

East Hendred Catholic Parish

Food for the Journey

15th November – 20th November 2020



St Edmund of Abingdon (16th November)

LOOKING AHEAD TO DECEMBER

THE STANDING COMMITTEE met on Wednesday 11th December to make provisional plans for December. Taking the government's present projection, we should be back in 'Tier 1' and able to resume the arrangements in force before the latest Lockdown.

Assuming that, the question arises about how to provide for Christmas. The plan is to have two Christmas masses on Christmas Eve (4pm and 8pm) as well as two on Christmas Day (9.30am and 11.15am). There will be no congregational singing at these Masses, and this year, unfortunately, we can't host a Crib Service, for reasons which are not hard to imagine.

We face the twin problems that people will need to book in advance and there may well be 'no room at the inn' for those who turn up on spec. To be as helpful as possible, Chris Harrison is at work on how we can maximise our numbers, whilst retaining the 2 metre rule, and we are giving plenty of notice of how the booking will happen. For fairness' sake, it won't be 'first come first served'. Nothing will be finalised **until after 13th December**. We are keeping it fluid because some of us don't know quite who will be allowed to travel to be in our 'household' at Christmas. So, please tell us nothing **until after 3rd December**, when the government is due to release Lockdown restraints. Next week I shall be including details of how in that window, 3rd to 13th December, to let us know your preferences and requests.

Fr Andrew

East Hendred Catholic Parish



St Edmund of Abington
16th November

**Thirty-Third
Sunday
in Ordinary Time
(A)
15th November**

Entrance Antiphon

The Lord said: I think thoughts of peace and not of affliction. You will call upon me, and I will answer you, and I will lead back your captives from every place.

Dicit Dominus

Jer 29:11, 12, 14

Collect

Grant us, we pray, O Lord our God, the constant gladness of being devoted to you, for it is full and lasting happiness to serve with constancy the author of all that is good. 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.

First Reading

Proverbs 31:10-13, 19-20, 30-31(RSV)

A good wife who can find?

She is far more precious than jewels.

¹¹ The heart of her husband trusts in her,
and he will have no lack of gain.

¹² She does him good, and not harm,
all the days of her life.

¹³ She seeks wool and flax,
and works with willing hands.....

¹⁹ She puts her hands to the distaff,
and her hands hold the spindle.

²⁰ She opens her hand to the poor,
and reaches out her hands to the needy.....

³⁰ Charm is deceitful, and beauty is vain,

but a woman who fears the LORD is to be praised.

³¹ Give her of the fruit of her hands,
and let her works praise her in the gates.

Psalm 128:1-5 R/ 1

**R/ Blessed are all who fear the Lord,
and walk in his ways!**

Blessed are all who fear the Lord,
and walk in his ways!
By the labour of your hands you shall eat.
You will be bless'd and prosper. **R/**

Your wife like a fruitful vine
in the heart of your house;
your children like shoots of the olive,
around your table. **R/**

Indeed thus shall be bless'd the man who fears the Lord.
May the Lord bless you from Zion.
May you see Jerusalem prosper
all the days of your life! **R/**

Second Reading

1 Thessalonians 5:1-6 (RSV)

As to the times and the seasons, brethren, you have no need to have anything written to you. ² For you yourselves know well that the day of the Lord will come like a thief in the night. ³ When people say, 'There is peace and security,' then sudden destruction will come upon them as travail comes upon a woman with child, and there will be no escape. ⁴ But you are not in darkness, brethren, for that day to surprise you like a thief. ⁵ For you are all sons of light and sons of the day; we are not of the night or of darkness. ⁶ So then let us not sleep, as others do, but let us keep awake and be sober.

Alleluia, **Alleluia**

Make your home in me, as I make mine in you:
Whoever remains in me bears fruit in plenty.

Alleluia, alleluia, alleluia.

Gospel

Matthew 25:14-30 (RSV)

Jesus spoke this parable to his disciples: The kingdom of heaven will be as when a man going on a journey called his servants and entrusted to them his property; ¹⁵ to one he gave five talents, to another two, to another one, to each according to his ability. Then he went away. ¹⁶ He who had received the five talents went at once and traded with them; and he made five talents more. ¹⁷ So also, he who had the two talents made two talents more. ¹⁸ But he who had received the one talent went and dug in the ground and

hid his master's money. ¹⁹ Now after a long time the master of those servants came and settled accounts with them. ²⁰ And he who had received the five talents came forward, bringing five talents more, saying, 'Master, you delivered to me five talents; here I have made five talents more.' ²¹ His master said to him, 'Well done, good and faithful servant; you have been faithful over a little, I will set you over much; enter into the joy of your master.' ²² And he also who had the two talents came forward, saying, 'Master, you delivered to me two talents; here I have made two talents more.' ²³ His master said to him, 'Well done, good and faithful servant; you have been faithful over a little, I will set you over much; enter into the joy of your master.' ²⁴ He also who had received the one talent came forward, saying, 'Master, I knew you to be a hard man, reaping where you did not sow, and gathering where you did not winnow; ²⁵ so I was afraid, and I went and hid your talent in the ground. Here you have what is yours.' ²⁶ But his master answered him, 'You wicked and slothful servant! You knew that I reap where I have not sowed, and gather where I have not winnowed? ²⁷ Then you ought to have invested my money with the bankers, and at my coming I should have received what was my own with interest. ²⁸ So take the talent from him, and give it to him who has the ten talents. ²⁹ For to everyone who has will more be given, and he will have abundance; but from him who has not, even what he has will be taken away. ³⁰ And cast the worthless servant into the outer darkness; there men will weep and gnash their teeth.'

Reflection

WE ARE in the last days of the Church Year. The feast of Christ the King, the Omega, the end point of our pilgrimage, lies immediately ahead. Soon Advent Sunday, the beginning of a new year, will be with us. We shall remember that the Christ whom we worship next Sunday is not only the Omega but the Alpha. He is the beginning of all things as well as the end. But, for now, we see the year draining away and the readings, understandably, are preoccupied with the kingdom of God and rumours of the end of all things.

So what do we make of the old? The Book of Daniel speaks of four empires – of gold, silver, bronze and iron. These four empires – whatever they were (and I shall return to that in a second) – were shattered by a stone. The stone is the holy people of God – as learn in the Old Testament – a spiritual temple, as we learn in the New – built on Christ the cornerstone. This holy people has seen an end to many empires – not only Daniel's four but the empires of another 2,000 years. Most recently it has seen an end to the empire of the Soviet Union and, once more, the Church in Russia is free to worship. We cannot be surprised that there have been more empires than Daniel's four – whatever they were. Does not Jesus in the Gospel foretell nation fighting against nation, kingdom against kingdom?

Daniel's empires, it was always thought, were the Babylonian, the Medo-Persian, the Greco-Seleucid and the Roman. Together we get 'seventy weeks of years' (9:24-27), said the commentators, culminating in the death of Jesus Christ. Modern biblical criticism says that we have got the empires wrong. The four should be the Assyrians, the Medes, the Persians and the Greek, we're told. The Assyrian – which is really the Assyrian-Babylonian – becomes known by the Jews as the Babylonian. The Persians and the Medes were swapped round because Cyrus, who rescued the Jewish people by conquering Babylon, called himself 'the king of the Medes and Persians'. None of this now much matters because the important truth is that God and his holy people survive the worst of human aggression and natural disaster: the rise and fall of empires, earthquakes, plagues and famines.

It follows that in our own time we must keep faithful. There are two particular challenges in our time. The first is that the world which, as recently as the 1990s, seemed to be settling down, now seems more volatile and dangerous than at any time since, say, the height of the Cold War. Bringing in climate change, Noam Chomsky, the American intellectual, has recently said that the world is in a more precarious state than ever before. The second is that secularization and globalization have brought massive losses to established religion throughout the world. New religions and religious movements, correspondingly, are doing well. Just as Shintoism is declining in Japan, so is Christianity in decline in the UK. And conversely, of course, Christianity continues to spreading like wildfire in Africa and Asia. We must keep our nerve throughout this process.

We must keep faithful, for, in truth, the church of the committed is leaner and fitter in every way than the church of those who attend for mostly conventional reasons. Part of our own difficulty in the Church is that some seek every way they can to make changes, to keep secularization at bay. Others think that they are throwing the baby out with the bathwater. The last word is Christ's. 'The time will come when not a single stone will be left on another: everything will be destroyed', he says. We know that. It is true of our own bodies, of our own lives. And yet we know too that if we are faithful until death, he will give us the crown of life for the Lord Jesus Christ is our Alpha and our Omega, he is our beginning and he is our end. Amen.

Prayer over the Offerings

Grant, O Lord, we pray, that what we offer in the sight of your majesty may obtain for us the grace of being devoted to you and gain us the prize of everlasting happiness. Through Christ our Lord.

Preface

(I De mysterio paschali et de populo Dei)

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: Holy, holy, holy &c.

Communion Antiphon

Amen dico vobis

Amen, I say to you: whatever you ask in prayer, believe that you will receive, and it shall be given to you, says the Lord. *Mk 11:23-24*

Prayer after Communion

We have partaken of the gifts of this sacred mystery, humbly imploring you, O Lord, that what your Son commanded us to do in memory of him may bring us growth in charity. Through Christ our Lord.

Salve Regina

Hail, holy Queen, Mother of mercy! Hail, our life, our sweetness and our hope! To thee do we cry, poor banished children of Eve; to thee do we send up our sighs, mourning and weeping in this vale of tears. Turn then, most gracious advocate, thine eyes of mercy towards us; and after this our exile, show unto us the blessed fruit of thy womb, Jesus. O clement, O loving, O sweet Virgin Mary!

Scripture Reading (Week 33 Year 2)

Monday	Revelation 1:1-4, 2:1-5	Luke 18:35-43
Tuesday	Revelation 3:1-6, 14-22	Luke 19:1-10
Wednesday	Revelation 4:1-11	Luke 19:11-28
Thursday	Revelation 5:1-10	Luke 19:41-44
Friday	Revelation 10:8-11	Luke 19:45-48
Saturday	Revelation 11:4-12	Luke 20:27-40

CHRIST THE KING

Ezekiel 34:11-12, 15-17

1 Corinthians 15:20-26, 28

Matthew 25:31-46

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NOTICEBOARD

HOLY FATHER'S NOVEMBER PRAYER INTENTION

We pray that the progress of robotics and artificial intelligence may always serve humankind.

THE SICK AND THOSE IN NEED

Baby Martha, John Castle, Petal Connell, Daniel Cuevas, David Durham, Rose Millet, John Stringer, Louise Woodhouse, Sr Catherine, Mary Wallace, Brenda Paddon, Angus Clark, Karen Greig, Kitty Teasdale, Mary Mc Nichol, Andrew Gunn, Elizabeth Gunn, Des McNichol, Christine Robinson

THE FAITHFUL DEPARTED

Week 15th-21st Nov: Canon Thomas Luck P.P., Edith Lily O'Driscoll, Gerrard Felle, Rose Anne Rooke, Gertrude Corby, Marjorie Mockler, Anthony Francis Castle.

ECUMENICAL EVENING PRAYER

At 6pm each evening during the rest of November we have been asked by Catholic and Anglican Bishops to pray for our country, for those who are ill with COVID-19 and all in the NHS who seek to care for them. The format is short and simple - five minutes max - and those who wish may stay on live-stream for Evening Prayer - ten more minutes. The live-streaming is on East Hendred Catholic Parish Facebook Page and the Benefice of Wantage Downs Facebook Page on alternate days. Please join us! This week it is (Sun) C of E (Mon) RC (Tues) C of E (Weds) RC (Thurs) C of E (F) RC (Sat) C of E.

OPEN CHURCH THIS WEEK

St Mary's will be open for Private Prayer daily from 10am to 4pm (Thursdays 10.30am to 4pm). Please sign in with QR or, if you are unable to do that, please e-mail hendred@portsmouthdiocese.org.uk to say that you have visited. Please observe carefully the regulations set out on the noticeboard on the easel as you enter Church. This is a new venture. Please do what you can to ensure that it goes safely and well.

MASSES THIS WEEK

At the time of writing there are to be no public masses between 5th November and 2nd December. Mass will be live-streamed Sunday to Friday. We have moved from our own live-streaming to live-streaming from St Mary's, courtesy of ChurchServicesTV. See the times of Mass and use the link on www.hendredcatholicparish.org.uk.

THE YEAR OF THE WORD

Following the disruption caused by COVID-19, Bishop Philip has extended 'The Year of the Word' until 30th September 2021. In short, we shall continue with our intense Scripture programme till then. So far, we have had weekly 'The God who speaks' Bible Study (and I should like that to continue and become more extensive) and my own 'Food for the Journey' daily reflections, which began last March. Many people have been helped by the reflections, whether by regular or occasional study, or just the reassurance of being included in a mail-list. We are doing our very best in this parish to bring the Bible to the forefront of our lives.

CHILDREN CELEBRATE

Our Team have produced resources, which are available as booklets and kits at the back of St Mary's, to collect when the Church is open. See also the website www.hundredcatholicparish.org.uk

Resources for 15th November

Download accompanying [illustration](#).

[Thirty-third Sunday in Ordinary Time](#)

www.cafod.org.uk/childrensliturgy

Children's liturgy general guidelines [\(doc, 59kb\)](#)

GIVING

To help with supplying the Didcot Foodbank, contact Veronica Paget: veronicapaget@hotmail.com or leave suitable food outside her front door. Jackymattam@btinternet.com needs help with the poor locally.

She needs warm clothes for the following: Boys age 3-7 years, boy age 6-9 months, girl 9-18 months, girl age 2 years, girl age 6 years, girls age 2-5 years, but no storage space for other ages at present.

MARY'S MEALS

Your help is sought with the school project to feed children in an African school. See also St Amand's Facebook page for details.

TO GIVE

TO OUR PARISH BY REGULAR STANDING ORDER OR OCCASIONAL GIFT

BANK DETAILS: PRCDTR East Hendred, St Mary

Sort Code: 309304 Account Number: 00877183

To arrange Gift Aid, contact : hendred@portsmouthdiocese.org.uk

CONTACT DETAILS

Fr Andrew is 01235 835038 or 07976 437979

aburnham@portsmouthdiocese.org.uk

FOOD FOR THE JOURNEY

16th – 20th November 2020

Week 33[ii]

ST EDMUND OF ABINGDON, Bishop

Joint-Principal Patron of the Diocese

Monday 16th November

St Edmund (c1175-1240) was born in Abingdon and studied in Oxford and Paris. He became treasurer at Salisbury and then in 1233 Archbishop of Canterbury. With the help of St Richard of Chichester and others he was a great reformer of ecclesiastical discipline and the rights of the Church. He died at Soisy in France, *en route* to Rome, and was buried at Pontigny. Colleges in Oxford and Cambridge were founded in his name.

Collect

O GOD, by whose grace the Bishop Saint Edmund of Abingdon was vigilant over integrity in public office and discipline in religious life: grant, we pray, through his intercession, that same spirit of constancy to your Church, that she may be fearless in promoting justice. 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.

Reading

Rev 1:1-4; 2:1-5

Introduction and Salutation and the Message to Ephesus

1 The revelation of Jesus Christ, which God gave him to show to his servants what must soon take place; and he made it known by sending his angel to his servant John, **2** who bore witness to the word of God and to the testimony of Jesus Christ, even to all that he saw. **3** Blessed is he who reads aloud the words of the prophecy, and blessed are those who hear, and who keep what is written therein; for the time is near.

4 John to the seven churches that are in Asia:

Grace to you and peace from him who is and who was and who is to come, and from the seven spirits who are before his throne.....

2 To the angel of the church in Ephesus write: 'The words of him who holds the seven stars in his right hand, who walks among the seven golden lampstands.

2 ^I know your works, your toil and your patient endurance, and how you cannot bear evil men but have tested those who call themselves apostles but are not, and found them to be false; **3** I know you are enduring patiently and bearing up for my name's sake, and you have not grown weary. **4** But I have this against you, that you have abandoned the love you had at first. **5** Remember then from what you have fallen, repent and do the works you did at first. If not, I will come to you and remove your lampstand from its place, unless you repent.

Reflection

THE APOCALYPSE – or 'The Revelation to St John' – was granted to a prophet called John, who was neither St John the Son of Zebedee nor the author of the Gospel and Epistles of St John. He is therefore often referred to as 'St John the Divine'. The book, the last in the New Testament, seems to date from the 90s. The Emperor Domitian died in AD96 and he notoriously persecuted Christians. It has been suggested that the Number of the Beast, 666, which figures in the Book (13:18), expressed in Roman Numerals as DCLXVI, stood for Domitian, an absolute dictator and a notorious persecutor of Christians. Expressed in Roman numerals, 666 is DCLXVI— *Domitius Caesar Legatos Xti Violenter Interfecit*—which translates as 'The Emperor Domitian violently killed the ambassadors of

Christ.’ Today’s reading gives us the introduction and the first of seven messages to the various churches in the western part of Asia Minor. Though the whole book appears to us surreal and strange, it is very much what one expects from visionary apocalyptic literature, common at the time. There are also traces of this literature in the Gospels (Mt 24:1-35; Mk 13:1-31; Lk 21:1-33). We appear to be looking ahead to some future End-Time but the writing is often occasioned by, and reflective of, what was seen as the turmoil of the present. The apocalyptic sensitivity of the Early Church was heightened by the devastation of Jerusalem and destruction of the Temple in AD 70. The major misunderstanding of the book is when interpreters look to the future for the meaning of what is prophesied. Rather we should learn what was happening at the time and how it is to be understood, and then how it might assist us interpret our own times.

Writing to each of the seven churches, the prophet is addressing them with the words of Christ, variously described. Each message continues with a characterisation of the church, the good things and the bad things, as appropriate. What follows is admonition and encouragement to do better. The short messages each end with a promise to those who prevail in the struggle.

Tuesday 17th November

(St Hugh of Lincoln, Religious, Bishop)

ST HUGH (c1140-1200) was born at Avalon in Burgundy and was first an Augustinian Canon and then a member of the Carthusians. After ten years at La Grande Chartreuse, he came to Witham in Somerset to take charge of the new Charterhouse there. In 1186 he reluctantly became Bishop of Lincoln. He died at his residence in Lincoln’s Inn, London in 1200. His symbol is a swan because of his affinity to the swan of Stowe which guarded him as he slept.

Collect

O GOD, who gave the Bishop Saint Hugh of Lincoln the grace of relying on you alone and endowed him with a wise and cheerful boldness to commend to earthly rulers the merits of a holy life: grant us, we pray, that, with him as our advocate, we may have good cause for the hope that is in us. 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.

Reading

Rev 3:1-6, 14-22

The Message to Sardis and the Message to Laodicea

3 'And to the angel of the church in Sardis write: 'The words of him who has the seven spirits of God and the seven stars.

"I know your works; you have the name of being alive, and you are dead. ²Awake, and strengthen what remains and is on the point of death, for I have not found your works perfect in the sight of my God. ³Remember then what you received and heard; keep that, and repent. If you will not awake, I will come like a thief, and you will not know at what hour I will come upon you. ⁴Yet you have still a few names in Sardis, people who have not soiled their garments; and they shall walk with me in white, for they are worthy. ⁵He who conquers shall be clad thus in white garments, and I will not blot his name out of the book of life; I will confess his name before my Father and before his angels. ⁶He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches.'.....

14 'And to the angel of the church in La-odice'a write: 'The words of the Amen, the faithful and true witness, the beginning of God's creation.

15 ^I know your works: you are neither cold nor hot. Would that you were cold or hot! **16** So, because you are lukewarm, and neither cold nor hot, I will spew you out of my mouth. **17** For you say, I am rich, I have prospered, and I need nothing; not knowing that you are wretched, pitiable, poor, blind, and naked. **18** Therefore I counsel you to buy from me gold refined by fire, that you may be rich, and white garments to clothe you and to keep the shame of your nakedness from being seen, and salve to anoint your eyes, that you may see. **19** Those whom I love, I reprove and chasten; so be zealous and repent. **20** Behold, I stand at the door and knock; if any one hears my voice and opens the door, I will come in to him and eat with him,

and he with me. ²¹ He who conquers, I will grant him to sit with me on my throne, as I myself conquered and sat down with my Father on his throne. ²² He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches.”

Reflection

TODAY we get to hear the messages to two more of the seven churches. Yesterday it was the message to the Church in Ephesus. Today it is messages five and seven, to Sardis and Laodicea. We have passed over messages two, three, and four, to Smyrna, Pergamon, and Thyatira, and we have missed out message six, to Philadelphia. In each message there are local and topical references. For example, the reference in the message to Sardis about the Lord coming like a thief at an unexpected hour not only has biblical resonances (Mt 24:43; 1 Thess 5:2) but also refers to the difficulties of the city, twice captured by surprise. Similarly the Laodiceans, whose lukewarmness means that they will be spewed out, calls to mind the very different temperatures in the hot springs at nearby Hierapolis and the cold drinking water of Colossae. Many of the details of the seven messages are now lost to us but what is certainly of abiding importance is the need to watch eagerly for the coming of the Kingdom and to be aflame with hope and zeal.

Wednesday 18th November

(The Dedication of the basilicas of Saints Peter and Paul, Apostles)



[AB1]

LAST week (9th November) we celebrated the dedication of the Archbasilica of St John Lateran. Today we remember two other basilicas, that of St Peter, on the Vatican Hill, built above the tomb of the first Pope, and that of St Paul 'outside the Walls', built above the tomb of St Paul.

Collect

DEFEND your Church, O Lord, by the protection of the holy Apostles, that, as she received from them the beginnings of her knowledge of things divine, so through them she may receive, even to the end of the world, an increase in heavenly grace. 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.



St Peter's Basilica

Reading

Rev 4:1-11

The Heavenly Worship

4 After this I looked, and behold, in heaven an open door! And the first voice, which I had heard speaking to me like a trumpet, said, 'Come up hither, and I will show you what must take place after this.' **2** At once I was in the Spirit, and behold, a throne stood in heaven, with one seated on the throne! **3** And he who sat there appeared like jasper and carnelian, and round the throne was a rainbow that looked like an emerald. **4** Round the throne were twenty-four thrones, and seated on the thrones were twenty-four elders, clad in white garments, with golden crowns upon their heads. **5** From the throne issue flashes of lightning, and voices and peals of thunder, and before the throne burn seven torches of fire, which are the seven spirits of God; **6** and before the throne there is as it were a sea of glass, like crystal.

And round the throne, on each side of the throne, are four living creatures, full of eyes in front and behind: ⁷ the first living creature like a lion, the second living creature like an ox, the third living creature with the face of a man, and the fourth living creature like a flying eagle. ⁸ And the four living creatures, each of them with six wings, are full of eyes all round and within, and day and night they never cease to sing,

'Holy, holy, holy, is the Lord God Almighty,
who was and is and is to come!'

⁹ And whenever the living creatures give glory and honour and thanks to him who is seated on the throne, who lives for ever and ever, ¹⁰ the twenty-four elders fall down before him who is seated on the throne and worship him who lives for ever and ever; they cast their crowns before the throne, singing,

¹¹ 'Worthy are you, our Lord and God,
to receive glory and honour and power,
for you created all things,
and by your they existed and were created.'



Basilica of St Paul's Without Walls

Reflection

THE DESCRIPTION of the heavenly worship in Revelation 4 fits well with our commemoration today of the Basilicas of St Peter and St Paul in Rome. This scripture passage is often thought to be a looking forward imaginatively to what things will be like when we are finally gathered into the presence of God. It has also been suggested that it reflects the experience of worship in the Early Church. Whichever of these – either, neither, or both – we glimpse the heavenly court in session, with imagery drawn from the Book of Ezekiel and the Prophet Isaiah. Instead of mythical figures, precious gems are used to describe the Lord God sitting upon his throne. Lightning and the four living creatures echo the vision of the cherubim in Ezek 1:4-13 and 10:18-22. The ‘Holy, holy, holy’ reminds us not only of the Sanctus at Mass but also of Isaiah’s vision (Is 6:3). The additional words, ‘who was and is and is to come!’, declare the eternal glory of God, resounding throughout creation, and transcending the trials and tribulations of the present. The seven churches to which St John the Divine has written need to withstand the transitoriness of their embattled circumstances and look beyond to eternity. An interesting feature of the passage is the number twenty-four, two groups of twelve. This number of elders does not happen outside the Book of Revelation and we should presume, perhaps, that what the prophet has in mind are twelve representatives of the old Israel, the Old Covenant, the heads of tribes, and twelve of the new Israel, the New Covenant, the apostles.

Thursday 19th November *(Week 33[ii])*

Collect for Week 33

GRANT us, we pray, O Lord our God, the constant gladness of being devoted to you, for it is full and lasting happiness to serve with constancy the author of all that is good. 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.

Reading

Rev 5:1-10

The Scroll and the Lamb

5 And I saw in the right hand of him who was seated on the throne a scroll written within and on the back sealed with seven seals; **2** and I saw a strong angel proclaiming with a loud voice, 'Who is worthy to open the scroll and break its seals?' **3** And no one in heaven or on earth or under the earth was able to open the scroll or to look into it, **4** and I wept much that no one was found worthy to open the scroll or to look into it. **5** Then one of the elders said to me, 'Weep not; behold, the Lion of the tribe of Judah, the Root of David, has conquered, so that he can open the scroll and its seven seals.'

6 And between the throne and the four living creatures and among the elders, I saw a Lamb standing, as though it had been slain, with seven horns and with seven eyes, which are the seven spirits of God sent out into all the earth; **7** and he went and took the scroll from the right hand of him who was seated on the throne. **8** And when he had taken the scroll, the four living creatures and the twenty-four elders fell down before the Lamb, each holding a harp, and with golden bowls full of incense, which are the prayers of the saints; **9** and they sang a new song, saying,

'Worthy are you to take the scroll and to open its seals,
for you were slain and by your blood ransomed men for God
from every tribe and tongue and people and nation,
10 and have made them a kingdom and priests to our God,
and they shall reign on earth.'

Reflection

YESTERDAY we had a vision of the Heavenly Worship. Today we have a complementary vision of the Lamb. The prophet is told to see the Lion of Judah (see Gen 49:9-10) and the Root of David (see Is 11:1-10; Rom 15:2) who has conquered and has dominion over the nations, and instead sees the Lamb. The image of the Lamb is possibly derived from the morning and evening temple sacrifices (Ex 29:38-42; Num 28:3-8) or from the Passover Lamb (Ex 12:1-27; Lev 23:5-6) or from the Suffering Servant (Is 53:7). These striking images tumble over one another as do the sevens as they accumulate: seven seals, seven horns, seven eyes, seven spirits of

God sent out into the world. In the vision of the Heavenly Worship, God is hymned as the Creator: the scroll is his, it is in his right hand. We met this scroll first in Ezek 2:8ff. The writing is on both sides of the scroll: nothing can be added to God's Providential plan. Like wills in the Roman world, the scroll for security's sake has seven seals on the scroll. In the vision of the Lamb, God the Son is hymned as the Redeemer. He alone is worthy to take the scroll and, when he does so, the four living creatures and the twenty-four elders – that is, the heavenly court – fall down in worship, with harps in their hand and golden bowls of incense. Their worship is our worship because the incense is the prayer of the saints – that is, the prayer of faithful Christians. The apocalyptic language takes a while to unpack and is ultimately impossible fully to comprehend but points to the otherness of God, his mystery and his majesty.

Friday 20th November (*Week 33[ii]*)

Reading

Rev 10:8-11

The Open Scroll

⁸ Then the voice which I had heard from heaven spoke to me again, saying, 'Go, take the scroll which is open in the hand of the angel who is standing on the sea and on the land.' ⁹ So I went to the angel and told him to give me the little scroll; and he said to me, 'Take it and eat; it will be bitter to your stomach, but sweet as honey in your mouth.' ¹⁰ And I took the little scroll from the hand of the angel and ate it; it was sweet as honey in my mouth, but when I had eaten it my stomach was made bitter. ¹¹ And I was told, 'You must again prophesy about many peoples and nations and tongues and kings.'

Reflection

JOHN the Divine is no longer in heaven but on earth. He is now being commissioned to transmit a bitter-sweet message. Drawing on imagery from the prophet Ezekiel (3:1-3) the mighty angel in this passage bids John eat the little scroll. This 'mighty angel' appears earlier in the Bible (Dan 4:13-14) and later in the Book of Revelation (10:1; 18:21): he is portrayed

as vast, astride sea and land. The scroll too is new. It is a little scroll this time, and an open scroll, so that the message is plain. The Gospel is bitter-sweet because it inaugurates a time of testing and trial as well as a time of beatitude and salvation. The Gospel message is to be proclaimed neither amidst, nor against, 'peoples and nations and tongues and kings' but with a view to them severally. We can see, for example, who the kings are meant to be when, later in the book, we hear of 'seven kings' (17:10) and 'ten kings' (17:12). The 'seven' are Roman Emperors – though we cannot be quite sure which of the fourteen Roman Emperors are being indicated – and the 'ten kings' are in the future.
