

2<sup>nd</sup> Sunday (B)

14<sup>th</sup> January 2024

‘Remain with Him’

1Sam 3: *Samuel was lying in the sanctuary of the Lord*  
*Lord, I come to do your will*

Ps 39: *Here I am O*

1Cor 6: *the body is not meant for fornication*

Jn 1: 35–42: *“you are to be called ‘Cephas,’ meaning ‘Rock.’ ”*

University terms can so easily run away with us. University *years* too! Blink, and another term, another year, has passed; all of sudden we’re facing the end of university with all the awesome decisions that that brings! I mean, surely it’s only *January*, isn’t it? — plenty of this academic year to run? But, let’s face it, just one month and it’ll be mid-February, the half-way point of the year (at least), and for 2<sup>nd</sup> year degree (3-yr) students that’s the half-way point of your undergrad life. Incredible! And for final-year students, of course, the end of university beckons. What should we do? How can we best use these precious, *irreplaceably precious*, years? Please God, not in scrolling through cat videos on YouTube, or worse ... No, the Lord has a far better programme for you, to lay the foundations of a good and profitable life. “*What do you want?*” He asks you. It’s the 10<sup>th</sup> hour, time seems to be slipping away and running out. But there *is* enough time.

“Where do You live?” we blurt out instinctively. “Come and see,” He replies — a simple but profoundly hospitable, no-questions-asked invitation to draw close to Him, to come to stay with Him the rest of that day ... *the rest of life*. So, I urge you to make new and greater use of Newman House this term, to *throw yourselves into it*, into everything we have to offer as a community built on Jesus Christ, before the term is over, the year is almost out, and it’s too late. But more of that later. Let’s go back a step ...

This year we also have *just a few weeks* between the Christmas season and the season of Lent. Ash Wednesday will be quite early, on 14<sup>th</sup> February — *Valentine’s Day* ... unfortunately for some! So we have a mere 5 Sundays in Ordinary Time between now and then, to begin hearing of the early part of Our Lord’s ministry in the 1<sup>st</sup> chapter of St Mark’s Gospel, and this weekend, as an introduction to that, some verses from the first chapter of St John.

In these few verses, we learn *so much* about the enormous impact Jesus had within such a short while on those who encountered Him. At their very first meeting,

Andrew and the other unnamed one of John the Baptist's disciples remain with Jesus "*for the rest of that day.*" There is obviously something immediately engaging about Our Lord that these early apostles cannot help but be grabbed by. Jesus goes from being called by Andrew, at first, '**Rabbi**' ('teacher'), and then by the next day, '**Messiah**' (that is, the 'Christ'). This is a huge claim by Andrew, and yet he is convinced of it, and fetches his brother Simon (Peter) to meet Our Lord, too, on that very basis: "*We have found the Messiah!*" But it is by John the Baptist that He is referred to by a higher title still: "**Lamb of God,**" indicating that Jesus is to be the sacrificial lamb in a new covenant with God, a new Passover. That title for Jesus, of course, we acknowledge in each and every celebration of the Holy Mass, as we ourselves gaze on Jesus before Communion: "Behold, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sins of the world."

As we listen to the Gospel, and as we hear what impact Our Lord had in those first days, we need to let Him gaze on us in that same way as He did Peter: loving him,

... seeing his gifts, ... renaming him, ... and giving him a mission. That attentive gaze of Jesus is one which reaches straight in to Peter's heart, and reaches in to our heart too. Have we let that loving attention of Jesus be acknowledged in our lives, or have we averted our gaze? Have we given Jesus the time and space to excite in us a real Passion for our faith? If we have really let Jesus speak to our hearts, then we would want to spend more time with Him. We would want to, as the Gospel said, "*remain with Him the rest of that day*" — or, as Samuel so vividly was in the first reading, be constantly spending time with the Lord in the sanctuary: residing, ... resting, ... *being*. 'Remaining with the Lord,' constantly spending time with Him, can be done at crucial times in the sanctuary of a Church, where is the most Sacred Presence in His Tabernacle, His 'tent,' His dwelling place. And it also be done at other times in the sanctuary of one's private prayer, the silence of one's soul, *heart to heart* with the Lord. Just let's be sure that we make our way into both those places of prayer, often, to feel that gaze of the divine Jesus loving us.

We need to ask ourselves, then: are we allowing the Lord to draw us to Himself in an increasingly close way? Do we allow Him access to our hearts and minds every day, several times a day? As we start this year, 2024 — and as we enter this new term, however far we are through our degree — we want to make sure that we give Him the *greatest chance* of coming close to us. He is true God, made true man ... but He does not force Himself on us. He asks us to bring ourselves to Him, bodily, whether in the silence of prayer, or physically, into the Chapel to be with Him in His real presence at Mass and in the Tabernacle. Just as Andrew, Simon, and the other unnamed disciple made their way at His sublime invitation to be with Jesus where He dwelt, so we need to make our way into that place of prayer, often. We cannot expect the Lord to do all the running. He constantly invites us, calls to our hearts, draws us by His love and goodness. But *He can't make us* be with Him. He desires it so much, but He will not force it. He wants us to love Him, come to Him, remain the rest of that day — the rest of our lives — with Him.

So, as 2024 begins, maybe we have been looking at some New Year's resolutions: where does prayer and faith come in to those resolutions for living a better life? The most obvious way is to ensure that we spend some time each and every day with the Lord. The most perfect way, of course, is to strive to be at Mass. If we are not making it to **Sunday Mass** each and every Sunday, then *that* is the greatest priority, without question: to be here in the presence of the Lord Jesus, hearing His Word, kneeling and adoring Him in the Holy Eucharist, receiving Him devoutly, if we are able, in Holy Communion. This is the priority, and to make that absolute commitment to 100% attendance at Sunday Mass is a *must* for every Catholic. But for those for whom Sunday Mass is already a given, I would say: work now towards a *weekday* attendance at Mass. Our Lord is here in Mass, really and truly present, every single day. If you are at one of the universities in this vicinity, then try to come once or twice a week to **weekday Mass** (5.30pm), and make that offering of your time to Jesus, who will reward you abundantly. Of course, the ideal would be to work towards coming *daily* if you are able! He made the ultimate sacrifice on the Cross, the Lamb of God slain for our sins: may we truly offer a sacrifice of thanksgiving in devotion to Him at Mass.

This term too, as a resolution, we should seek a renewal with Jesus in that sanctuary that is ‘remaining with Him’ in our innermost heart: our **daily & personal prayer**. Without hesitation I can recommend to you revitalizing your prayer life through the forthcoming ‘**Week of Guided Prayer**,’ starting a fortnight today. Some of you I know have done this before, and I’m sure you’d want to urge others to do it. Last year we had over 70 participants, a record! Let’s see if we can break that record again, shall we? It’s 5 days of 30 mins/day with a prayer guide; an *unmissable* chance to seize what Newman House has to offer you at a crucial point in your Christian life! Many times of Adoration are offered to you, here in chapel, too, to abide with Jesus in quiet peacefulness: Sunday and Tuesday evenings and alternate Thursday Holy Hrs; don’t turn down these ideal times to pray and be close to Jesus.

In fact, when you get your newsletter today, what you’ll find is that it’s a bumper number, a full A3 folded-and-stapled colour version, with all sorts of information & ideas for these first weeks of term, ways in which we invite you to participate in the vibrant life in Christ that we want for you. Yes, that includes Mass & prayer — as already mentioned — this is the beating heart of Christian living. But there’s much more

besides, and we’d want you, next, to **exercise your *intellect*** in the service of God. When Andrew & his companion spent “the rest of that day” with Jesus, no doubt they were full of questions for Him, asking, listening, pondering, accepting His divine Word of authority, working it out. Please look at the Newsletter and see all the chances to discuss and grow in faith that are offered this term: Wednesday *Sycamore*; Tuesday courses; Thursday 6pm short talks; Sunday *Love & Relationships* workshops; various CathSocs. And then, to complete all this, there are events that are just there to give you time to make friends, eat, drink, relax and enjoy being a happy part of this community that is built on Jesus. **Meals and socials** — don’t miss out on those either! They’re all here for you; they’re all listed for you!

“*You know, surely, that your bodies are members making up the body of Christ; anyone who is joined to the Lord is one spirit with Him,*” said St Paul to us today: let’s take this seriously; let’s live with Him, and in happy, holy communion with one another at Newman House, making it ever more a vibrant place where we live life to the full in Jesus, wasting no time, but giving it all to His glory.