

3) In the end PRAYER is going to be absolutely necessary in this journey. There is no other way and St Teresa said that if anyone tells you there is another way, then they are a liar.

The most powerful prayer we could call the prayer of transformation – it goes by many names but this phrase emphasises its purpose. It is to sit quietly and still in a comfortable - but not too comfortable - position in the presence of God. To silently listen without paying any attention to our images or thoughts that may come to us. Saying a simply phrase or word helps. Then persevering in this prayer, being simply disposed to whatever God wishes to do within us.

The difficulty is not here in technique which is very simple but in perseverance because everything will hasten to tell us that we are wasting out time and that there are many more important things to be done.

Jesus is begging us to allow his life to reign in our souls, He wants to change us from being unhealthy to being healthy, from being weak to being strong, from being so changeable and lacking in firm resolutions to being unmoveable. But the one necessary thing is to rid ourselves of our self-will. Go back to Eden and see how glorious Adam and Eve were before the fall. They were truly like the Elves light bearers.

All that is needed is a firm purpose of amendment and the desire to enter the Kingdom.

Let us ask Mary, Queen of the Rosary, who bore the Light of the World to help us in our journey to becoming humble and prayerful people who have complete trust that like Mary, God can accomplish in us all that He has promised.



The light of Galadriel who in the Lord of the Rings was an image of Mary who herself shaped Tolkien by her beauty.



The Tax Collector and the Pharisee

From the Parish Priest's Desk.....

Dear Faithful,

It is good to be back in the parish after my fortnight away. It always reminds me how important it is to take time just to step back from the busyness of parish life so as to be able to keep ones perspective fresh. Holidays in that sense are of great importance. But we should also try to build into our daily lives times when we can hear the Lord's call to go up the mountain to be alone with him.

It was especially relaxing because the parish is beginning to take shape with Deacon Martyn as our parish administrator and chairman of the PPC, we have a body to help move us forward in mission. We also have help now with Edward Kendall who has been appointed to help ours and the surrounding parishes in taking the burden of administration off the priests' shoulders.

We are looking towards the First Sunday of Advent to commence our journey towards our bicentenary in October, 2025. It is good to have a goal in our lives; but not only individual goals but also, a goal for our parish. Jesus is clear that at the final judgement it will become clear what role countries, towns, parishes, schools etc had in the salvation of souls.

We need to keep refreshing in our minds, that Bishop Patrick has set down the three crucial stages: to encounter the Lord; to then become his disciples and thirdly, to then become disciples that spread the gospel – missionary disciples. It could be summed up in Bishop Patrick's episcopal motto: to seek the face of Christ.



During my time away, I once again started to read The Lord of the Rings. I find it a refreshing, challenging but encouraging book full of Catholic sentiment. Like the Hobbit, much of the interest and involvement that we have with the book comes from it being a journey, an adventure – a journey that has danger, tragedy, humour, camaraderie, patience and the simple battle of Good versus Evil.

It is thus a loose parallel (explicit in the Book of Exodus) with the spiritual life. To pick out just a few key points:

1) The necessity for Fellowship on the journey. It is much easier to journey in a group than alone. Jesus sends out his disciples two by two. We all know this regarding our family and friends but we can often forget how important it is to meet to pray together.



2) Our journey is a real battle. The stakes are the highest – the salvation of our souls. In the Lord of the Rings, Frodo and Sam carry in their quest, the whole future of Middle Earth. St Paul reminds us that our battle is not against flesh and blood but against powers and principalities (Eph. 6:12). Evil is real, the demons are real and they seek our destruction so we need the right weapons: prayer and the sacraments.

3) The importance of Humility. The hobbits succeed because at heart they are a humble people, not warlike but prepared to fight if needs be. The gospel today is very clear that only those who are humble are going to be in a right relationship with God. In the most influential rule ever written, the Rule of St Benedict, the chapter of Humility and the twelve steps are the focus of the whole Rule and that simply reflects the gospel. To paraphrase Fr John Main – the essential context of humility lies in the fundamental relationship that we have towards God – He is Creator and we are creature. Just as the Trinity is relationship so too discovering our true personhood lies in discovering and living out this relationship.

*“True humility is not thinking less of yourself,
it’s thinking of yourself less.” C.S. Lewis*

Humility has the great power to transform us – or rather – it has the power to allow God to transform us because it opens us up to the power of grace to change our hearts and mind. It is also a cure for stress and anxiety because once we know that our true worth lies in recognising our worthlessness without God, all is possible. In day 5 of the Surrender Novena, Fr Dolindo tells us that what trouble us and wounds us is our reason, our thoughts, our desire to deal with whatever is troubling us. The Ring of Power eats away at its possessor, but once free of it, we experience true freedom.



One of the great secrets to achieve humility – and as the spiritual writers tell us – is the purification of our thoughts and by this purification, to purify our self-will. All evil comes from self-will and self-will starts in our thoughts – look at Adam and Eve to see how this plays out.

How do we purify our thoughts?

1. We stop thinking of the “Whys and the Hows”, we stop using our reason – in other words we stop trying to look at everything from our perspective. God’s most powerful works come from nothing – He created the world out of nothing. Once we clear out of the way and leave God a free hand, he can then start to mould us so that we acquire a Divine Reason, a Divine way of looking at things (this after all is the Gift of Wisdom.) It is very, very useful to stand back and look at the hard reality of our thoughts – what would have transformed the Pharisee in the Gospel would have been if he had simply realised that his whole life was self – centred and self-focused. He was not really concerned with God, only himself.

2. This purification, however, means that we have also to become detached from things and creatures since it is these that take up so much of our preoccupation. We worry about things in this life that are so often worthless in the long run – trinkets, justifying ourselves before man and forget the one necessary thing. (Cf Lk 10:42) Mary sat at the feet of Jesus listening, learning, being transformed simply by being in his company. It is hard to “unmake” ourselves, to rid ourselves of all that is not God, but it is essential if we are to gain heaven.

