

SACRED HEART OF JESUS CHRIST

Today we celebrate the 125th anniversary of this parish of Sacred Heart Shanklin and 75 years since the consecration of St. Patrick's Sandown. Anniversaries are times to look back and to give thanks. We thank God today for all we've received here: the baptisms, confirmations and First HCs, the marriages and funerals, the parish priests and parishioners we've known and loved. Shanklin and Sandown have changed greatly since those pioneering days of Bishop Vertue and Fr. John Flynn, but these churches have been for the Catholic family of South Wight, and for others too, truly the house of God and the gate of heaven.

SEND LAZARUS TO DIP HIS FINGER IN WATER TO COOL MY TONGUE; I'M IN AGONY. In the Gospel, we hear more of Our Lord's teaching about money, the shocking story of Dives and Lazarus: the rich man DRESSED IN FINE LINEN, the poor man begging at his gate COVERED WITH SORES. Jesus doesn't condemn anyone for being rich, nor begrudge people making money, but he does insist we are good stewards, that we use our resources to do good. The rich man went to Hell not because he was rich but because he used his wealth only to serve himself. He was utterly self-absorbed. As in life, oblivious of the beggar at his gates, so in death, he still thought only of himself: SEND LAZARUS TO DIP HIS FINGER IN WATER TO COOL MY TONGUE; I'M IN AGONY. This, of course, is the danger of riches. Mammon can make us very selfish. It can dull our conscience. Like sex and power, it can smother our religious awareness, destroy the sacred canopy and deprive us of the love and sense of God in our lives.

When I became bishop last September, I took the motto In Corde Iesu, In the Heart of Jesus. This was about far more than piety. It was a statement. For in Britain today, many people now deny God. Or busy, they've become indifferent to their eternal destiny and the role of religion in human living. Worse, in the new secular culture, politicians and policy-makers, awash on a sea of relativism, are taking more and more wrong turns, leading our country further away from its Christian patrimony and the values that have made us what we are. This is why I wanted to put myself and my ministry 'in' the Heart of Christ. I wanted to pray that Jesus Christ, that Jesus Christ alone, that serving Jesus Christ, would be absolutely central to everything I think, say and do. But that is also what I ask of you today. People of Shanklin, you are already dedicated to the Sacred Heart: please don't drift! Don't lapse! Don't

put your Catholic Faith second in life! No, put Christ first. Put Him first, then the rest will follow on. Never let money, work, or busyness obscure, diminish or smother your friendship with Our Lord.

FIGHT THE GOOD FIGHT OF FAITH AND WIN FOR YOURSELVES ETERNAL LIFE said the 2ndR. Anniversaries are not just times to look back but also a time to look forward. So in this Mass, we rightly pray for Fr. PJ and for all who belong to our communities today, for the parish schools and for the next generation. Indeed, let us ask the Father to pour out afresh the gifts of the Holy Spirit. May He bless this parish with many vocations. May He fill us all with new zeal, remembering too our fellow Christians and everyone of good will. In this Mass, let us pray that though our parish communities, everyone in Shanklin and Sandown may come to know and love Christ, and thus one day, like Lazarus, be found worthy to enter the happiness of heaven.