

Light the Beacons!

Homily pronounced by Fr Armand de Malleray, FSSP at the First Solemn High Mass in England of Fr Ian Verrier, FSSP at St James' Church in London on 20th June 2015.

Dear newly ordained Fr Verrier, Just give up! It is all lost. Go and hide. We are vanquished. Christianity is over. Our time is gone. Anyone with eyes to see will agree. Greater than waves, *tsunamis* rather surge against life, against common sense, against freedom and against innocence! See the crimson tide of abortion; the green tide of Islam; the pink tide of inversion; the black tide of pornography; and as a deadly mix of all others, the fluorescent tide of political correctness.

Coming fast upon us, down those evil waves, like mighty hordes of surfers, the enemy conquers our parliaments; our tribunals; our universities; our media; our hospitals; our barracks; our schools; our workplaces; our bakeries; even our homes – and what of our churches? No one is there to protect us. Our martyrs are long gone. Our confessors and doctors are dumb. Our virgins are mocked. Our leaders are shy or unsure. And *we...* We are weak. We are selfish. We are lazy. We are afraid.

Dear Fr Verrier, more than once you crossed the Channel with many English pilgrims, to take part in the annual Pilgrimage of Christendom. You admired the glorious procession assorted in hundreds of chapters, each carrying its embroidered banner with its local saint and its shining cross, singing canticles along the 70-mile hallowed path to the medieval shrine of Chartres!

What you may have missed, however, is the 'Cleaning



Section'. That little group of volunteers walks at the very end of the one-mile-long column. After the ten thousand pilgrims have walked through fields and woods, that lowly party follows. After the ten thousand pilgrims have gone. We remember what an amazing sight those thousands were – now vanished as a dream! And the small Cleaning Section closes the column, dutifully picking up any paper, any empty cans or wrappers (or occasionally rosary beads) fallen from the pilgrims' hands. What is the ambition of the Cleaning Section? It is to leave the place neat and tidy, when the tiny silhouette of the last Catholic will have shrunk down to the size of a dot on the grey horizon. The Cleaning Section prides itself on leaving no trace behind: no one would ever guess that a Catholic army once boldly trod across that road.

Catholics worldwide in 2015, those with eyes to see, feel very much like the Cleaning Section. We see our parishes merged, our churches shut down, our seminaries, convents and noviciates sold to developers, our schools decatholicised. We quietly withdraw. Even as we die, we must be careful not to rock the boat. Let us vanish in a gentlemanly way, as the world smiles at us: "Farewell, miserable rearguard, and good riddance!" So, should we not give up? Should we not give in?

No. *That* was the horizontal vision, not the transcendent one. It was what the flesh tells us – not the faith. Fr Verrier, you would not be sitting in our midst as Celebrant; you



would not soon stand at the altar to offer the Holy Sacrifice, if you shared that deceptive vision. Dear friends, if we adhered to it ourselves, we must have misplaced our supernatural glasses. When we find them again – our proper *faith* glasses; when we focus on what escapes our eyes of flesh but not our souls – *this* is what we will see. What indeed, do you ask?



and view the land and the city of Jericho. They went and entered into the house of a woman that was a harlot named Rahab, and lodged with her” (cf *Joshua* 2).

As the spies found refuge in the house of the prostitute Rahab, who was spared for her faith when Jericho fell, in our turn we spread the Good News among alien folk. We mark those of good will with the sign of the

We will see that we belong to One Who has already won the battle on our behalf. It was on Good Friday, on Mount Golgotha. He is our Head and we are His mystical Body, the Church. He is our Head, in Latin ‘caput’, whence also ‘captain’. And our Captain will soon return, visibly. The end of time is near, for Him to Whom one thousand years are like a day.

We belong to His Church, spread across time even more powerfully than across space. Here below, we only see the Militant or Pilgrim fringe of His Church: with a mere 1.2 billion known. But much more numerous and helpful are the suffering souls in Purgatory, who are already holy and will intercede for us when their purification is ended. In Heaven now, without interruption, billions of saints and trillions of holy angels petition on our behalf the adorable Trinity, led in intercession by the Most Holy Mother of God.

With them, we are Christ’s holy army. We are still on earth, yes. But we are not forgotten: we are sent. We are not lagging behind: we are scouting out. We are not the *rearguard*: we are the *vanguard*! We are the Lord’s gentle spies.

Spies? Indeed! Remember how, in the Old Testament, after forty years of wandering in the desert, Joshua sent spies to reconnoitre the Promised Land, ahead of the Hebrew army, still encamped east of the River Jordan: “Josue the son of Nun sent from Setim two men, to spy secretly: and said to them: Go,

Lord, so that they may be saved, when the army will take possession of the land. We are the emissaries of the liberation forces. We have but little time to enrol as many as will trust in the Word Who sent us, and Who guides us daily.

What are we? We are not agents of subversion, because evil is chaos and the peace we bring is the tranquillity of order. We are the spies of love, under the nose of hatred. We are busy smuggling mercy. We plot freedom. We inject grace. Weak and few as we may seem, we rely on apocalyptic backup in heaven. Angels and saints listen to us, poor pilgrims across our vale of tears. When our knees touch the ground below, one million hands join in prayer on high. When our hands join in prayer below, one billion wings spread above to shield us. Such is the Communion of saints. All the baptised partake in this wondrous power. All of us are spies of the Great King on-high, preparing His people for the liberation to come. Such is, dear friends, our shared mandate through Holy Baptism. Such is our brotherly pride.

But the King our Captain has willed to imprint special powers in selected agents. He has made them head-spies, associate captains and chief forerunners of His final advent. Who are those, you ask? You should know. They are here. They live amongst us. They are the priests. The priests of God. Our priests.



Leaving seminary like Fr Verrier a fortnight ago, on the day of their ordination they jump in the dark, through the night of sinful worldliness. They land behind enemy lines: not at random, but to targets assigned by Chief Command (i.e. the Holy



See and our shepherds the bishops). They are thoroughly trained in the arts of God's grace. And what do you think is their first action once landed, and their last? They light the beacons! They activate a signal of infinite magnitude: the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass. Such is the command they received from Christ Himself: "I came to cast fire upon the earth; and would that it were already kindled!" (Luke 12:49-53).

At each Holy Mass, the priest acts *in persona Christi*. He lets the divine Captain communicate His own infinite merits to all of us sinners. Out of the tyranny of the devil, the Prince of this World, wounded souls are drawn into the Eucharistic light. Shivering souls are led to the warmth of the Eucharistic *Fire*.

From on-high, the liberation army observes the radiance beaming from every altar on earth. Just as on a clear summer night we look up at the stars and wish we were there – reciprocally, from on-high saints and angels look downwards at the constellation of Masses across our dark world, and soon they will be here, visibly.

When the King's armies enter the land, on the days of wrath, those found within the Eucharistic shelters will be spared. Like the prostitute Rahab, they will have life, on account of their faith and good works. But as we examine our conscience, we admit that even lovers of the Eucharist need guidance and encouragement! And those still alien to the Eucharist need witnesses and teachers. Hence I ask you: where will we find such men?

It is God's will that all should be saved. To that end, our divine Captain demands priests. With trembling then, but with joy, today I call in His name. I call for priests. I call



for holy sacrificers to offer *in Persona Christi* not "the blood of goats and calves" (Hebrews 9:12) but that of the Immaculate Lamb. I call for men. I call for associate captains. I call for God's commandos. But note that I am not calling for *supermen*. I am not calling for geniuses and heroes, as if natural skills could suffice for such a sacred enterprise. Before desiring any particular skills, I am calling for those Whom Christ destines to be configured to Him: "meek and humble of heart".

Listen to me then, men; future *men of God*. Your training will be gradual, brotherly, deep, and rewarding. Your weapons will be humility; prayer; joy; knowledge; purity; trust in God; good humour; discipline; endurance and fraternity. Soon enough, you will be airborne. After takeoff and a seven-year flight, you will jump in the darkness of the world, like Fr Verrier just a fortnight ago. You will fly with the parachute of grace and, landing according to plan, you will light the beacons. You will





offer Holy Mass: “Introibo ad altare Dei!”

On the occasion of this First Solemn High Mass of our newly ordained priest back in England, I say to you, dear young men: Come undercover! Come underground, as God’s secret emissaries! Come and exfiltrate souls from the entanglements of sin! Come and increase the number of the elect, through the fecundity of God’s grace. Do you wish you could reply “yes,” but do you still also feel weak? Then listen to the great Apostle St Paul, the Doctor of the Nations, listen to what God told him: “My grace is sufficient for thee; for power is made perfect in infirmity. Gladly therefore will I glory in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may dwell in me” (2 Co 12:19). Men, come: join the *vanguard*.

There are many ways to train God’s captains. The Priestly Fraternity of St Peter is a small and imperfect tool. We ordain a mere twelve priests a year worldwide. This year, we have ordained fifteen. In England, up to last week, we were but two priests in one house. Not quite enough to make hell tremble! But through God’s mercy and through your prayers, in the last dozen years we have ordained seven priests from this country: Fr Konrad Loewenstein in 2002; Fr Brendan Gerard in 2006; Frs Matthew Goddard and William Barker in 2009; Fr Simon Harkins in 2010; Fr Matthew McCarthy in 2011 and Fr Ian Verrier this month.

In addition, we have ten seminarians from England and Wales beginning or continuing their studies at our two international seminaries in Bavaria and Nebraska. This gives reasonable hopes for one new deacon and one new priest from England and Wales ordained every year in the forthcoming years. Every year then, one more priest from this country and one more deacon. What a grace! What a sign! What a reward! Already, two of them are now serving in England. We will send more, if they are wanted here.

Please consider making your prayer for vocations even more fruitful through our prayer network, the Confraternity of Saint Peter. You only need to pray daily one decade of the Rosary, recite one prayer for vocations and have the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass offered once a year for vocations. In return, you can gain special

indulgences and also be supported by the prayers of our 160 seminarians and of our 250 priests. Every day, thirteen Holy Masses are offered specifically for the intentions of the 4,900 members of the Confraternity and for our vocations.

In conclusion dear friends, let us renew our commitment as the gentle spies of Christ. Let us put on our supernatural glasses and focus on what escapes the eyes of our body but not those of our soul! Let us walk bravely, even amidst the flames of vice, witnessing God’s sanctity. Let us light up and make known the Eucharistic beacons, casting away the shadows of despair. Let us not rely on our skills, for we are useless servants but, poorly or richly endowed, let us do our utmost and God will grant victory! Though we are but a few scattered emissaries... – across the river Jordan, on the other side of time, the formidable armies of God are on the move!

Look! See the celestial legions of England and of Wales! See how they watch our humble scouting, while with our feeble hands we mark God’s elect. See the mighty officers on-high, about to set foot across the water and lead their battalions down to our earthly shores. See Alban and Augustine! See Bede and Cuthbert! See Chad, Hugh and Thomas! The end is near. They are



coming! See Winifred and Ethelreda! See Simon Stock the gracious Carmelite! Hold the line, they are on their way! See the Pearl of York, Margaret Clitherow; and Margaret Pole, both saintly mothers of priests! Stand your ground, they are here! See John Fisher and Thomas More, the columns of faithful England! See Campion and Mayne, the gallant missionaries! See John Henry Newman and Dominic Barberi!

But most of all, look at the fair one, awaiting the return of Her Dowry to Her, for Her Son’s glory: watch the Mother of God, the Most pure and chaste, our Mother through grace. “Thou art beautiful, O my love, sweet and comely as Jerusalem: terrible as an army set in array” (Cant. 6:3). On our behalf, almightily, She begs. Under Her queenship, let us toil gladly and prepare the coming of Her Son, Jesus, the Prince of peace. He is on the move with His armies. He is coming to rescue us. He is here: Ecce Agnus Dei, ecce qui tollit peccata mundi! □