

LIVERPOOL ARCHDIOCESAN CENTRE FOR EVANGELISATION

From the Press Officer:

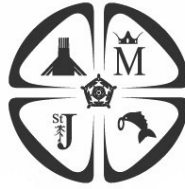
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PASTORAL LETTER

*To be read in all churches and chapels of the Archdiocese of Liverpool on
Sunday, 20 September 2009, the twenty-fifth Sunday of Ordinary Time.*

My dear People,

On Thursday night there will be one of the most important public events ever to take place at our Cathedral. This event makes clear something vital for all. We will see facts essential for our well-being.

But this public event will be private, silent, hidden, enclosed. At 10.30 on Thursday evening Night Prayer will be sung; from that afternoon the relics of Saint Therese of Lisieux will have been in the Cathedral. There will have been Evening Prayer as they arrived: Mass at 7.30: a reflection every hour on the hour to deepen the prayer, the wisdom, the daring of all who come to rejoice in Therese, Carmelite, Doctor of the Church, woman of daring.

But after Night Prayer the Cathedral will become a Carmelite Monastery: a silent place; a hidden place; an enclosed place. During the Night the Sisters of the Carmelite Monasteries of Birkenhead, Liverpool, Saint Helens and Upholland will watch and pray.

That hidden, silent, enclosed time and space is the word we all need to hear and the vision we need to see, and the space we need to find, if we would be blest by the visit to our diocese and the diocese of Shrewsbury, with whom we will share that 24 hours, of the relics of Saint Therese of Lisieux.

While the nuns keep silent watch, some of us will keep an All Night Vigil at the Church of Saint Anne and Blessed Dominic, Sutton Manor: that is the shrine of Dominic Barberi, who, in the words of Pope Paul VI, 'At Littlemore on the evening of 8 October 1854, received from that most remarkable spirit, John Henry Newman, his decisive profession of the Catholic Faith.' It is also the shrine of Elizabeth Prout, Foundress of the Congregation of the Sisters of the Cross and Passion; and the shrine of Ignatius Spencer, of the Order of the Passion, and

who shares ancestors with Princess Diana, through the Spencers of Althorpe. He also includes Saint Ambrose Barlow in his family tree. The focus of prayer there will be priesthood and vocation to the priesthood and religious life. It is open to all. You will know times and places of prayer planned near where you are for these same days and night.

At 7.30 on Friday morning together with all who wish, I will return to the Cathedral and join the Carmelite Sisters for Morning Prayer. They will then return to their monasteries in fidelity to their hidden, silent, enclosed life among us and for us.

We need them; we need the testimony of that silent, hidden, enclosed night kept publicly among us. There must be something hidden in every life for it to be wholesome, not fragmented, disintegrated, a frantic searching in pursuit of now this, now that. We need the wisdom of Elijah of Mount Carmel: he recognised the voice of God not in the spectacle, power, roar, magnificence of earthquake, wind, fire; but in the still, small voice of calm, a sound of sheer silence. Silence: I find myself drawn to these words of Pope Paul VI spoken when he was a pilgrim in Nazareth on 5 January 1964: he said:

‘I gladly would I become a child again, and go to school once more in this humble and sublime school of Nazareth: close to Mary, I wish I could make a fresh start at learning the true science of life and the higher wisdom of divine truths.

‘But I am only a passing pilgrim. I must renounce this desire to pursue in this home my still incomplete education in the understanding of the Gospel. I will not go on my way, however, without having gathered – hurriedly, it is true, and as if wanting to escape notice – some brief lessons from Nazareth.

‘First, then a lesson of silence. May esteem for silence, that admirable and indispensable condition of mind be revived in us; for we are besieged by so many uplifted voices, the general noise and uproar in our seething and over-sensitised modern life.

‘May the silence of Nazareth, teach us recollection, inwardness, the disposition to listen to good inspirations and the teachings of true teachers. May it teach us the need for and the value of preparation, of study, of meditation, of personal inner life, of the prayer which God alone sees in secret.’

Every one of those words of Pope Paul breathes the spirit of Saint Therese; and it is true to the call received from our Lord today: when they had been arguing which of them was the greatest. ‘So he sat down, called the Twelve to him and said, “If anyone wants to be first, he must make himself last of all and servant of all.” He then took a little child, set him in front of them, put his arms around him, and said to them, “Anyone who welcomes one of these little children in my name welcomes me; and anyone who welcomes me welcomes not me but the one who sent me.”’

As we prepare to welcome among us the relics of Saint Therese and to surrender our Cathedral to Carmel on Thursday night, let Therese have the final word:

'O, I don't try to jostle into the front rank, the last is good enough for me; I won't put myself forward, like the Pharisees. I'll take courage from the humble prayer of the tax collector. But the Magdalene, she, most of all, is the model I like to follow: that boldness of hers, which would be so amazing if it weren't the boldness of a lover, won the heart of Jesus, and how it fascinated me! I'm certain of this – that if my conscience were burdened with all the sins it's possible to commit, I would still go and throw myself into Our Lord's arms, my heart all broken up with contrition; I know what tenderness he has for any prodigal child of his that comes back to him. No, it's not just because God, in his undeserved mercy, had kept my soul clear of mortal sin, that I fly to him on the wings of confidence and love...'

Yours devotedly in Christ,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Patrick Kelly". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large initial 'P'.

Archbishop of Liverpool

**Ends
20 September 2009**