

ON GROUNDHOGS, CANDLES AND FISHBONES

If you were to drive three hours west of the college where I used to work in northeast Pennsylvania, you would start to see signs for a small town called Punxsutawney, internationally famous for Phil, its groundhog, who each year on February 2 comes out of his den to predict how much longer winter is going to last based on whether or not he sees his shadow. Phil makes a respectable meteorologist. He's only accurate about 40% of the time.

I hadn't realized that this tradition of predicting winter's end actually originates with the celebration of Candlemas, the liturgical feast on February 2 of Jesus's presentation in the Temple. And old English rhyme says: *If Candlemas be fair and bright,/Come, Winter, have another flight./If Candlemas bring cloud and rain,/Go, Winter, and come not again.* The idea was that Jesus is revealed this day, according to the prophecy of Simeon, as the light of revelation to the Gentiles. If the natural daylight competes with the light of Christ, symbolized by the candles that were brought to church to be blessed, then winter gains the upper hand and endures for a while longer. If the light of Candlemas shines against the midwinter gloom, however, then the darkness is defeated, and spring starts to approach.

Candlemas is a celebration of light, the fourth of the joyful mysteries, but it's also where clouds begin to gather over the Holy Family. Simeon strikes the first of what we know as Mary's seven sorrows, prophesying that her son would be a sign of contradiction and that a sword would pierce her own heart. Even as Jesus is revealed as our king and saviour, Mary is revealed as our sorrowful mother, and while the forecast over the Holy Family might seem grim, Christ's life set against the backdrop of Mary's suffering love signals that a new dawn has broken irrevocably upon the world. The seemingly interminable winters of our sin and sadness, in fact, will come to an end.

The candles that are blessed on Candlemas become an instrument of blessing themselves the next day (Feb. 3) for the feast of St. Blaise. Legend has it that a mother whose son had a fishbone lodged in his throat rushed up to Blaise on his way to martyrdom to ask for help, and Blaise healed the young boy with his blessing. Even as we continue to ask through St. Blaise's intercession for health against diseases of the throat, the light of Christ settles into the circumstances of our lives that cause our throats to catch. May we kindle this Candlemas into Mary's hope, and may our throats open into Simeon's joy.

Fr. Chase, csc



FISHER HOUSE NEWSLETTER

Sunday 3 February - 4th Week of the Year

CALENDAR - TERM WEEK III

Sunday 3	4TH WEEK OF THE YEAR 9.00am Sung Latin Mass 11.00am Sung English Mass
Monday 4	1.05pm Mass <i>Blessing of throats after Mass</i>
Tuesday 5	1.05pm Mass <i>St Agatha</i>
Wednesday 6	1.05pm Mass <i>St Paul Miki & comp.</i>
Thursday 7	1.05pm Mass
Friday 8	1.05pm Mass 7.30pm <i>Vespers and Meditation</i>
Saturday 9	11.30am Mass cel. Bishop Peter Doyle 4.30—5.30 <i>Confessions</i> 6.00pm Vigil Mass of Sunday
Sunday 10	5TH WEEK OF THE YEAR 9.00am Latin Mass 11.00am Sung English Mass Celebrant: The Papal Nuncio, Archbishop Edward Adams

FR MARK LANGHAM - SR ANN SWAILES OP - FR CHASE PEPPER CSC

POST-DOCS SCRIPTURE DISCUSSION

Wednesdays at 7.00pm in the Fisher House dining room, beginning on 6 February. There will be pizza available. We also continue to meet for lunch on the second Sunday of every month. Contact Kotryna on kb449

O&C LOURDES PILGRIMAGE

The Oxford & Cambridge Lourdes Pilgrimage will be from 20 to 28 July. Travel and accommodation costs are estimated at £350 with 50% bursaries available to students in financial need. More information from Simon Johnson at lourdesoandc@gmail.com

ST BLAISE: BLESSING OF THROATS

will take place after Mass on Monday.

GILBEY SCHOLARSHIPS

Available for singers and organists who wish to sing regularly at Fisher House. Please see the notice board for details.

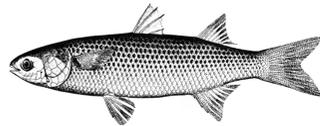
FILM CLUB

Films will be shown at 8.30pm on Sunday evenings in the Fisher Room during term. This Sunday *There be Dragons* - a war film uncovering the life of the founder of Opus Dei.

APOLOGIA

Our popular Tuesday meal and meeting continues on Tuesday, at 7.00pm in the Fisher Room. Come for dinner, a talk, compline and the bar. This week Fr Mark will talk about *Vatican I and patterns of authority*.

THE HADDOCKS



A discussion group on medical ethics, aimed at doctors or anyone interested in these questions. On Monday 4 Feb 4.00pm, Michael Wee will speak on *Withdrawing End of Life Support*. Contact Prakash on pt403.

PRO-LIFE GROUP

The new Fisher House Pro-Life Group will meet fortnightly during term. The next meeting will be on Monday 4 Feb at 7.30pm in the Fisher Room. Contact Conor McKee on cmm85.

KNIGHTS OF THE HOLY SEPULCHRE

Mass next Saturday will be celebrated at 11.30am by Bishop Peter Doyle, for the Knights of the Holy Sepulchre.

GRADSOC

Graduates meet on Wednesday at 7.30pm for a movie night.

THE DOLPHINS

Fisher House's football team will play the Baptists today, Sunday, at 3.00pm on Jesus Green. Please contact Julia Wdowin on jw735



DANTE CIRCLE

Monday 4 February 5.30pm in Great Chamber, *Purgatorio XXX*.

ECUMENICAL TALK

Thursday 7 Feb, talk on the Romanian Orthodox Church. 7.30pm in Great Chamber. Drinks served.

ANNUAL VON HÜGEL LECTURE

On Friday 8 Feb, Fr Thomas Rosica will deliver the Lecture on '*Catholicity: Crises and Opportunities*'. Thomas Rosica is a renowned author, speaker and commentator, who advises the Vatican media service.

SUMMER HOLIDAYS!

It's the time of year to look ahead to warm and lazy days of summer. We are planning another visit for Senior Members to Palazzola, the stunning villa outside Rome, from 5 August for 7 nights. Not to be missed! Please see the notice board for details.

PAPAL NUNCIO TO MASS

The 11.00am Mass next Sunday will be celebrated by Archbishop Edwards Adam, the Papal Nuncio to Great Britain.

QUAERO: THEOLOGY FOR NON-THEOLOGIANS

On Sundays at 3.30pm in the library, discussion of classic texts in an engaging and accessible way - over mead! Contact Reed on rjm228

SCRIPTURE & SOUP

Each Friday, an opportunity to study scripture over lunch in the Fisher Room, from 1.30pm.

THE FRANCIS IMPACT: EUROPEAN PREMIERE

On Thursday 7 Feb, the VHI is hosting the first European screening of *The Francis Impact*. The film's director, Sebastian Gomes, and the executive producer, Fr Thomas Rosica CSB, will be present for Q&A. See Poster for details.

DAILY LUNCH

Lunch after Mass in the Fisher Room each day, just £1.50 - payment may now be made by card.

LAST WEEK'S COLLECTION

£394.58

It costs £4,000 per week to run Fisher House.