

OUR LADY OF LOURDES CHURCH In NEW MILTON

Catholic Diocese of Portsmouth

15 Mount Ave, New Milton. BH25 6NT.

Parish priest: *Father George Ngwa*



FOURTH SUNDAY OF LENT YEAR "B" 14TH MARCH 2021

JESUS CHRIST ON THE CROSS AND THE BRONZE SERPENT

In the gospel reading today we have a frequently asked question - why does he liken Himself to the serpent that was lifted up in the desert in the Old Testament, considering that serpents are usually associated with Satan? Why was a serpent chosen as a type/foreshadowing of what Jesus would do on the cross, especially in light of the Bible always emphasizing the "lamb" that was slain?

We should not make any further points of comparison, such as "Jesus must be like a serpent in some way, rather than a lamb, because he said he had to be lifted up just as the serpent was lifted up." However, we should keep in mind that in the gospel of John, there are always multiple levels of meaning at work. Behind physical references there is often spiritual significance.

Jesus refers to the way Moses made a bronze serpent and put it up on a pole in order to make one specific point to Nicodemus. Jesus has just told him that he needs to be "born again" through water and the Holy Spirit in order to enter the kingdom of God. Jesus tries to explain that he's talking about being "born of the Spirit," but Nicodemus still asks, "How can this be?" So Jesus uses the episode of the bronze serpent to explain more precisely what he means by being "born again."

This Gospel is related in the book of Numbers. The Israelites are travelling through the wilderness and they start complaining about the very manna that God has been providing miraculously to feed them in the desert. (They say, "We detest this miserable food!") As a punishment for their ingratitude, God sends poisonous snakes among them and many of the Israelites start dying from snake bites. So they come to Moses and admit, "We sinned when we spoke against the Lord and against you." They ask him to "pray that the Lord will take the snakes away from us." God forgives the people and tells Moses to make a bronze snake and put it up on a pole." God promises, "Anyone who is bitten can look at it and live."

In other words, an admission of sin and a response of hopeful faith, looking to the means God provided for deliverance, was how the Israelites could be rescued from physical death in this instance. Jesus is telling Nicodemus that the same thing will be true, on a much grander scale in the spiritual realm, when he is "lifted up" onto the cross. Anyone who is sincerely sorry for the way they've disobeyed and offended God, and who looks in hopeful faith to Jesus' death on the cross for their sake, will be rescued spiritually and given the chance to live anew. This is what it means to be "born again."

So that is the single point of comparison: just as the Israelites needed to look in hopeful faith to God's provision for their physical deliverance in the wilderness, so Nicodemus (and anyone else, ever since, who hears about Jesus' conversation with him) needs to look in hopeful faith to God's provision for their spiritual deliverance in the form of Jesus' death on the cross.

There are a multitude of significant factors in the typical relationship between the bronze serpent (Numbers 21: 4-9) and the crucified Lord Jesus Christ (John 3:14-15) at Calvary:

In the first place, the bronze serpent was God's means of salvation for the Israelites who were bitten by the serpents in the wilderness.

Jesus is God's means of salvation for everyone who has been bitten by the deadly venom of sin in the wilderness of this fallen world.

The bronze serpent was God's only means of salvation for the bitten Israelites.

Jesus is God's only means of salvation for Jew and Gentile (see. John 3:16).

The bronze serpent was a visual representation of the wrath of God against a grumbling and complaining people.

The cross of Christ is a visual representation of the wrath of God against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men.

The bronze serpent, representing the wrath of God, also represented the turning away of that wrath. Whoever looked at the serpent would find that the wrath of God was turned away.

The cross of Christ, representing the wrath of God, also represents the turning away of that wrath. Mercy and truth meet together at the cross; righteousness and peace embraced one another in the death of Jesus.

The bronze serpent was a representation of the venomous serpents that bit the people and brought deadly consequences on account of their sin, yet it was without the venom that caused their death.

Christ represented those who were ruined by sin, making Himself a body in the likeness of sinful flesh—yet without sin—so that He might, by His death, save those who—by their own sin—were poisoned unto death. He was made a curse for us that we might receive the blessings of God.

The bronze serpent was meant to remind the Israelites of the cause of their sin. It was meant to carry their minds back to the Garden of Eden where Satan came in the form of a serpent to tempt their first parents.

The punishment for the sin brought into the world through the temptation of that Serpent of Old, was laid on Jesus at the cross. The penalty for our sin fell on Him. He became sin for us, that we might become the righteousness of God in Him.

With the serpent in the wilderness, the healing was dependent upon the word of God concerning His means of salvation. With Christ crucified, salvation is dependent on God's word concerning His means of that salvation. In the account of the poisoned Israelites and the bronze serpent, both the means and the instrument of God's salvation are typified.

In the account of Jesus' interaction with Nicodemus both the means and the instrument of God's salvation are pointed out. A crucified Saviour is the means of God's salvation. Faith, or looking to Him, is the instrument of salvation. The plagued Israelites were called to look upon the bronze serpent in order to be healed. Sinners are called to look upon the crucified Son of God to be saved.

The serpent was lifted up before the Israelites in the midst of the camp so that those who were bitten might look and be healed.

Christ was lifted up—first on the cross, then in His resurrection, then in His ascension, and finally in the preaching of the Gospel—so that sinners might look on Him and be saved.

The bronze serpent was the central and all-sufficient means of healing for the Israelites.

The cross is the central and all-sufficient means of the work of Christ. The bronze serpent was the clearest type of the saving work of Jesus at Calvary. Of all the types and shadows, there was not any that showed forth the principal work of the Saviour better than this type. Jesus could have pointed to the Passover or any of the sacrificial types that foreshadowed His atoning death, but He chose to point Nicodemus to this type.

Just as God chose a man, namely Moses, to lift up the bronze serpent on the pole so that men might look and be healed, God has chosen ministers to hold up Jesus in the preaching of Christ crucified so that men might look to Him and be saved.

Just as looking to a bronze serpent was a foolish means of healing poisoned Israelites, so looking to a crucified Saviour (an executed, dying Man) is a foolish means, in the world's eyes, for the salvation of a sinners condemned to death.

The bronze serpent was held up for many for salvation from the wrath of God and the deadly consequences of sin. Christ was lifted up for many for the salvation of men from the wrath of God and the deadly consequences of sin. God's use of serpent symbolism for healing was appropriate for other reasons. Israelites, like other Semitic peoples, associated serpents with life and healing. Snakes were thought to have regenerative healing powers because they shed their skin. Serpent images were a common motif in ancient Near Eastern art. Storage jars often included serpent imagery—perhaps to ward off theft or spoilage. The Greek god of healing, Asclepius, was depicted as a snake. The rod of Asclepius, a staff entwined by a snake, is still a symbol for medicine and healing today. Here, Yahweh uses this imagery to proclaim His sovereignty over other gods.

Aside from their association with healing, serpents were familiar symbols of protection. Consider ancient Egypt, where the snake is an ever-present symbol. The uraeus serpent on the crown of the pharaoh was thought to render him immune from harm and enable him to heal. Other serpent icons served as divine guardians. The confrontation between Moses and Pharaoh, in which the serpent of God devoured the Egyptians' serpents, sent a powerful theological message about the superiority of Yahweh (Exod 7:8–13). Yahweh—not Pharaoh—had power over the natural and divine worlds and the authority to dispense or withhold judgment or mercy.

He was truly God; Pharaoh was an amateur magician. He could punish faithlessness by commanding the forces of nature—sending venomous serpents against the Israelites. But He also had the power to reverse the effects, offering His divine healing through a bronze serpent. Healing came with one condition: The Israelites had to exercise faith in the offer.

Jesus' use of this test of the "obedience of faith" creates a fitting analogy to His own destiny. Death, the natural world's most consuming force, would be reversed for all who looked to Jesus, raised up on the pole of the cross—if only the afflicted would believe.

ANNOUNCEMENTS

HOLY MASS BOOKING ON LINE DURING CORONAVIRUS PANDEMIC

As we are still in Lock Down it will be necessary to continue restricting the number of parishioners in Church for each Mass to approximately 45, which means that you will need to book your place in advance. We now have an “on-line” booking system in place, which you can find by going onto our website at

<https://www.nfwp.org.uk>- (scroll down left-hand column to CORONAVIRUS: Welcome to Our Lady of Lourdes, New Milton and click on CORONAVIRUS: How to book a seat for Mass). Alternatively the Links for Sundays in March are as follows:-21st March - <https://forms.gle/ZFq9W9Jgj3DUmYFZA>

28th March - <https://forms.gle/XRb7xtUwMyfCc5Gc9>

FINANCIAL SUPPORT during the COVID PANDEMIC. Whether or not you are a Gift Aider and you would like to continue supporting your Church through this difficult time, you may wish to organise a Standing Order arrangement with your bank to pay your collection directly into our Church bank account. Details as follows: - Lloyds Bank - Sort Code 30-93-04, Account No: 00883116, Account Name – PRCDTR New Milton Our Lady. Or you may prefer to give your donation directly to the Office. Thank you! If you do decide to pay money directly into our Bank Account, it would be very helpful for our Treasurer if you could write what it is for in the Reference Box when paying on line, i.e. Church donation, Intention, Cafod etc.

GIFT AID ENVELOPES

Would the two Parishioners using Gift Aid Box Numbers 34 & 56 please contact Lizzie in the Parish Office to confirm their details.

MONTH OF MARCH – ST. JOSEPH

The month of March by custom is devoted to St. Joseph and we look forward to his great feast day on **19th March**. The Holy Father Pope Francis has dedicated this year to him in commemoration of the 150th anniversary of the Saint’s proclamation as the Patron of the Universal Church by Pope Pius IX on 8th December, 1870. We thus have every reason to invoke him in our prayers. One traditional prayer that you may or may not be familiar with is the Litany of St. Joseph. It was approved for public use by Pope St. Pius X in 1909, although its origins go back further. It contains twenty-five invocations expressing the virtues and dignity of St. Joseph.

ANNIVERSARY OF PRIESTLY ORDINATION – Friday 19th March. 2 years ago Fr. George celebrated his 25 years as a Priest. You may remember the wonderful party we put on for him to celebrate this very special occasion. So much has happened in the 2 years since then, with very challenging times for us all, caused by the Covid-19 Pandemic. Even when our Church was forced to be closed, he has steadfastly held Mass on Live-streaming and encouraged us through the darkest days with his faith and hope for a better future. Let’s take this opportunity to congratulate him on his 27 Year Anniversary of Priesthood, to thank him for his dedication and love for us all and to wish him well in his future journey of Ministry and Faith. God Bless Fr. George & thank you from us all!

TO OUR CATHOLIC UNIVERSE AND CATHOLIC TIMES READERS IN THE PARISH:- at the moment you are unable to collect your paper at Mass, but you can get it delivered direct to your home every week, POST FREE. Please go to www.thecatholicuniverse.com or call them on 0161 820 5722 and they will arrange for you. for:- £115.00 Print Copy and Digital Edition, Saving over £39.00.

PRINT OFFER ONLY £99.00 (Postage Free) DIGITAL OFFER ONLY £55.00

SAFEGUARDING MINISTER

Sadly Tony Harwood, has stepped down from his role as Safeguarding Minister. We extend our deepest thanks to him for all the hard work and dedication that he has put into the role over the past couple of years. Of course, this now means that we have a vacancy for this very important role. Is there anyone who feels that they are able to volunteer? Once a volunteer has come forward, I will pass their name on to Vanessa Eastwood, the Diocesan Safeguarding Parish Support Officer, who will commence the recruitment process. She can also offer further information about the role on Tel: 02394 216490 or via Email: veastwood@portsmouthdiocese.org.uk Many thanks! Lizzie

FOURTH SUNDAY OF LENT YEAR B 14TH MARCH 2021

Sunday Vigil	13	2021 Mar.	Vigil Mass of the 4 th Sunday of Lent Year B	18:00 Holy Mass - <i>Joan & John Miller (health & wellbeing)</i>	
Sunday	14	Mar.	FOURTH SUNDAY OF LENT Year B	08:00 Holy Mass – <i>Irene Pilnick (RIP)</i> 10:00 Holy Mass – <i>Gehane Therese (health & wellbeing)</i>	
Monday	15	Mar.	Monday of the 4 th Week of Lent Year B		
Tuesday	16	Mar.	Tuesday of the 4 th Week of Lent Year B	18:00 Exposition 18:30 Rosary 18:50 Benediction 19:00 Holy Mass – <i>Paul Gordelier (Birthday Blessings)</i>	6:00-7:00 p.m. Rosary, Benediction
Wednesday	17	Mar.	ST PATRICK Year B	09:25 Stations of the Cross 10:00 a.m. Holy Mass – <i>Mary & Roy Tanner (Wedding Anniversary Blessings)</i>	6:00-7:00 p.m. Rosary, Benediction
Thursday	18	Mar.	Thursday of the 4 th Week of Lent Year B	10:00 a.m. Holy Mass - <i>Brigid Horan (RIP)</i>	
			ST JOSEPH Solemnity Year B	18:00 Vigil Mass of St. Joseph	Vigil Mass
Friday	19	Mar.	ST JOSEPH Year B	09:25 Stations of the Cross 10:00 Holy Mass – <i>Fr. George (for his Priestly Ordination)</i>	6:00 – 7:00 p.m. Rosary and Benediction
Saturday	20	Mar.	Saturday of the 4 th Week of Lent Year B	09:30 Divine Mercy Devotion 10:00 Holy Mass - <i>Eugene Nolan (Intention)</i>	
Saturday Vigil			Vigil Mass of the 5 th Sunday of Lent Year B	18:00 Holy Mass – <i>David Holmes & Jean Peltier (for continuing good health)</i>	
Sunday	21	Mar.	FIFTH SUNDAY OF LENT YEAR B	8:00 - Holy Mass – <i>Marta Kaminska (Birthday Blessings)</i> 10:00 – Holy Mass - <i>For All the Souls in Purgatory (RIP)</i>	

This Weekend – 2nd Collection (obligatory) for Clergy Assistance Fund

Your continued financial support during these very challenging times would be very much appreciated

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Hall Bookings suspended during the Pandemic.

Secretary: Lizzie Davies – Office Hours 12.00h to 15.00h Wednesdays & Fridays

Our Parish Live Streaming: <http://churchservices.tv/newmilton> Website: www.nfwp.org.uk

Safeguarding Minister: Tony Harwood Tel: 01425 511 952 or email hughharwood314@hotmail.co.uk

PRAYER FOR THE RENEWAL OF OUR DIOCESE – (to be said at home even with Church closure).

O Sacred Heart of Jesus, we beg you to change us, to convert us and to make us holy. Fill us with a deeper faith, hope and love for you. Send into our hearts the cleansing fire of the Holy Spirit and powerfully renew all the clergy, religious and laity of our Diocese. Unite us in love and respect for one another and unify us as your one, holy people. Grant us a new passion and zeal for the Catholic Faith, for Mission, Outreach and Service. Help us to proclaim your Gospel generously to the poor and needy that many more souls may be saved by finding their way to you in your Church. May Mary Immaculate help us. May St. Edmund of Abingdon and Blessed Pier Giorgio Frassati pray for us. Amen

Prayer to St. Michael the Archangel - St Michael, the Archangel, defend us in battle. Be our protection against the wickedness and snares of the devil. May God rebuke him, we humbly pray; and do thou, O Prince of the heavenly host, by the power of God cast into hell Satan and all the evil spirits who wander through the world seeking the ruin of souls - AMEN