

Parish of Holy Cross, Our Lady & Saint Paul

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5th January 2025 - The Epiphany of the Lord

CYCLE OF CATECHESIS. THE SPIRIT AND THE BRIDE. THE HOLY SPIRIT GUIDES THE PEOPLE OF GOD TOWARDS JESUS OUR HOPE. 7. JESUS WAS LED BY THE SPIRIT INTO THE WILDERNESS. THE HOLY SPIRIT, OUR ALLY IN THE FIGHT AGAINST THE SPIRIT OF EVIL

Immediately after His baptism in the Jordan, Jesus “was led up by the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted by the devil” (Mt 4:1) – this is what the Gospel of Matthew says. The initiative is not Satan’s, but God’s. Going into the wilderness, Jesus obeys an inspiration of the Holy Spirit; He does not fall into an enemy snare, no, no! Once He has withstood the test, it is written, He returns to Galilee “in the power of the Spirit” (Lk 4:14). In the wilderness, Jesus freed Himself of Satan, and now He can deliver from Satan. He freed Himself, He frees from Satan. It is what the Evangelists highlight with the numerous studies of deliverance from possession. Jesus says to His opponents: “If it is by the Spirit of God that I cast out demons, then the kingdom of God has come upon you” (Mt 12:28). And Jesus casts out the demons, with the aspiration of the kingdom of God.

Nowadays we are witnessing a strange phenomenon regarding the devil. At a certain cultural level, it is held that he simply does not exist. He would be a symbol of the collective subconscious, or alienation; in short, a metaphor. But “the cleverest ruse of the devil is to persuade you he does not exist!”, as someone wrote (Charles Baudelaire). He is astute: he makes us believe that he does not exist, and in this way he dominates everything. He is cunning. And yet our technological and secularized world is teeming with magicians, occultism, spiritualism, astrologers, sellers of spells and amulets, and unfortunately with real satanic sects. Driven out the door, the devil has re-entered, one might say, through the window. Driven out of faith, he re-enters with superstition. And if you are superstitious, you are unconsciously conversing with the devil. One does not converse with the devil.

The strongest proof of the existence of Satan is found not in sinners or the possessed, but in the saints! “And how can this be, Father?”. Yes, it is true that the devil is present and working in certain extreme and “inhuman” forms of evil and wickedness that we see around us. But by this route, though, it is practically impossible to reach, in individual cases, the certainty that it is truly him, given that we cannot know with precision where his action ends and our own evil begins. This is why the Church is so prudent and so rigorous in performing exorcism, unlike what happens, unfortunately, in certain films! It is in the life of the saints, precisely there, that the devil is forced to come out into the open, to place himself “against the light”. All the saints, all the great believers, some more, some less, testify

to their struggle with this obscure reality, and one cannot honestly assume that they were all deluded or mere victims of the prejudices of their time.

The battle against the spirit of evil is won as Jesus won it in the wilderness: by striking with the word of God. You see that Jesus does not converse with the devil, He never conversed with the devil. Either he casts him out, or condemns him, but He never converses. And in the wilderness, he replies not with His word, but with the Word of God. Brothers, sisters, never converse with the devil; when temptations present themselves: "But, this would be nice, that would be nice" – stop. Raise your heart to the Lord, pray to Our Lady and banish him, just as Jesus taught us how to banish him. Saint Peter also suggests another means, that Jesus did not need, but we do – vigilance. "Be sober, be watchful. Your adversary the devil prowls around like a roaring lion, seeking someone to devour" (1 Pt 5:8). And Saint Paul says to us: "Give no opportunity to the devil" (Eph 4:27).

After Christ, on the cross, defeated forever the power of the "ruler of this world" (Jn 12:31), a Father of the Church said, "the devil is bound, like a dog on a chain; he cannot bite anyone except those who, defying the danger, go near him... He can bark, he can urge, but he can bite only those who want". If you are a fool and you go to the devil and say, "Ah, how are you?", and everything, it ruins you. The devil – distance. One does not converse with the devil. One banishes him. Distance. And all of us, everyone, we have experience of how the devil approaches with some temptation. The temptation of the ten commandments: when we feel this, stop, keep your distance: do not approach the chained dog. Modern technology, for example, besides the many positive resources that are to be appreciated, offers also countless means to "give an opportunity to the devil", and many fall in the trap. Think of online pornography, behind which there is a flourishing market: we all know this. It is the devil at work, there. And this is a very widespread phenomenon, which Christians should beware of and strongly reject. Because any smartphone has access to this brutality, to this language of the devil: online pornography.

Awareness of the action of the devil in history should not discourage us. The final thought must be, also in this case, of trust and security: "I am with the Lord, be gone". Christ overcame the devil and gave us the Holy Spirit to make His victory our own. The very action of the enemy can turn to our advantage, if with God's help we make it serve our purification. Let us therefore ask the Holy Spirit, in the words of the hymn *Veni Creator*: Drive far away our wily Foe, and Thine abiding peace bestow; If Thou be our protecting Guide, no evil can our steps betide". Beware, the devil is astute – but we Christians, with God's grace, are more astute than him.

OUR PARISH VISION & MISSION

We are a warm & welcoming community of faith rooted in the love of God revealed to us in Jesus Christ. Belonging is at the heart of what we do as members of the body of Christ. We believe worship is not just found in prayer, it's something expressed in everything we do.

PLEASE REMEMBER IN YOUR PRAYERS

Those who are sick

***Irene Fortune, Anna Coughlan, Canon Philip Moor, Lily Baker, Christopher Browne, Rob Creer,
Eileen & Julia Ward, Philip Smith, Clare McElroy & Teresa Denye***

Those who have died

Lynda Ventre, Ruth O'Brien, Nigel Salisbury & Paddy Lewis

POPE'S PRAYER INTENTION FOR JANUARY 2025

The Diocese of Shrewsbury is a Registered Charity: No 234025

FOR THE RIGHT TO AN EDUCATION – Let us pray for migrants, refugees, and those affected by war, that their right to an education, which is necessary to build a better world, might always be respected.

MASSES FOR THE WEEK				
Sunday	THE EPIPHANY OF THE LORD	9:30am	People of the Parish	SP
		11am	Michael Christopher Coughlan R.I.P.	OL
<i>Tea & Coffee are served after both Sunday Masses</i>				
Monday	Monday after Epiphany	9am	Kamila Jaroslawska (Speedy Recovery)	OL
<i>Access to Our Lady's for weekday Mass is through the entrance to the right side of the church</i>				
Tuesday	Tuesday after Epiphany	9:30am	Bosco & Lorraine (Wedding Anniversary)	OL
Tea & Coffee are served in the Saint Joseph chapel after Mass on Tuesday mornings. Everyone welcome!				
Wednesday	Wednesday after Epiphany	9am	Sharmila Viegas (Birthday)	OL
Thursday	Thursday after Epiphany			
Friday	Friday after Epiphany	9:30am	Ann (McDonnell) Jones R.I.P.	HC
Saturday	Saturday after Epiphany			
Sunday	THE BAPTISM OF THE LORD	9:30am	People of the Parish	SP
		11am	Billy Boylan R.I.P.	OL

SAINT JOSEPH LAMP the lamp burns for Pauline Bewley (Speedy Recovery) at Our Lady's and Terry Connor R.I.P. at Saint Paul's. Envelopes for intentions are at the back of each church. A £5 donation is requested.

PARISH

REQUIEM MASS FOR RUTH O'BRIEN will be celebrated in Saint Paul's church on Monday 13th January at 1:45pm.

BECOMING A CATHOLIC – For anyone who has been baptised as a Catholic, as a member of another Christian community or never been baptised at all, we will be running the Catholicism course. Our meetings resume tomorrow (Monday 6th January 2025) at 6pm in Our Lady's.


CONFIRMATION Any young person who is in Year 8 or above at school and wishes to enrol in this year's Confirmation programme please get an information flyer from the back of church. The sessions for this year's confirmation programme will continue Thursday 9th January) at 7pm in Our Lady's. If you know someone who would like to be confirmed but hasn't yet joined tell them to come & bring a friend or three!

STRONGER TOGETHER COMMUNITY GROUP empowers members to address daily life challenges in a supportive environment. Tuesday mornings (9:30am-12pm) in Saint Joseph's parish centre, North Road. The group is facilitated by Caritas Diocese of Shrewsbury.

JOB VACANCY AT SYMT – The Diocese of Shrewsbury is seeking to appoint a new Youth Mission Team Member to engage with young people in schools and parishes across the Diocese: 35 hours a

week including some evening and weekend working. For more information and job description please see the Diocesan website: <https://www.dioceseofshrewsbury.org/latest-vacancies/>. **Closing date: Friday 31st January.** Please send your CV to Recruitment@dioceseofshrewsbury.org

EASY FUNDRAISING – thanks to your generosity in using Easy Fundraising, our latest payout is £24.38. As you are shopping for your Christmas presents online, don't forget to use the Easy Fundraising donation reminder so that the parish can collect even more free donations as you shop!

<p><u>PARISH FINANCE</u></p> <p><u>22nd December 2024</u></p> <p>Offertory £462.62 (cash); £17.50 (Standing Orders); £5 (card/contactless); Zambia/Eye Fund/Caritas £24.03</p> <p><u>25th December 2024 – Christmas Offerings</u></p> <p>Offertory £902.95 (cash); £5 (card/contactless)</p> <p><u>29th December 2024</u></p> <p>Offertory £409.05 (cash); £17.50 (Standing Orders); £5 (card/contactless); Zambia/Eye Fund/Caritas £9.90</p> <p><u>CARITAS at CHRISTMAS collection (inc. crib offerings)</u></p> <p>£41.11</p> <p><i>Thank you for your continuing generosity.</i></p>	<p>To donate online, please scan the QR code.</p> 
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STANDING ORDERS – You can set a standing order up through your online banking or via the form which is available from the parish office. If you are a UK taxpayer, please gift aid these payments.

BONUS BALL SCHEME- Congratulations to the winner in the draw held on 21st December with no 8 but as there was no winner on Saturday 28th December with no 55 there will be a rollover for the draw held yesterday, 5th January 2025. If you would like to join, please see a helper at the back of church.

CHARITY

WIRRAL FOODBANK – Thank you for your continued support. Donations can be left at the back of Saint Paul's or outside the Saint Joseph chapel in Our Lady's.

TESCO STRONGER STARTS: OUR LADY & SAINT EDWARD'S PRIMARY SCHOOL – each month Tesco in Bidston Moss supports three local charitable schemes. This month they are supporting OLSE Fitness for Fun, with the aim to promote cycling to & from school where possible. You can vote for this scheme of one of our parish primary schools by picking up the blue tokens & putting it in the box marked Our Lady & Saint Edward's. The charity with the most votes can receive up to £1500 toward their scheme. If you shop in Tesco, please vote for the project of one of our primary schools!

STAMPS – The stamps are sent off to the RNIB to support their work with those suffering sight loss. There is a box at the back of church for any used stamps you have.

GLASSES – Please donate any old glasses to support the work of the Eye Fund. Boxes for donations are available at each church.

TABLET BLISTER PACKS – used ones can be donated at each church to support the Marie Curie charity.

*Thank you to everyone for your gifts, cards & messages over the Christmas season.
Thank you to everyone who has helped in any way great or small during the past year.*

Thank you to each of you for your support throughout the year but especially in these past couple of months. Wishing you all a Blessed 2025. Fr Michael