

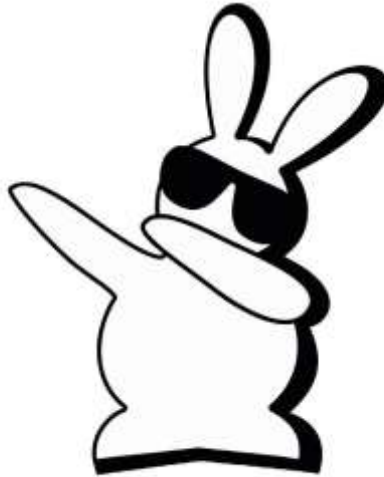
A Message for all our Young People at St. Mary's

Thursday 23rd April 2020

To all our young parishioners,

How are you all? I've not seen any of you in ages but I know you are all out there because of the lovely home-made Easter cards you sent, the chocolates left at my door and the kind voicemail recordings on the presbytery phone.

Here is a joke for you. What is the Easter Bunny's favourite kind of music?



Hip-Hop of course!

A bit of a naff joke I know but I bet you cracked a smile – even if only briefly! At the moment things are not very normal in the world are they? With this Coronavirus everyone is having to do things a bit different. Everything that we are use to has changed from school, shopping, playing out and meeting our friends. And when things in life change that can be a bit scary and frustrating. Have you had some sad days?

I would like to tell you a story about Saint George whose special day it is today. He, like us, believed in Jesus and wanted to follow him. George lived in a world that could be a bit scary but because he prayed, Jesus became his friend and gave him the gifts of courage, strength and protection.



Saint George was a Roman Soldier who lived a long time ago in the Middle East. He had heard people talk about God and decided to find out for himself who God was and why people believed in Him. He came to a church and found it packed with people singing and listening to the Bible. The singing made George smile because the words spoke about God who was the Creator of the whole world. The words of the hymn described how God made the universe from the highest mountain to the distant oceans. From the fruitful forests to the barren deserts. From the wildest beasts to the tamest pet. God even made human beings and blessed them with life because He loved them so much.



Then George listened to what was being read aloud from the Bible for all the people to hear. It was from the Gospel of St. John:

‘God loved the world so much that he gave us His only Son, Jesus, so that all who believe in him will have real life for ever and ever.’

George continued to listen to the Gospel and heard how Jesus healed people who were sick, gave people a second chance when they had done wrong by forgiving them, and taught them about God and how to live as children of God.

George was so moved by what he heard and saw, especially how all the people in church were trying to copy Jesus and live like him. He too decided to become a follower and asked if he could be baptised that very day and become a Christian.

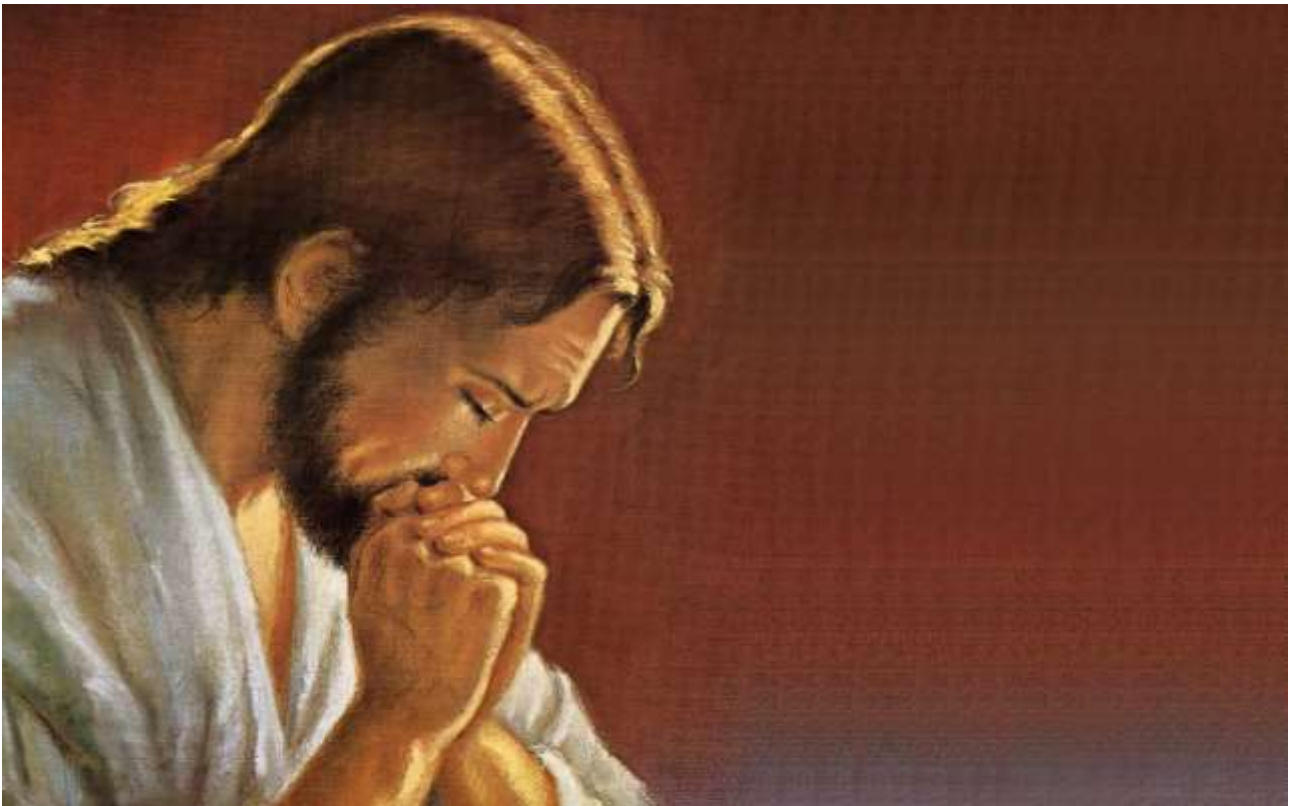


However, there were some nasty people who called George for believing in God and following Jesus. They tormented and bullied him but George, to their surprise, would not react. Anything they could do to distract him from praying or stop him from helping others, well, George just simply ignored! How? Because he had the gifts of courage, strength and protection from his new friend the Lord Jesus.



Often in pictures of Saint George you see him battling and defeating an ugly dragon. The dragon represents all those horrible things in life that can scare and upset us. What dragons are there in your life that try to frighten you? Is it the sadness of not seeing your family and friends? Not being able to have a hug off your gran or play with your grandad? Is the dragon the loneliness you feel when you can't play with your friends or go out with your family? Or is the dragon the anger that wells up inside you and explodes into hurtful words to those people around you? The dragon that upsets me is not being able to visit my family and see my nephews. Whatever the dragon is in our lives we can defeat it just like St. George in the picture above. How? By praying!

Jesus can't help us or others unless we speak to him. He can't give us those gifts of courage, strength and protection unless we ask him. He can't reassure us and give us hope unless we tell him what is worrying us. Jesus is always wanting to listen and help us but he can only do that if we talk to him in prayer. That's what prayer is - just talking to Jesus.



Today, draw a picture of you and St. George on a horse defeating that dragon which worries you. Then put that picture somewhere you can see it everyday and pray. Pray to Jesus and talk to him like your best friend. Ask him for those gifts of courage, strength and protection. Make sure you also ask St. George in heaven to pray for everyone in our country to be good to each other and look after each other.

God Bless and I hope to see you soon, keep praying.

Happy Saint George's Day.

Fr. O'Brien