death, summoning us to the glory of being now called a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for your own possession, to proclaim everywhere your mighty works, for you have called us out of darkness into your own wonderful light.

And so, with Angels and Archangels, with Thrones and Dominions, and with all the hosts and Powers of heaven, we sing the hymn of your glory, as without end we acclaim:

### ACCLAMATION

**All: Holy, Holy, Holy Lord God of hosts. Heaven and earth are full of your glory. Hosanna in the highest. Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord. Hosanna in the highest.**

*Congregation kneels*

**Priest:** You are indeed Holy, O Lord, and all you have created rightly gives you praise, for through your Son our Lord Jesus Christ, by the power and working of the Holy Spirit, you give life to all things and make them holy, and you never cease to gather a people to yourself, so that from the rising of the sun to its setting a pure sacrifice may be offered to your name.

Therefore, O Lord, we humbly implore you: by the same Spirit graciously make holy these gifts we have brought to you for consecration, that they may become the Body and + Blood of your Son our Lord Jesus Christ, at whose command we celebrate these mysteries.

For on the night he was betrayed he himself took bread, and, giving you thanks, he said the blessing, broke the bread and gave it to his disciples, saying:

TAKE THIS, ALL OF YOU, AND EAT OF IT,  
FOR THIS IS MY BODY  
WHICH WILL BE GIVEN UP FOR YOU.

In a similar way, when supper was ended, he took the chalice and, giving you thanks, he said the blessing, and gave the chalice to his disciples, saying:

TAKE THIS, ALL OF YOU, AND DRINK FROM IT,  
FOR THIS IS THE CHALICE OF MY BLOOD,  
THE BLOOD OF THE NEW AND ETERNAL COVENANT,  
WHICH WILL BE Poured OUT FOR YOU AND FOR  
MANY FOR THE FORGIVENESS OF SINS.

DO THIS IN MEMORY OF ME.

**Priest:** The mystery of faith.

**All: We proclaim your Death, O Lord, and profess your Resurrection until you come again.**

**Priest:** Therefore, O Lord, as we celebrate the memorial of the saving Passion of your Son, his wondrous Resurrection and Ascension into heaven, and as we look forward to his second coming, we offer you in thanksgiving this holy and living sacrifice.

Look, we pray, upon the oblation of your Church and, recognising the sacrificial Victim by whose death you willed to reconcile us to yourself, grant that we, who are nourished by the Body and Blood of your Son and filled with his Holy Spirit, may become one body, one spirit in Christ.

May he make of us an eternal offering to you, so that we may obtain an inheritance with your elect, especially with the most Blessed Virgin Mary, Mother of God, with blessed Joseph, her spouse, with your blessed Apostles and glorious Martyrs with Saint Patrick and with all the Saints, on whose constant intercession in your presence we rely for unailing help.

May this Sacrifice of our reconciliation, we pray, O Lord, advance the peace and salvation of all the world. Be pleased to confirm in faith and charity your pilgrim Church on earth, with your servant Francis our Pope and **N.** our Bishop, the Order of Bishops, all the clergy, and the entire people you have gained for your own.

Listen graciously to the prayers of this family, whom you have summoned before you: in your compassion, O merciful Father, gather to yourself all your children scattered throughout the world. To our departed brothers and sisters and to all who were pleasing to you at their passing from this life, give kind admittance to your kingdom. There we hope to enjoy for ever the fullness of your glory through Christ our Lord, through whom you bestow on the world all that is good.

**Priest:** Through him, and with him, and in him, O God, almighty Father, in the unity of the Holy Spirit, all glory and honour is yours, for ever and ever.

**All:** **Amen.**

*Congregation stands*

## THE COMMUNION RITE

**Priest:** At the Saviour's command and formed by divine teaching, we dare to say:

**All:** **Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name; thy kingdom come, thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread, and forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive those who trespass against us; and lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil.**

**Priest:** Deliver us, Lord, we pray, from every evil, graciously grant peace in our days, that, by the help of your mercy, we may be always free from sin and safe from all distress, as we await the blessed hope and the coming of our Saviour, Jesus Christ.

**All:** **For the kingdom, the power and the glory are yours now and for ever.**

**Priest:** Lord Jesus Christ, who said to your Apostles: Peace I leave you, my peace I give you, look not on our sins, but on the faith of your Church, and graciously grant her peace and unity in accordance with your will. Who live and reign for ever and ever.

**All:** **Amen.**

**Priest:** The peace of the Lord be with you always.  
**All:** **And with your spirit.**

**Priest:** May this mingling of the Body and Blood of our Lord Jesus Christ bring eternal life to us who receive it.

**All:** **Lamb of God, you take away the sins of the world, have mercy on us. Lamb of God, you take away the sins of the world, have mercy on us.**

**Lamb of God, you take away the sins of the world, grant us peace.**

*Congregation kneels*

*The celebrant says quietly:*

Lord Jesus Christ, Son of the living God, who, by the will of the Father and the work of the Holy Spirit, through your Death gave life to the world, free me by this, your most holy Body and Blood, from all my sins and from every evil; keep me always faithful to your commandments, and never let me be parted from you.

## INVITATION TO HOLY COMMUNION

**Priest:** Behold the Lamb of God, behold him who takes away the sins of the world. Blessed are those called to the supper of the Lamb.

**All:** **Lord, I am not worthy that you should enter under my roof, but only say the word and my soul shall be healed.**

**Priest:** May the Body of Christ keep me safe for eternal life.

**Priest:** May the Blood of Christ keep me safe for eternal life.

## COMMUNION ANTIPHON

*Cf. Ps 33:6*

**All:** **Look toward the Lord and be radiant; let your faces not be abashed.**

*Purifying the chalice the celebrant says quietly:*

What has passed our lips as food, O Lord, may we possess in purity of heart, that what has been given to us in time may be our healing for eternity.

## PRAYER AFTER COMMUNION

*Congregation kneels*

**Priest:** Let us pray.  
Grant, we pray, almighty God, that, receiving the grace by which you bring us to new life, we may always glory in your gift. Through Christ our Lord.

**All:** **Amen**

## THE CONCLUDING RITES

**Priest:** The Lord be with you.

**All:** **And with your spirit.**

**Priest:** May God bless you with every heavenly blessing, make you always holy and pure in his sight, pour out in abundance upon you the riches of his glory, and teach you with the words of truth; may he instruct you in the Gospel of salvation, and ever endow you with fraternal charity. Through Christ our Lord.

**All:** **Amen**

**Priest:** And may the blessing of almighty God, the Father, and the Son, + and the Holy Spirit, come down on you and remain with you for ever.

**All:** **Amen**

*Then the celebrant, with hands joined and facing the people, says:*

**Priest:** Go and announce the Gospel of the Lord

**All:** **Thanks be to God.**

### THIS WEEK'S CALENDAR

Monday 24 January - St Francis de Sales  
Tuesday 25 January – The Conversion of St Paul  
Wednesday 26 January – St Timothy & Titus  
Thursday 27 January – St Angela Merici  
Friday 28 January – St Thomas of Aquinas

### We pray for our dead:

**RECENTLY DECEASED:** Patricia (Tricia) Mulholland (nee Donaghy): Pamela Stevenson

**MONTH'S MIND:** Sarah Stanley

**FIRST ANNIVERSARY:** Pat Hanna: Michael O'Connor (Cork)

**ANNIVERSARIES:** Brian Magennis: Sr Mairead Walsh: Clara McCool: Thomas Fegan: Martin (Marty) Mooney: Florence & Pat McKeown: Una Connor: Thomas, Hugh P. & Irene Stafford: Margaret Agnew: Bridie Marsden: Raymond Mayes: John Tennyson: Mark Toland: Danny McIntyre: Veronica Belshaw: Mary & Joseph Osbourne. May they rest in peace.



### ST ALOYSIUS PRIMARY SCHOOL & NURSERY UNIT:

Given COVID, the Department of Education has asked schools to exercise caution and take a very considered approach to Open Days and school visits.

If new parents wish to have a tour of the school and an overview of admissions, please contact Mrs Catherine Milne to arrange a date and time: [cmilne244@c2kni.net](mailto:cmilne244@c2kni.net) /9266 2293.

Applications OPENED on the E.A. website on MONDAY 10 JANUARY at 12noon and CLOSE on FRIDAY 28 JANUARY at 12noon.

**ANNUAL CHRISTMAS MISSIONARY APPEAL.** Thank you for your generous response to our Christmas Missionary appeal. Donations are still very welcome – **appeal will close Sunday 30 January 2022.** All funds received will be forwarded directly on your behalf of the Medical Missionaries of Mary and Dominican Sisters working with Aids victims, orphans and disadvantaged children. Thank you.

**THE 4 CORNERS FESTIVAL 2022** is a 10th Anniversary celebration that begins in St Anne's Cathedral and ends in St Peter's Cathedral. This year the week long series of thought-provoking events will be around the theme Common Ground, Common Good and includes participants as diverse as boxer Carl Frampton, the Archbishop of Canterbury, and Dr Austen Ivereigh, the Pope's biographer. Come and join us between January 30th and February 6th, somewhere across Belfast's four corners or online. Browse events here <https://4cornersfestival.com/>

### "Spiritual Challenges in Later Life" with Sr Una Agnew SSL PhD

*hosted by Drumalis via Zoom from 11:00 am – 12:15 pm (25 Jan, 1, 8, 15 & 22 Feb 2022)*

"Spiritual well-being in later life is a potential that needs to be explored even as it is happening within us and among us.

During this series, we will explore together this rich season of grace that we call ageing." (Una Agnew SSL)

Suggested Donation: £50 per person. For further details or to book a place, please contact Drumalis during office hours (Mon-Fri, 9 am – 5 pm) – 028 28272196/28276455 or email [drumalis@btconnect.com](mailto:drumalis@btconnect.com)

### "Patrick Kavanagh – A Poet for Spring" with Sr Una Agnew SSL PhD

*hosted by Drumalis via Zoom from 11:00 am – 12:15 pm (2, 9 & 16 March 2022)*

"As we embark on the season of spring, we celebrate in poetry the way Kavanagh senses the stirrings of his soul as the earth comes alive in Spring. His liturgy of the seasons enhances his poetic pilgrimage from Monaghan to the Grand Canal." (Una Agnew SSL) Suggested Donation: £30 per person. For further details or to book a place, please contact

Drumalis during office hours (Mon-Fri, 9 am – 5 pm) – 028 28272196/28276455 or email [drumalis@btconnect.com](mailto:drumalis@btconnect.com)

### ST. PATRICK'S PASTORAL CENTRE DEIRDRE'S GENTLE YOGA. PHONE: 07900454312

Monday 6.40pm – 7.40pm

Beginners/mixed ability

6 week block: £39. £8 weekly, pay as you go.

### WORKSHOP "BACK CARE" YOGA

Starting Wednesday 02 February x 4 weeks

1st Class: 6.30pm – 7.30pm 5 places only

2nd Class: 7.45pm – 8.45pm 5 places only

Your investment £50. Book by Fri. 31st January 2022.

**CANDLEMAS DAY CANDLES:** Candles £1 each may be ordered in church porch this weekend.



**Catholic Schools Week** runs from Sunday 23 – Sunday 30 January 2022.

## God Knows

When you are tired and discouraged from fruitless efforts ...God knows how hard you have tried.  
When you have cried so long and your heart is in anguish... God has counted your tears.  
If you feel that your life is on hold and time has passed you by...God is waiting with you.  
When you're lonely and your friends are too busy even for a phone call...God is by your side.  
When you think you have tried everything and don't know where to turn ...God has a solution.  
When nothing makes sense and you are confused or frustrated...God has the answer.  
If suddenly your outlook is brighter and you find traces of hope...God has whispered to you.  
When things are going well and you have much to be thankful for...God has blessed you.  
When something joyful happens and you are filled with awe – God has smiled upon you.  
When you have a purpose to fulfil and a dream to follow ...God has opened your eyes and called you by name.  
Remember that wherever you are and whatever you are facing ...God knows. Kelly D Caron



## Gospel Commentary

"To bring good news to the poor." What is good news for the poor? That they are going to become rich? And then it will be their turn to oppress the poor!

*Hurrah for revolution and more cannon-shot!*

*A beggar on horseback lashes a beggar on foot.*

*Hurrah for revolution and cannon come again!*

*The beggars have changed places, but the lash goes on. (W.B. Yeats)*

This could not be what Jesus meant. "Blessed are you who are poor," he said (Luke 6:20). Are they blessed in being poor, or because they are poor, or for some other reason that is only materially connected with their being poor?

Is poverty a value? It is hard to see how it could be a value in itself, seeing that it is just the lack of something good: an adequate level of wealth. (It is not wealth that is evil, but the selfish misuse of it.) Where is the value in poverty, then? In 1965 Paul VI, in *Apostolicam Actuositatem*, wrote, "That which is already due in justice [to the poor] is not to be offered as a gift of charity." In fact he was just repeating the much earlier teaching of the Church: for example, St John Chrysostom (5th century) had written, "Not to enable the poor to share in our goods is to steal from them and deprive them of life. The goods we possess are not ours, but theirs." And Pope Gregory the Great (also 5th century) wrote, "When we attend to the needs of those in want, we give them what is theirs, not ours. More than performing works of mercy, we are paying a debt of justice."

In the time of Jesus, wealth was seen as a sign of God's favour, and poverty a sign of disfavour. His good news for the poor was not that the rich would welcome them when they came begging, nor that they could prove how humble they were, but that they had an equal dignity in the eyes of God and an equal right to the earth's goods. The good news was not that they would become rich, but that they could stand in their full dignity before God and the world.

Many have imagined a future Utopia, a perfect place where everything will be as it should be. But the word 'Utopia' does not mean a perfect place; it means a 'non-existent place' (from the Greek, ou = not, and topos = place). Is the Christian vision a Utopia? In a sense yes. The world is not a place of perfect justice, love, or peace. We have not arrived, but we are "on the way," in via, as the mediaevals put it. The work has started, the seed has been sown. "This text is being fulfilled today even as you listen," Jesus said. We are not invited to dream ineffectually of a Utopia, but to work for the coming of God's Kingdom on earth.

People who practise *lectio divina* - the slow careful meditative reading of Scripture - stress the importance of being aware, when reading any passage, that 'this text is being fulfilled today even as we read.' Something of the word of God is already moving in us. If there were nothing, then we would only be dreaming of Utopia. The practical way is to care for the little that is there, rather than dream and do nothing. "Better an acre in Wessex," said Macaulay, "than a principality in Utopia."

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