



St. Elizabeth's Parish, Minsteracres

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Monthly Newsletter

January 2021

A two-faced "god"?

Now this at first might seem a little strange, especially for a catholic parish newsletter, but of course I'm not talking about God, rather it's a reference to a Roman god. Not any Roman god of course, rather one that has a particular relevance to this time of year. And that god is Janus, considered by some to be the most important god in the Roman pantheon.

Now convention has it that the month of January is named after Janus, although an ancient Roman farmers almanac would claim that Juno is the titular deity for this the first month of the year. Regardless of this ambiguity though, I think Janus or rather the traditions surrounding him are particularly relevant to reflect on at this time in the calendar, and perhaps especially this year.

For Janus, whose name in Latin might be translated as gateway, is seen as the god of transitions, the god of boundaries, the god of endings and beginnings, and as such is usually depicted as having two faces, one looking to the past and the other to the future.

And if you've ever been lucky enough to visit Rome and wander through the Forum, just down the hill from the home of the passionists in Rome, you may have wandered past the ruins of a small temple dedicated to Janus. But despite its diminutive nature this temple it seems was symbolically very important, for its doors, known as the "Gates of Janus", were opened in times of war and closed in times of peace. Although it seems that this change from being open to being closed rarely happened since the Romans were usually engaged in war with someone or another across their vast empire.

But Janus is frequently found symbolising change in all sorts of other places and circumstances. Whenever there was movement from past to future, Janus it appears was a central character and was worshipped at both planting and harvest, at births, marriages and at deaths. In essence

Janus was the god people turned to at times of movement from one phase of life to another.

Now of course we know that there is only one God to turn to, the one true God, the God who sits outside of time, the God for whom there is no beginning and no end. For us mere mortals of course, existing within time, then perhaps we can take some tips from the two faced nature of Janus or rather from this concept of being able to look to the past so as to be able to better shape our future

Because how would we ever learn how best to move forward without looking back. By looking back we become aware of the choices we have made and their effect both positive and negative on ourselves and on those around us. Looking back and reflecting on our achievements, challenges, sorrows, joys and the lessons we have learned through all of the ups and downs of the last 12 months can help us mature as both humans and Christians.

And looking forward in the light of this retrospective reflection can open up to us a vista of new beginnings, new opportunities and new insights into how we can live our lives so as to better develop into the person God wants us to be. Of course every day can be an new start, every day is a gift from God and an invitation to live out our baptismal calling and become more like Christ. But especially at this time of year it might be good to take stock and



perhaps plot out some new directions of travel.

The ancient Romans it seems used to make promises to Janus at this time of year, and whilst I'm certainly not suggesting that as a course of action, we might though take some clues from this Roman deity, in that having a view of the past we might find ourselves in a better place to be able to look to the future. To trust and put our faith in the God of hope so as to look to the future with confidence.

So happy New Year and may 2021 be a blessed, happy and fruitful year for all.

Amen

Rev. David Collins

Diocesan Refugee Project

As you know Rosaleen and Ann usually make an annual appeal in early January on behalf of the Diocesan Refugee Project which supports a drop-in centre in Newcastle and provides food and financial support to refugees and failed asylum seekers. Over the years the parishioners have been very generous in supporting this cause. The drop-in centre has recently reopened in a new location at the SVP centre in Newbridge St. Given the restraints imposed on us this year, the Justice and Peace Group will not be making the usual appeal at mass but simply providing a collection basket at the masses on the Epiphany and on Sundays throughout January.

We hope that you will continue to support this project which needs our support more than ever this year. Thank you.

Jim Darlington
Chair, Justice and Peace Group

Sunday masses

Sunday masses at 8.30am and 10.30am continue. Places may be booked as normal using the Heavenfield Partnership website.

The 8.30am mass is available streamed live each week. If you are unable to attend in person, you are encouraged to join the online congregation.

Go to: www.youtube.com/minsteracres

Parish Council Constitution

Some small revisions have been made to this document. A copy can be found on the parish website.

Sunday collections

The emphasis on hand hygiene means that parishioners may be wary about handling cash. If desired, offerings may instead be paid directly into the Parish account:

Barclays Bank
Account Name Passionists Minsteracres
Sort Code 20-40-09
Account no 30171697

Bishop's Pastoral Message

Bishop Robert's message on the Feast of the Holy Family can be downloaded from the parish website.

Feasts and Solemnities in January

Mary, The Mother of God	1st
2nd Sunday after Christmas	3rd
The Epiphany of the Lord	6th
The Baptism of the Lord	10th
St Aelred of Rievaulx	11th
St Benet Biscop	12th
2nd Sunday of the Year	17th
St Wulstan	19th
3rd Sunday of the Year	24th
The Conversion of St Paul	25th
4th Sunday of the Year	31st

January Anniversaries

Edward Atkinson
Kathleen Monaghan
Fr Martin Dougherty CP
Margaret Telfer
Barbara Whaley
Noel Ernest Bowers
Jack Robinson
Margaret Nicholson
Christopher Gibson
Mgr. Kevin Francis Nichols
Brenda M Price (Silvertop)
Coral Brydie Connor
Thomas Ivor Ward
Fr Richard Appleyard CP
Monica Katherine Bottomley
Christopher Harry Lee
Westmacott
James Stanton Forster
Thomasz Ian Dorantt
Eileen Norris
Arthur Reginald Loughran
Brian Keith Alderson

January birthdays

Catherine McGrath
Seamus Simon
Francesca Bell
Aidan Joseph Spence
Maryan Cleary
Gareth Wade
Norma McDonald
Theo Nwosu-Hope