

ST ETHELBERT'S CHURCH, LEOMINSTER
& ST JOSEPH'S, BROMYARD

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2nd August 2020: 18th Sunday of the year

A Reflection on today's first reading by Fr John Foley SJ

I love the First Reading. I suppose this is obvious from the fact that I wrote a hymn, "Come to the Water," which is based on it. It was a long time ago (1971), but I remember the time clearly. The St. Louis Jesuits were only just forming and we took a summer together to write, out in Berkeley, CA. We always composed music individually and then presented it to one another for critique. For my part I wrote two hymns, and when it was time, played them for the others. I remember the exact spot where I stood.

You probably think one of them was *Come to the Water*, but it wasn't. I don't even remember the names of those two pieces. The unanimous reaction of my brothers in Christ was, "ugh." "They just don't work," "What were you thinking?" These encouraged me to file the errant pieces in the round file and try again. I had learned something. I could not just "dash off" music. I had to believe in it and believe in what it was saying.

So I searched the scriptures and prayed. The result? A setting of the First Reading for this Sunday.

All you who are thirsty,
come to the water!
You who have no money,
come, receive grain and eat;
Come, without paying and without cost,
drink wine and milk!

Why spend your money for what is not bread;
your wages for what fails to satisfy?
Heed me, and you shall eat well,
you shall delight in rich fare.

Composers and authors actually do not know what happens when inspiration hits. I only know that I began writing immediately, and that something inside was guiding me. *Come to the Water* was born. I continue to believe in it and to stand behind what it says.

Both the song and the scripture passage express a solution to the needs and aches in our bodies and souls. The love we received when we were children was true, in spite of whatever wounds and reversals any of us received then or afterwards. The inside chambers of our self are truly and thoroughly loved by the giving-God.

Jesus shows this to us in the Gospel. He was aching, himself. He had been told about the death of his dear teacher and friend, John the Baptist. He wanted to get away from people, to let himself feel the loss.

But look what happened. Crowds of people tracked his boat and figured out where he was headed. They ran around the lake and waited as he pulled up to shore. Gone was his chance to mourn, at least for the moment. Maybe he should have told them to go away! Come back later. But the scripture

says, “his heart was moved with pity for them, and he cured their sick.” Even more, he gave them food, a tiny bit of food that multiplied so there was enough. If you look at it, he was doing exactly what the First Reading and *Come to the Water* are talking about.

We are meant to be fed by God in this way. And we are to be like Jesus in our actions toward other people. What we receive as we walk up the aisle to communion makes us into God’s way of fulfilling the First Reading.

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St Ethelbert’s Leominster

Last weekend it was a great joy to be able to celebrate Mass with a congregation, even though we were few in numbers and had to adhere to strict guidelines. For the time being, I will celebrate a public Mass at 9.00am and 5.30pm on Sunday and at 9.00am on Monday and Friday. At present, the number of people attending Mass has to be restricted, and we can only accommodate a relatively small number of people at each Mass, so to avoid disappointment, I would ask that those wishing to attend Sunday Mass to book a place by contacting the presbytery, preferably by email leominster@rcadc.org or phone if you do not have email, stating which Mass you wish to attend.

St Joseph’s, Bromyard

St Joseph’s will be open for private prayer on Thursday from 10.00am until 12noon. Unfortunately we are not in a position to open St Joseph’s for public worship. I will review the situation again during the week and again make the necessary application to the diocese. Hopefully, we will soon be able to celebrate Mass at St Joseph’s with a limited congregation.

Services during the week

Sun 2 Aug	18 th Sunday of the year	Mass 9.00am Leominster Mass 5.30pm Leominster	Fr Edward McMahon People of the Parish
Mon 3 Aug		Mass 9.00am Leominster	Brian Fieldhouse
Tue 4 Aug	St John Vianney	Private Mass	
Wed 5 Aug		Private Mass	
Thur 6 Aug	Transfiguration of the Lord	Private Prayer 10am-12noon Bromyard Private Mass	
Fri 7 Aug		Mass 9.00am Leominster	Private Intention
Sat 8 Aug	St Dominic	Private Mass	
Sun 9 Aug	19 th Sunday of the year	Mass 9.00am Leominster Mass 5.30pm Leominster	People of the Parish

Confessions

A few parishioners have asked about the situation regarding Confession. At present it is still not possible to hear confessions in the usual way however if you wish to go to confession, please contact the presbytery and I will make suitable arrangements.

Belmont Abbey online event

An online day of reflection titled A Chance for Change?’ “Pope Francis’ vision for humanity in the wake of the pandemic.” Will be led by papal biographer Austen Ivereigh on 8th August starting at

10.15am. The event will take place on Zoom and details of the day and how to register can be found on Belmont Abbey website <https://www.belmontabbey.org.uk/online-event-3--pope-francis>

At the beginning of this Coronavirus crisis, Austen Ivereigh was in the unique position to interview Pope Francis and learn from him directly how he understood it as a potential moment of creativity and conversion for the Church.

He will look at Pope Francis's vision for humanity in the wake of the pandemic: his spiritual leadership during the crisis (we can think of the striking image of the Pope alone in St Peter's Square) and the proposals that are likely to come out of the Vatican COVID-19 Commission that the Pope has set up.

Dr Ivereigh, a Fellow in Contemporary Church History at Campion Hall, Oxford, has been described as "the most astute historian of the pontificate of Pope Francis" and his recent book Wounded Shepherd charts the Pope's six year struggle to bring about reform in the Church.



Listen, listen to me and you will have good things to eat and rich food to enjoy. Pay attention, come to me; listen, and your soul will live. With you I will make an everlasting covenant out of the favours promised to David.'
(First Reading Eighteenth Sunday in Ordinary Time, Isaiah 55:3)