

Year of Faith



Issue Number 3

St Ethelbert's Parish, Deane, Bolton



Why do I need the church?

For some people, church comes into their lives only three times: when hatched, when matched, when dispatched. At other times, these people either see church as an unnecessary hindrance between God and them or are otherwise too preoccupied to take part. Also, some people refuse to belong to the church because they equate it with buildings, rules, the hierarchy, or what they term as "phony" members. This is a wrong equation. The church is primarily a pilgrim people on a common journey to God. Christians--both saints and sinners--bond together because they know they can't go it alone. Christians need each other to get through life. As the poet John Donne wrote: "No man is an island, entire of itself." Consider these reasons for needing church:

- ✓ The church exists because Jesus founded it. He wants everyone to belong. Jesus prayed that all people may be one in his name (see Jn 17:20-26). St. Paul termed the church, "the body of Christ" - the Lord's presence in the world. Jesus is the head, directing and guiding us, the body, by the power of the Spirit. This means each of us has tremendous worth and dignity with a specific role to play. We are needed in order for the work of Jesus to continue.

- ✓ The church gives us the Bible, the good news of Jesus, and guidance on how to live a Christian life. The Bible was written by Christians who were a part of the Christian community. Its message is meant to guide the church. Church leaders determined what was and was not included.

- ✓ We meet Jesus in the church. The sacraments of the church are grace-filled encounters with the Lord. For example, in the eucharist the Risen Jesus comes to transform us into his disciples and to strengthen us to live the Christian life. Note the meal symbolism. Eating is a joyful, life sharing act that we do with others. Jesus comes to us in a setting where we are with and care for others.

- ✓ Jesus loved associating with ordinary sinners. It is true that Christians are indeed sinners and hypocrites. Many can also be described as "phony." Jesus came as the Divine Physician. We all could use a bit of his healing touch. Remember there is no such thing as finding the perfect church.

- ✓ Christ continues to guide us in the truth through the pope and bishops. Complex moral issues confuse today's world. There are many conflicting voices telling us what to think and to do. Thankfully, in Christ's church his voice still speaks the truth to us through the magisterium. Only a person suffering from the moral disease of pride thinks he or she knows it all and can do without help. When you make yourself the church, you choose a fool for a teacher.

However, in the final say, you can worship alone. Many people say they'd like to worship God alone in the woods, for example. Unfortunately, they rarely get around to it. But why not worship God alone and with others? Enjoy God in nature and enjoy meeting Christ in others through his church.

In this Issue:

WHY CHURCH?

Here are some good reasons for belonging to the Pilgrim People of God...

SEVEN NEW SAINTS

Pope Benedict canonised seven new saints on 21st October 2012 at the beginning of the Year of Faith. Their lives and witness speak to us...

ADOPT A SAINT

Why don't you "adopt" a saint and make him or her your special companion for this Year of Faith?

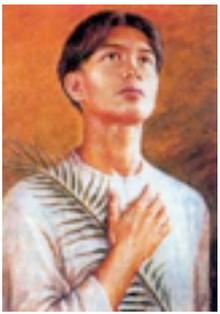


Seven New Saints



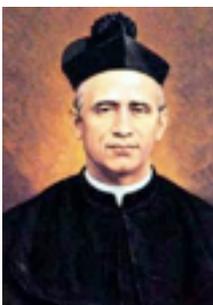
Jacques Berthieu, born in 1838 in France, was passionate about Jesus Christ at an early age. During his parish ministry, he had the burning desire to save souls. Becoming a Jesuit, he wished to journey through the world for the glory of God. A tireless pastor on the island of Sainte Marie, then in Madagascar, he struggled against injustice while bringing succour to the poor and sick. The Malagasies thought of him as a priest come down from heaven, saying, You are

our "father and mother!" He made himself all things to all men, drawing from prayer and his love of the sacred heart of Jesus the human and priestly force to face martyrdom in 1896. He died, saying "I prefer to die rather than renounce my faith".



Pedro Calungsod was born around the year sixteen fifty-four, in the Visayas region of the Philippines. His love for Christ inspired him to train as a catechist with the Jesuit missionaries there. In sixteen sixty-eight, along with other young catechists, he accompanied Father Diego Luis de San Vitores to the Marianas Islands in order to evangelize the Chamorro people. Life there was hard and the missionaries also faced persecution arising from envy and slander.

Pedro, however, displayed deep faith and charity and continued to catechize his many converts, giving witness to Christ by a life of purity and dedication to the Gospel. Uppermost was his desire to win souls for Christ, and this made him resolute in accepting martyrdom. He died on the second of April, 1672 Witnesses record that Pedro could have fled for safety but chose to stay at Father Diego's side. The priest was able to give Pedro absolution before he himself was killed.



Giovanni Battista Piamarta, priest of the Diocese of Brescia, was a great apostle of charity and of young people. He raised awareness of the need for a cultural and social presence of Catholicism in the modern world, and so he dedicated himself to the Christian, moral and professional growth of the younger generations with an enlightened input of humanity and goodness. The secret of his intense and busy

life is found in the long hours he gave to prayer. When he was overburdened with work, he increased the length of his encounter, heart to heart, with the Lord. He preferred to pause before the Blessed Sacrament, meditating upon the passion, death and resurrection of Christ, to gain spiritual fortitude and return to gaining people's hearts, especially the young, to bring them back to the sources of life with fresh pastoral initiatives.



María Carmelo Sallés y Barangueras, a religious born in Vic in Spain in 1848, did just so. Her educational work, entrusted to the Immaculate Virgin Mary, continues to bear abundant fruit among young people through the generous dedication of her daughters who, like her, entrust themselves to God for whom all is possible.



I now turn to **Marianne Cope**, born in 1838 in Heppenheim, Germany. Only one year old when taken to the United States, in eighteen sixty-two she entered the Third Order Regular of Saint Francis at Syracuse, New York. Later, as Superior General of her congregation, Mother Marianne willingly embraced a call to care for the lepers of Hawaii after many others had refused. She personally went, with six of her fellow sisters, to manage a hospital on Oahu, later founding Malulani Hospital on Maui and opening a

home for girls whose parents were lepers. Five years after that she accepted the invitation to open a home for women and girls on the island of Molokai itself, bravely going there herself and effectively ending her contact with the outside world. There she looked after Father Damien, already famous for his heroic work among the lepers, nursed him as he died and took over his work among male lepers.



Kateri Tekakwitha was born in today's New York state in 1656 to a Mohawk father and a Christian Algonquin mother who gave to her a sense of the living God. She was baptized at twenty years of age and, to escape persecution, she took refuge in Saint Francis Xavier Mission near Montreal. There she worked, faithful

to the traditions of her people, although renouncing their religious convictions until her death at the age of twenty-four. Leading a simple life, Kateri remained faithful to her love for Jesus, to prayer and to daily Mass. Her greatest wish was to know and to do what pleased God. She lived a life radiant with faith and purity.



Anna Schaeffer, from Mindelstetten, as a young woman wished to enter a missionary order. She came from a poor background so, in order to earn the dowry needed for acceptance into the cloister, she worked as a maid. One day she suffered a terrible accident and received incurable burns on her legs which forced her to be bed-ridden for the rest of her life. So her sick-bed became her cloister cell and her suffering

a missionary service. She struggled for a time to accept her fate, but then understood her situation as a loving call from the crucified One to follow him. Strengthened by daily communion, she became an untiring intercessor in prayer and a mirror of God's love for the many who sought her counsel.