



BLACKFRIARS SUNDAY, 11 AUGUST, 2024

CAMBRIDGE

XIX Sunday of Ordinary Time / X Post Oct. Trin.

TIMES OF THE LITURGY

Sunday - 7.45am - Lauds | 8.15am - Low Mass | 9.15am - Dominican Rite Mass (Extraordinary Form) | 11am - Sung Conventual Mass | 6pm - Low Mass | 7pm - Vespers.

Monday - Friday - 7am - Lauds | 7.30am - Conventual Mass | 6.15pm - Devotions and Meditation | 6.30pm - Vespers. [N.B. First Fridays of the month, Vespers in the presence of the Blessed Sacrament with a period of Adoration from 6.15pm.]

Saturday - 9am - Lauds | 9.30am - Conventual Mass | 4.30-6pm - Confessions | 6.15pm - Sung Litany of the Blessed Virgin Mary | 6.30pm - Vespers.

THIS WEEK

Sun 11 **SUNDAY XVIII**

Mon 12 *feria*

Tue 13 *feria*

Wed 14 St Maximilian Kolbe

Thu 15 **THE ASSUMPTION**

Fri 16 *feria*

Sat 17 S. Hyacinth

Sun 18 **SUNDAY XX**



THE ASSUMPTION

HOLY DAY OF OBLIGATION

7.30am Sung Conventual Mass | 7.30pm Dominican Rite

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ENGLAND

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EVOLUTION, CATHOLICISM, & THE UNITY OF TRUTH



Professor David Ronderos
Monday, 12 August, 7.30pm in the Old Library

The Medjugorje Apostolate Annual Pilgrimage to Walsingham will take place on Bank Holiday Monday 26 August 2024. The day will begin at 1.15pm with a talk by Fr Zvonimir Pavičić OFM followed by Mass at 3.45pm.

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What is Knowing? On Divine, Human, and Artificial Intelligence, 23-26 August 2024. In partnership with CEPHAS, a residential course exploring the benefits and challenges posed by Artificial Intelligence with Saint Thomas Aquinas. Limited spaces available:

<https://christianheritagecentre.com/events/divine-human-artificial-intelligence/>

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The March for Life UK will take place in London on Saturday 7th September 2024. There are many attempts at the moment to further liberalise abortion in the UK and to silence those offering any alternative viewpoint, whether that's 'pills by post' abortions, 'decriminalisation', buffer zones or censorship on pro-life students at universities. The dangers of these situations are being highlighted by the theme for this year's March for Life which is 'Abortion isn't Healthcare'. Join thousands at this family-friendly event. Find out more at www.marchforlife.co.uk. If you are interested in attending please contact the diocesan Pro Life Rep, Katy Torcat, for local travel information from our Diocese: katytorcat@gmail.com.

SPORT IN THE BIBLE

Neither in the Old or the New testaments do we find any description of sporting activity. This is quite different from the world of Greek and Latin literature. In the Iliad, at the funeral of Patroclus, who has died in battle, his friend Achilles organises a series of sports, chariot races, boxing matches, a foot race and a contest where weights were thrown. We find no such descriptions in the bible, but this is not to say that there was no sport in the Hebrew world, nor to say that sport was banned in this world. There were reasons though why Jews might hesitate to join in sporting events. One was the lack of clothing in sport, to the extent of being naked. Another important reason was the association of sport with pagan religion. We can see this in Patroclus' funeral which was a religious rite. The sport was clearly not just an amusement after the funeral. It is part of the rite but this did not stop it being entertaining too. The same consideration is found in Greek drama which was both a spectacle and yet never without its religious roots. In fact, in the Greek city states, it is very hard to disentangle sport, drama, poetry, music and underlying this, the city states wish to gain prestige by the lavish nature of these spectacles. Drama and sport did not occur in any organised way in the Jewish world for this reason. Jews might not have been banned from watching such events, though it would likely enough be frowned upon, but they certainly did not organise them. Another function of sport in the Greek world was to organise gatherings of the people, not just from the locality but from all over the Greek speaking world. The great games, such as the Olympic games, attracted contestants from all over this world, not to mention spectators. Religious festivals also could act as magnets for visitors, and here the Jews would have understood the point. Many Jews would come to Jerusalem for the Passover, and this was another reason why they would not only see no

reason for great sporting events but could well have seen them as a blasphemous rival to the great religious event of the Passover. The temple was a sufficient attraction for them. Jewish worship contained music and poetry, as we can see in the Psalms, with their references to musical instruments of various kinds. Music and poetry were not contaminated by pagan religious practice because they were too universal and did not require the same organisation as sporting events. The religious meaning of music and poetry was suitable for the one true God, the God of Israel. Art was limited by the exclusion of images of living beings, but this did not stop the temple and priestly vestments being highly decorated.

Christianity was more open to sport, because the coming of Christ gave us freedom. The pagan implications of sport in the Greek world could be ignored. Though St Paul does not discuss the illicitness or not of sport, we can see what sort of attitude he would take from his discussion of the problem of eating food which had been sacrificed to idols. The temples would sell food which had been sacrificed to idols so some Christians felt that eating this food would be participating in idolatry. Paul in Chapter 8 of 1 Corinthians, argues that since Christians know that the pagan God do not exist (1 Corinthians 8:4); hence, as to the eating of food offered to idols, we know that "an idol has no real existence," and that "there is no God but one."

So it doesn't really matter if we eat such food, but St Paul is concerned with the weakness of some people's conscience, so that out of charity we might refrain from eating such meat. A similar argument could be applied to organised sport, so that its religious history in pagan life could be disregarded. St John Chrysostom, as Archbishop of Constantinople lived in that great city, compares Christ in one of his sermons to a skilled charioteer, who looks like he is about to fail but somehow wins the race. So sport did become acceptable in Christian circles, though the violence of Gladiator matches caused Christians to shun them. There is a famous passage in the Confessions of St Augustine where he describes how a friend, Alypius, was compelled to go to gladiatorial games, where he closed his eyes to avoid the spectacle until a particularly exciting moment aroused the crowd. He opened his eyes and was captured by the madness of violence. He would later be converted but Augustine's objection to the games was both the violence in itself, and the dangerous and corrupt emotions such an event would arouse in its spectators.

Having suggested that organised sport was problematic for Jews, it is surprising that there was one aspect of sport which appears as a metaphor in the Book of Wisdom and also in the New Testament. This is the aspect of competition or struggle, struggle being a sort of competition with oneself. This was very much part of the Greek mind, to quote from Walter Burkett's book, 'Greek religion'. 'The number of things which the Greeks could turn into a contest is astounding; sport and physical beauty, handicraft and art, song and dance, theatre and disputation.' This aspect seemed to impress the Jews. We find this reference to virtue, where the Book of Wisdom speaks of Jacob,

She protected him from his enemies and kept him safe from those who lay in wait for him; in his arduous contest she gave him the victory, so that he might learn that godliness is more powerful than anything (Wisdom, 10:12).

This is the language of the Greek contest, the agon, which required a judge. This was not as I have said a mentality exclusive to sport, but it was an attitude which appealed to the Jews, to be applied to their religious life. It became a metaphor for Christian life, as in the Letter to the Hebrew, 12:1, saying that we run the contest, (agon) which is set before us. Nietzsche said that the agonal spirit, that is the spirit of competition, was one of the driving forces of Greek life. So, it is surprising to see how this attitude could be allowed into Jewish and Christian thought, even though only as a metaphor. It does not mean that the early Christians were going to give themselves over to sport, since we also have metaphors from war to describe Christian life. Yet the commitment to a life of struggle was so central to how the early Christians saw their life that it was hard to avoid the language of sport. So St Paul says 2 Timothy 4:7 'I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith'. The word he uses for 'fight' is 'agon', once again, and the reference to running, shows that he is thinking of sport. Then there is this quotation.

Do you not know that in a race all the runners run, but only one receives the prize? So run that you may obtain it. Every athlete exercises self-control in all things. They do it to receive a perishable wreath, but we an imperishable. So I do not run aimlessly; I do not box as one beating the air. But I discipline my body and keep it under control, lest after preaching to others I myself should be disqualified (1 Corinthians, 9:24-10:1).

In this summer of sport, especially the Olympic games, we should feel free to enjoy sport but constantly remind ourselves that there is a more serious struggle which none of us can avoid, the struggle for the eternal crown.

THE PRIORY OF ST MICHAEL THE ARCHANGEL

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