

SERMON 2A 2026.

My friends we are now back in the ordinary time of the year, today being the 2nd ordinary Sunday. Our celebration of Xmas is over and all the feasts that follow of the Epiphany and the baptism of Jesus that we celebrated last Sunday. It is clear that it is ordinary time from the green vestment I am wearing and the green veil on the tabernacle and on this lectern, green being the colour of ordinary time. We will be celebrating ordinary time up until the beginning of Lent, with Ash Wednesday this year being on 18th February, quite a way away, with Easter Sunday being on 5th April. But no Sunday is ever really ordinary, no celebration of the mass can be ordinary, and even this week there are some special days and events making this Sunday not ordinary but special. For a starter we are beginning today the week of prayer for Christian unity, every year from 18th - 25th January is the special week of prayer, when we pray for ever greater unity between all those who believe in Jesus as their lord and Saviour. It begins this Wednesday, and builds up to the feast of the conversion of St. Paul next Sunday, when we remember how that great apostle and missionary became a Christian with his conversion on the road to Damascus. There will be lunchtime services at 12noon in various churches. The main service is on Saturday at St. Mary's priory at 2pm.

Today is also the day of our annual white flower appeal, when we pray for and contribute to the work of Pro life, especially the work of the society for the protection of the unborn child, to pray that unborn will be cherished and respected. SPUC as well as asking us for our donations today to help fund their work, are asking us to continue to lobby our political representatives in both the UK and Welsh Parliaments to oppose the liberalisation of abortion and the introduction of assisted suicide. As you leave Church today postcards from SPUC will be handed out, which you can use to request further info from SPUC on their campaigns.

Also on the same subject, Archbishop Mark and Bishop Brignall of Wrexham have issued a letter on assisted suicide asking us to continue our efforts to oppose assisted suicide legislation in the Senedd, the Welsh assembly, info on this in the newsletter and the full text in the parish website.

Also this Sunday is the annual peace Sunday, when we are all asked to pray for the gift of peace in our world, and to pray especially for the work of the catholic peace movement – “Pax Christi.” Praying for peace and indeed praying for unity are off course intentions we should always have in our prayers, but today we are reminded of how important they are, both peace and unity in our lives and families, the importance of maintaining good strong relationships in our families and community and never letting any pride or greed or fear cause division and anger and threatening that peace or unity. And also to pray for peace and unity in our world, as Pope Leo has asked us to do, to pray for peace and unity between and within divided nations and communities, so we should pray especially today for peace in Ukraine.

It can be very troubling nowadays reading the papers or watching the television news and reading and seeing all the terrible things going on in our world, terrible acts of violence committed, often done in the name of God, by extremists and politicians and secular leaders who believe they are doing Gods will or pretend to; people who proclaim faith in God and yet do all they can to destroy peace and unity. In the face of this we must not despair but resort to prayer, to pray to Our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, that the spirit of peace will descend upon us, our families and our world, helping to build peace. Fortunately we have just listened to a lovely Gospel reading to inspire us in this way. We heard from St. Johns Gospel about the immediate aftermath of the baptism of Jesus by John the Baptist. John gives witness to Jesus and says he is the “Lamb of God.” the lamb of God who takes away the sins of the world. This was a lovely way to describe Jesus, reminding us that the fate of this world is not in our hands, but in the hands of Jesus, all we need do is trust in him, have faith and not despair. Calling Jesus the Lamb of God or the Agnus Dei reminds us that Jesus offered his life as a sacrifice for all mankind, that just as those of the Jewish faith would offer actual lambs as sacrifices to God in the temple in Jerusalem as a way of seeking forgiveness for their sins, so we believe Jesus is that ultimate Lamb of sacrifice who freely offers himself as a sacrifice for us and the world, so that

we may be at peace and be united. So special is that title, that we repeat it in very mass, we say or sing three times just before receiving communion, calling on Jesus, the Lamb of God, to have mercy on us and to grant us peace. Jesus as Gods son, as the lamb of God is our hope and out strength, in his name can pray with confidence for peace and unity, as we heard from the Prophet Isaiah in our 1st reading, he, the Saviour, will be the light of the nations, he will save all people. And appropriately today from St. Paul, as we prepare to celebrate his conversion next Saturday, reminding the people of Corinth in his letter that Jesus is the saviour of all peoples, not just the Jews but everyone, and may Jesus and his Father send them grace and peace.

Let us echo that prayer today on this peace Sunday and in this week of prayer for unity, may God the Father, Our Lord and Saviour Jesus, the very lamb of God, who gave his life for us as a sacrifice, send us grace and peace, upon this so often troubled and divided world. We may feel helpless in the face of all the division and violence around us and in the world, but let us persevere in faith and prayer, trusting that what may be beyond our efforts, the mission of building true peace and unity, is most certainly not beyond the efforts of God and his loving Son, who offered his very life for us and for everyone in this world.