

Our Lady of England, Storrington. **WHITE CANONS**

MAY 2011

This issue of **White Canons** announces our annual Novena of love and reparation to Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament and in honour of **St. Norbert** which begins on his Feast Day June 6th and continues until June 14th. St. Norbert founded our Order in 1121 in Prémontré in the North Eastern part of France. Since then the Order has grown into a world wide community of Abbeys, Priors and convents. The growth of our Order down through the centuries has been the result of centuries of prayer so we can testify to the power of prayer.

But what happens when our prayer is *not* answered? You, our loyal friends and benefactors, may have asked that question more than once. This issue contains part of a talk Fr. Martin Gosling o.praem. gave in Lent in Storrington's Anglican Church on "Unanswered Prayer".

We will include 'Priory News' in the next edition of 'White Canons'.

Introductory Novena Prayer

Almighty God,
Father of mercies,
and giver of all good gifts,
we come before you in honour
of your servant
and ask his help in our many
needs.

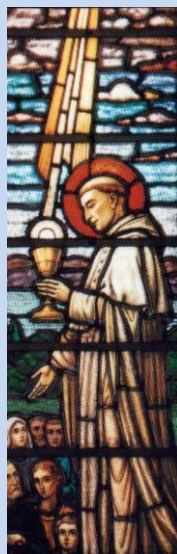
You promised those who asked
would receive and those
who knocked would have
doors open to them.

Hear the prayers of your
Church and grant
the requests we make
as we trust in your love for us.
Amen.

***We suggest at this point you
spend some quiet time in
prayer, offering to God the
intention for which you are
making the Novena.***

For St Norbert add

Loving God,
every day mirrors
the resurrection
of your Son,
Jesus Christ,
and the glory
to which
you call your
people.
Renew your
Church
in the spirit of
Norbert
so that peace,
reconciliation
and justice
may rule the
earth.
We ask this through
the same
Christ our Lord.
Amen.



UNANSWERED PRAYER

When I was asked to do this talk about “prayer guides” my mind went completely blank, because I don’t consider anyone in particular influences how or what I pray; but then with hindsight I suppose that if I had to make a choice it would probably be either King David because of the amount of psalms we use along the lane in the choir office, or it would be Jesus himself, though some might find that facetious! But I opted for unanswered prayer because that is one of the most frequent comments I get about prayer from others.

In talking of unanswered prayer, we immediately assume that prayer needs an answer, that it is a request, a petition.

Any Catholic of “a certain age” will have been brought up on “the penny catechism”, which is still available but now, due to inflation is £2.50p. They will remember, even if they have been lapsed for years, the answer to the question “What is prayer?” as: “Prayer is the raising of the heart and mind to God”. Nothing about asking, not even anything about talking! But more recently prayer has been described as “talking to God in your own words”. That is praying in contrast to saying prayers. Many of us may find that composed prayers just happen to get our thoughts more succinctly, more eloquently, than we could ever do.

Raising the mind and heart to God can involve request, but if we get what we ask for it should also lead to thanksgiving; it can and should also involve adoration, praise and blessing.

There are different ways of prayer - which can be vocal, but also can be contemplative and meditative.

So, back to my prayer guru, insofar as I have one, Jesus. He recommends prayer although he tells his followers that when they pray they should go into their private room and pray to the Father in secret and that the Father who sees all that is done in secret will reward them. In fact Jesus gets away in private after curing Peter’s mother in law, after being with large crowds he would go to a lonely place to pray, before choosing the 12 he spent the whole night in prayer. He prays after his baptism, he prays before he asks the disciples who the people say he is, and he is praying at the time of the Transfiguration. None of these prayers are specifically requests. And he prayed on the cross; the many references around the crucifixion scene to Psalm 21 have led commentators to wonder whether he might not have recited the whole of that Psalm on the cross.

But he tells his followers that they can ask for things : He says that our Father knows all that we need even before we ask him and urges against an excessive use

of words: "Do not babble as the pagans do, for they think that by using many words they will make themselves heard". It is after that in Matthew that Jesus gives us the pattern of prayer which is common to all his followers, but note that he did not offer it as "a prayer", but as a pattern : he did not say, "When you pray say this", but "When you pray, pray like this" and then follows what we have come to know as The Lord's Prayer. It puts God in his place, so to speak - in heaven, and praise of his name.

In it we also ask forgiveness, and this line is the only one with a condition attached to it - as we forgive those who sin against us.

We ask for daily bread, with a bit left over to share.

We ask that God's will be done - and that I think is where a lot of people come unstuck - let me jump for a moment to the beginning of the Bible : the Book of Genesis tells us that God made us in his own image and likeness. It seems to me that ever since, we have been trying to recreate God in our image and likeness, and when it come to praying for what we want and we get it - God is doing alright. But is it not far more the case that we are prepared to do God's will our way, than God's will God's way?

Perhaps the two greatest examples of unanswered prayer of Jesus himself come right at the end of his life (it is said that even a condemned man can be granted his last wish): his prayer

at the Last Supper. Throughout the 17th Chapter of St. John's Gospel we are almost like a fly on the wall eavesdropping into a very private conversation of Jesus with his Father. (And here we come back to the description of prayer being a talking to God in our own words) Part of that prayer that his followers might all be one as he and the Father are one - well, we've scuppered that one.

And his prayer in the Garden of Gethsemane that the chalice might pass him by, yet not as he would have it but the Father's will be done - we're back to that refrain. And later on the Letter to the Hebrews will tell us that he submitted so humbly that his prayer to be delivered from death was heard. We might consider the crucifixion as a funny way of hearing the prayer, and yet it is still something better for us because he was led through death and out the other side in the glory of the resurrection and yet more - we are offered a share in that resurrection life!

To give an answer to unanswered prayer : there is no such thing.

We might just get what we want and the way we want it; we might end up with something quite different, but which is better for all concerned in the end.

It could be that the answer is "Wait".

And of course what we consider unanswered prayer - "No" is an answer!

PRAYER TO OUR LADY OF ENGLAND

O glorious and Blessed Mary,
our Mother and our Queen,
we gladly acclaim you
as Our Lady of England.
We thank you for all the graces
which you have obtained
for this country in times past,
and ask you to obtain still more.
Grant that as this nation of ours
once worshipped God through
one Church,
so by your intercession,
may all Christians be reunited
in the one service of your Son,
and may all our fellow countrymen
come to the knowledge
and love of this same Son, our Lord, Jesus Christ.
Our Lady of England, pray for us.
Our Lady of England, bless our country.
Our Lady of England, unite all Christians
into one Church.



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Last year the tax man gave us £4,050 tax plus transitional relief on donations made under a Gift Aid Declaration. Each £1 a tax payer gives us under Gift Aid is worth 28p – it was reduced to 25p this April, but we are already hit by the rise in VAT to 20%. Yes, charities do have to pay VAT! If you pay tax and would like to Gift Aid your donation please contact Fr Martin, the Bursar.

“The Norbertine Order in England” is a Registered Charity.
Please make cheques etc payable to **The Norbertine Order**

To our benefactors in Ireland – we can no longer accept cheques in Euros from Ireland. Can benefactors please send either cash or a sterling draft.

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