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THE BULLETIN - READINGS

18 November, 2nd Sunday before Advent

Collect for 2nd Sunday before Advent

Heavenly Father,
whose blessed Son was revealed
to destroy the works of the devil
and to make us the children of God and heirs of eternal life:
grant that we, having this hope,
may purify ourselves even as he is pure;
that when he shall appear in power and great glory
we may be made like him in his eternal and glorious kingdom;
where he is alive and reigns with you,
in the unity of the Holy Spirit,
one God, now and for ever.

(or)

Heavenly Lord,
you long for the world's salvation:
stir us from apathy,
restrain us from excess
and revive in us new hope
that all creation will one day be healed
in Jesus Christ our Lord.

Daniel 12:1-3: The Resurrection of the Dead

'At that time Michael, the great prince, the protector of your people, shall arise. There shall be a time of anguish, such as has never occurred since nations first came into existence. But at that time your people shall be delivered, everyone who is found written in the book. Many of those who sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake, some to everlasting life, and some to shame and everlasting contempt. Those who are wise shall shine like the brightness of the sky, and those who lead many to righteousness, like the stars for ever and ever.

Hebrews 10:11-14,(15-18),19-25;

And every priest stands day after day at his service, offering again and again the same sacrifices that can never take away sins. But when Christ had offered for all time a single sacrifice for sins, 'he sat down at the right hand of God', and since then has been waiting 'until his enemies would be made a footstool for his feet.' For by a single offering he has perfected for all time those who are sanctified. And the Holy Spirit also testifies to us, for after saying,

'This is the covenant that I will make with them

after those days, says the Lord:

I will put my laws in their hearts,

and I will write them on their minds',

he also adds,

'I will remember their sins and their lawless deeds no more.'

Where there is forgiveness of these, there is no longer any offering for sin.

A Call to Persevere

Therefore, my friends, since we have confidence to enter the sanctuary by the blood of Jesus, by the new and living way that he opened for us through the curtain (that is, through his flesh), and since we have a great priest over the house of God, let us approach with a true heart in full assurance of faith, with our hearts sprinkled clean from an evil conscience and our bodies washed with pure water. Let us hold fast to the confession of our hope without wavering, for he who has promised is faithful. And

let us consider how to provoke one another to love and good deeds, not neglecting to meet together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another, and all the more as you see the Day approaching.

Mark 13.1-8: The Destruction of the Temple Foretold

As he came out of the temple, one of his disciples said to him, 'Look, Teacher, what large stones and what large buildings!' Then Jesus asked him, 'Do you see these great buildings? Not one stone will be left here upon another; all will be thrown down.' When he was sitting on the Mount of Olives opposite the temple, Peter, James, John, and Andrew asked him privately, 'Tell us, when will this be, and what will be the sign that all these things are about to be accomplished?' Then Jesus began to say to them, 'Beware that no one leads you astray. Many will come in my name and say, "I am he!" and they will lead many astray. When you hear of wars and rumours of wars, do not be alarmed; this must take place, but the end is still to come. For nation will rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom; there will be earthquakes in various places; there will be famines. This is but the beginning of the birth pangs.

**Readings for 25 November, Christ the King, are:
Daniel 7:9-10,13-14; Revelation 1:4b-8; John 18.33-37**

Daily Mail has two brilliant features *by Rodney Nicholson*

For various reasons the Daily Mail is not my favourite newspaper but, picking up an abandoned copy on the bus last week, I was delighted by two articles: one about Asia Bibi, the other about a banned Iceland Foods advert.

Asia Bibi (53) is the Pakistani Christian woman who spent eight years in prison after being sentenced to death for supposedly insulting the prophet Mohammed. She was convicted on the flimsiest of evidence after being almost beaten to death by an

angry mob. Pakistan's Supreme Court overturned her conviction last month but, fearing riots, the Pakistan government agreed to release her only on condition that she stays in the country. Imran Khan, the prime minister, with an eye on his own political security, has with cowardice refused to stand up to such blatant injustice in his own country.

The Daily Mail criticises our own government for denying Mrs Bibi asylum. What more deserving case could there be, it argues, than a Christian woman who dare not emerge from hiding for fear of being murdered? The government, it says, fears reprisals for its diplomatic staff in Pakistan. According to the Christian mission agency, Open Doors, Pakistan is the fifth worst country in which to be a Christian. The worst is North Korea, followed by Afghanistan, Somalia and Sudan.

The Iceland Foods advert features a little girl comforting a baby orang-utan, called Rantang, who has lost her home when the rainforest was cut down to make room for palm oil trees.

Originally put together by Greenpeace, the advert draws attention to the terrible destruction caused by the world's thirst for palm oil, "which is contained in everything from shampoo to pizzas". Simon Barnes, the Daily Mail journalist, has travelled to Borneo and seen the unique creatures of the rainforest: rhinoceros-billed hornbills, pygmy elephants, proboscis monkeys, the red ape and orang-utan, all of which are threatened with extinction.

The advert was banned for being political, even though the reference to Greenpeace was removed. An online petition to allow the advert to be screened has so far attracted 670,000 signatures. The rainforests are the earth's lungs. We cannot do without them. They are essential to all life on this planet, as well as being home, Simon Barnes says, to flying snakes, bats the size of bumblebees and the slow loris, whose eye is bigger than its brain.

"O Lord how manifold are your works! The earth is full of your creatures", says Psalm 104. Well done, Iceland, for supporting the rainforests, and well done, the Daily Mail, for promoting their efforts.