

DAY	FEAST	MASS	INTENTION	DEVOTIONS AND ACTIVITIES
SAT 13th	Feria	12 noon 530pm	John O'Shea For the Parish	<b>Young People's Adoration: 10am</b> Confessions after both Masses and 415-515pm
SUN	Sunday Lent 4C	930am	Robert Stadnick	<b>Reception into Church: Jack and Sophie</b> <b>Baptism Team after Mass</b> <b>5pm Funeral Vigil: Raymond Thomas RIP</b>
MON	Lenten Feria	12 noon <b>Req 730pm</b>	<b>Raymond Thomas RIP</b>	Catechism for First Holy Communion. SM 4pm <b>Station Deanery Mass with Bishop 730pm</b>
TUE 16th	Lenten Feria	12 noon	John Walters	Catechism: Years 7 and 8. Stella Maris 4pm Catechumenate 730pm
WED 17th	St Patrick	12 noon	Martin and Mayer Ainsworth	<b>Stations of the Cross 7pm</b> SVP 730pm <b>Adoration 745-845pm</b> Full School Govies Mig 7pm School
THU 18th	Lenten Feria	930am School 12 noon 4pm House M	Pia Mosca Pia Mosca Phyllis Parry	<b>All welcome: School Mass 930 am Yrs 3,4,5,6</b> Open House. 2-4pm <b>Outreach</b> with Sr Mary 730pm Stella Maris
FRI 19th	St Joseph	12 noon	Anne Worthington RIP	Exposition of Blessed Sacrament 1230-415pm <b>Holy Hour</b> 3pm. Benediction 4pm
SAT 20th	Lenten Feria	12 noon 530pm	Robert Green RIP Peter Fahnigan RIP	<b>Young People's Adoration: 10am</b> Confessions after both Masses and 415-515pm
SUN	Sunday Lent 5C	9.30am	Int Antonello Mosca	<b>Baptism Team after Mass</b>

**FINANCIAL REPORT.** *The Collection last week was well below what we needed for the week, in fact £227 short. This means that we had to find an extra £227 out of our resources just to pay the bills, leaving us with nothing to save for oncoming and essential maintenance work. Collection: Plate: £457. Gift-Aided £302. Tax refund from Gift-Aided: £85. Total Collection=£844*  
*Feed My Lambs: £256 (feeding about 320 starving Sudanese children for a week) Well done!*  
*Poor Box: £23. We spent £96 last week on sleeping bags for the homeless who live in the caves on the Orme.*  
*Try to Gift-Aid your contributions. By doing so, you add 28p to every pound you give. Ring Peter Lewis on 542704*

# EIN HARGLWYDDES SEREN Y MÔR OUR LADY STAR OF THE SEA LLANDUDNO

35 LLOYD STREET. LL30 2YA

14 March 2010

## WELCOME TO FR GORDON

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## Dear Parishioner,

**T**hat mug shot of Jon Venables which has been staring out of our television screens and newspapers over this last week – I find it haunting; what do you make of it? This is the police photo of the now twenty-seven year old who, as a lad of ten, together with his mate Robert Thompson, kidnapped baby James Bulger from his mother's minding, back in 1993, and then brutally tortured and killed him. Tried in an adult court, he was found guilty and sent to prison, only to be released in 2001 with a new identity, for his own safety, and a new place to live.

This week, the news broke that Venables has been returned to custody for breaking the terms of his initial release, and speculation has rampaged throughout the land as to what his latest crime was, with Jack Straw, the Justice Secretary, refusing to give any details lest his trial and his safety be further jeopardised. The interest has been intense, with Mrs Denise Fergus, Bulger's mother, demanding that the information be put into the public domain, that Venables appear in court under his real name and face the full scrutiny of public justice.

I was surprised at myself, how vividly I remembered those CCTV pictures when they were re-shown on our televisions this week, shots that were first screened some seventeen years ago. Those pictures of these two little boys leading the toddler away; a sight so familiar in our streets, as our elder children take the

little ones to see the swans or the trains. But these boys were not leading the infant to the railway line to see the trains; they were leading him away to do him mischief, mischief which ended in murder.

**B**ut that is not what little boys do to littler boys; they take them to see the swans or the trains, but they do not take them away to murder them. Such behaviour is not in the nature of little children. It is in the nature of little children to play and maybe to scrap sometimes, but not to inflict vicious and gratuitous suffering, not to kill. So, was their behaviour an aberration, something unnatural? I think it was.

So why was their behaviour so out of keeping with normal childhood patterns? Why did they not behave as children are programmed, by their very nature, to behave? Because they had been programmed differently. Because society had shown them a different way. Society had taught those young minds how to be vicious; how to be violent; how to hurt; how to torture; how to kill. Society had taught them this pattern of behaviour from their earliest years. Society had surrounded them with scenes of violence in their homes and on their streets; on their televisions and in their video games. And that society is us; we are society.

That Venables is still committing crime is no surprise. What is put into our minds as children is almost irradicable.

So many of our adult problems arise from our childhood experiences. And our prison service is not renowned for reforming characters; that can only be done by the grace of God and by ongoing and careful therapy and counsel.

**B**ut is it not hypocritical for society to clamour, as it has this past fortnight, for Venables' blood? Was it not society itself that instilled these vicious and murderous attitudes into this young child's mind? I am reminded of the ancient Jewish practice of the scapegoat, when the sins of the people were supposedly loaded onto the shoulders of a goat. This unfortunate animal was then banished into the wilderness amid the angry and indignant cries of those very people whose sins it carried. Look again at that mug shot. It's haunting. And why so? Because I see something of myself in those features; do you not see something of yourself in them too?

**M**aybe you and I didn't do anything positive to promote the frame of mind that brought ruin on Venables and death on Bulger. But negatively we stand with Jon Venables in the dock. It is what we haven't done that condemns us. What have we done to stop this terrible slide in our country from Christian values to the state we are in today? What steps have we taken to turn our society away from this terrible "Culture of Death", as Pope John Paul II used to call it, which now envelopes all of us? What have we done to those children's minds to make them see the railway, not as a place for train spotting, as ten year old children should, but as a killing field?

"The Culture of Death", the Pope called it. Our society, turning away from Christian values and from its Christian roots, has lost its sense of the sanctity of life and therefore of the dignity of the human person. And it shows. Now abortion is actively promoted; now euthanasia is on the cards; now rape and sexual abuse are rampant; now violence against the person is commonplace; respect for one another is not commonly in evidence. And we have sat back and let all this happen. It is hypocrisy to make Venables and people like him into scapegoats; it is hypocrisy to wring our hands and make loud accusations. We ourselves are implicated. I have often said that we Brits make good hypocrites!

**L**ook back on last week's Gospel, the parable of the landowner who approached his fig tree year after year only to find no fruit on it. Intent on cutting it down, he is deterred by his gardener who persuades him to dig around it and fertilise it, so that it might bear fruit in the long term. We have stood by and watched the leaves on the tree of our society wither and die; we have watched it bear less and less fruit year by year; we have come and looked at it with dismay, wrung our hands but done nothing. Let us take the Lord's advice. Let us dig around the tree of our society with the values of our Lord Jesus Christ; let us put something positive into the soil; let us live in hope that it will bear fruit. Lent is the time for this kind of gardening!

God bless you,

Fr Antony