

Light from the Road to Damascus

Last week we celebrated the conversion of St Paul. The significance of this event for the history of the Church and for theology cannot be overestimated, and the dramatic events of Paul's biography give us powerful resources to describe the turning points in our own lives. We still label 180 degree shifts in worldview *Damascus Road moments*, still talk of the scales falling from our eyes when hitherto unknown or resisted truths become compelling. But, however influential Paul might be, he is a complex, and not immediately attractive character. The tone of his letters sometimes verges on the hectoring (though it can also be touchingly tender); their substance is frequently dense and convoluted (though sometimes sublimely beautiful), and his thought can be hard to access in a culture very different from his own. Although famously Paul remarked that one should only ever boast in the Lord, he himself does often seem to boast somewhat unashamedly in Paul. It has been said that one of the best arguments against Paul's authorship of the anonymous Letter to the Hebrews is that, in all that rather lengthy epistle, the word "I" doesn't appear once.

Here, though, are a couple of suggested reasons to love St Paul. In the first place, we cannot read his letters without having a vivid sense of the man who wrote them and of his evident and sometimes endearing self-knowledge, which is, above all, an awareness of his own imperfection. Paul thus insistently reminds us of the consoling truth that holiness is not the same as niceness. This means, of course, that none of us have any excuse for not aspiring to it. But, at the same time, Paul's letters emphasise that, while all of us, not merely the easy characters, are called to be saints, sanctity is, above all, God's project; as Paul himself puts it, we are God's works of art. Reassuringly, it's not all down to us.

Secondly, Saul who becomes Paul, in whom the violence of persecution is transfigured into the energy of mission, shows us how there is nothing in our own lives that cannot be redeemed and repurposed for the Lord's service. In the Acts of the Apostles, we are told that, when St Stephen, the first Christian martyr, was stoned to death, those going about the grim task laid their cloaks at "the feet of a young man named Saul, and that "Saul was entirely consenting to Stephen's death". Not long afterwards, Saul is knocked sideways by the revelation that, he has been seeking to destroy Christ himself in his opposition to his body the Church, as exemplified in his complicity at Stephen's murder. He repents, joins his former enemies in their vocation to be Christ to the world, and the rest, as they say, is history. This surely suggests there is no situation of bitterness and discord that is beyond reconciliation. That is good news for our own lives, when we are tempted to fear that relationships are damaged beyond repair, that we are damaged beyond repair, or have so damaged others, by our failures in love. It is certainly good news for our wounded and divided world. Such healing is not always possible in our own strength, but, to quote Paul quoting his Lord and ours, "my grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness".

Sr Ann



FISHER HOUSE NEWSLETTER

Sunday 26 January - 3rd SUNDAY OF THE YEAR

CALENDAR - LENT TERM WEEK II

Sunday 26	3RD SUNDAY OF THE YEAR		
	9.00am	Sung Latin Mass	
	11.00 am	Sung English Mass	
Monday 27	1.05pm	Mass	
Tuesday 28	1.05pm	Mass	<i>St Thomas Aquinas</i>
Wednesday 29	1.05pm	Mass	
Thursday 30	12.30 - 1.00pm	Adoration	
	1.05pm	Mass	
Friday 31	1.05pm	Mass	<i>St John Bosco</i>
	7.30pm	Vespers and Meditation	
Saturday 1	1.05pm	Mass	
	4.30 - 5.30	Confessions	
	6.00pm	Vigil Mass of Sunday	
Sunday 2	PRESENTATION OF THE LORD		
	9.00am	Latin Mass	
	11.00 am	Sung English Mass	

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

WOMENS' SCRIPTURE GROUP

A new group, for women undergraduate and graduates, will meet on Saturdays at 10.30am in Sr Ann's room.

COLLEGE MASSES

On Monday 27 January, Mass at **Clare College** at 6.15pm.

On Wednesday 29 January, Mass at **Queens' College** at 6.15pm.

FESTIVAL OF LIGHT

Robinson College is holding a Festival inspired by the chapel's glorious John Piper stained glass. It begins on Wednesday 29th with Compline at 9.00pm, led by Fr Chase. See the noticeboard for further details.

PRO LIFE GROUP

The group meets at 7.30pm on Monday 27 January, in the Fisher Room.

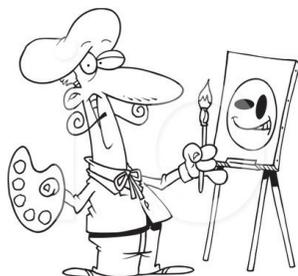
BLACK SWAN BAR

Open on Fridays, from 8.15pm to 11.00pm. A wide range of spirits and craft beers all at unbelievable prices!



** We are looking for new bar staff. If interested, please see Fr Mark.

FISHER ART EXHIBITION



The art exhibition concludes this weekend. Catch it in the area outside the chapel and in the Fisher Room.

DAILY LUNCH

Costing only £1.50, and available from Monday to Friday after 1.05pm Mass in the Fisher Room. Payment by cash or card.

FISHER COMMITTEE



The Fisher AGM, with election of the new committee will take place on Sunday 16 February - if you are a first year, why not consider standing for election? We are also looking for candidates for the Chair's position. A sign-up list is in the lobby outside the chapel.

APOLOGIA

Our popular series of talks on Catholic theology and culture returns on Tuesday, with a meal at 7.00pm, and at 8.00pm a talk given by Dr Kristin Williams on the fascinating and tragic history of *Japanese Catholicism*.



BENSON CLUB

The book for this term is *The House of Ulloa* by Emilia Pardo Bazan. We will meet to discuss it on Monday 12 March.

SVP

The Society of St Vincent de Paul (SVP) meets weekly on Wednesdays at 5.00pm in the Fisher Room (*nb* new time). The SVP also operates the nightly soup runs. We always need more names on the rota. If you'd be willing to sign up, please contact Nikhil on naa49.

DOLPHINS

Our invincible football team meets for training on Sundays, 3.00pm on Jesus Green.

LAST WEEK'S COLLECTION

£431.35

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

Contactless donation of £4 available after 11.00am Mass

NEWMAN LECTURE SERIES



The next lecture in our series to mark the canonization of Cardinal Newman will be on Thursday 30 January, when Fr Guy Nichol Cong. Orat. will speak on *Newman's Idea of the Beautiful*. Fr Guy (a former Fisher House member) is a member of Newman's Birmingham Oratory, and recently published a book on Newman's aesthetics: *Unearthly Beauty*.

For the next talk on 2 February, Dr Amy Daughton will speak on *Newman and Women*.

TERM CARDS

Please take your term cards, and if you are a College rep, pick up a bundle from the Fisher Room for your College.

OPEN OFFICE

Join Sr Ann for a lovely cup of Tea, Fridays from 3.00pm to 5.00pm.

