

In today's second reading, St Paul urges the Christian community at Ephesus to get a makeover. They must throw away the old self, he says, and put on the new self. Paul wasn't offering them sartorial advice or suggesting that they upgrade their physical appearance in order to look 10 years younger. He wasn't talking about makeup or fashion at all, but about a transformation of mind and spirit. The followers of Jesus in Ephesus must not go on living the aimless kind of lives that pagans live, but become whole new people in Christ, renewed by a spiritual revolution. They must be changed, reformed, transformed, into a Godly people.

Paul knew what he was talking about. His own dramatic experience on the road to Damascus changed his life completely. He threw away the old self and put on the new self. He even began using a new name. Through his encounter with the risen Lord, Paul's life had been upended utterly. Our encounter with the risen Lord, the Bread of Life, must upend and transform our lives, too.

ALWAYS BE OPTIMIZING

A couple of years ago, young American writer Jia Tolentino wrote a book called *Trick Mirror*. It's a collection of essays on the challenges facing young women today. One essay is entitled 'Always be Optimizing.' It's about the pressure women have always felt to look good, be attractive. The need to always be optimising; in other words, trying always to look better, be thinner, more glamorous, sexier, to never be satisfied with your appearance or success.

It's not only women who feel this pressure nowadays. Young men feel it increasingly too – the need to work out, to be ripped, athletic, desirable.

Our competitive world pressurises us to be acknowledged as successful, with a rewarding career and a big income, and a perfect family and a nice house. To always be optimising. Social media, with its obsession with looks and money and celebrity, makes

being your authentic self even harder. It's a reason why sales of make up, even to young men, are booming. Image is everything.

It explains why Reality TV shows like *Ten Years Younger* and *100% Hotter* are so popular. On these shows participants receive a makeover that alters or enhances how they look, bringing out or highlighting their best features. Seeing their before and after pics is like looking at a completely different person. We see the difference a new look can make, its transformative effect.

Liturgy is also about transformation. We are invited to give up our old way of life, and put on the new self, one created in God.

The new self we are invited to put on is not as simple as getting a new wardrobe or hairstyle like the participants on a TV show. Or giving up home and family and livelihood. Rather, it is about making sure that God is the director of our lives, that God shapes everything we do every day.

Putting on the new self means putting on God. It means following the example of Jesus, and allowing ourselves to be moulded in his image. It means knowing that Jesus is our Bread of Life, who nourishes and sustains us, and gives us everything that we need.

ST ALPHONSUS

Today is the feast of St Alphonsus de Ligouri, founder of the Redemptorists. A native of Naples in Italy, Alphonsus was a successful lawyer before becoming a priest. In 1732, while visiting the Amalfi coast, he was struck by the plight of the poor farmers and goatherds of the area who had been largely abandoned by church and state. He founded the Redemptorists to minister especially to the poor and marginalised. St Alphonsus was also a moral theologian and author of over one hundred books. In 1871, he was declared a doctor of the church. Today, more than 5,000 Redemptorists minister throughout the world. ■



Today's readings

Ex 16:2-4, 12-15
Eph 4:17, 20-24
Jn 6:24-35

GOD'S WORD TODAY

Today's Gospel uses rich concepts which have different levels of meaning. "Bread from heaven" is one such concept. It can refer to the manna of the Exodus story or to the Word of God which creates and sustains life. Both food and life are God's gifts to the world. When Jesus says he is the "bread of life," it means he is God's life-giving, life-sustaining gift to the world. We don't have to do anything to earn this gift. We only have to trust God and accept it freely.

1 August 2021 – 18th Sunday in Ordinary Time Year B

Psalter Week 4

Stu()space

SERIES: POINTERS ON THE JOURNEY

Season colour: GREEN

In this series, Gerard Moloney, C.Ss.R reflects on the Gospel in the context of today.



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Parishes of Dromara and Drumgooland

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18th Sunday in Ordinary Time – 1st August 2021

The Prophets

Micah

He is from humble origins, he represents the voice of ordinary men and women, he sees the events happening through the eyes of a peasant. Micah is around the same time as Isaiah.

He sees that Jerusalem will fall, but more importantly the people have already fallen away from God. He challenges social injustice, the land grabbers who exploit the poor to take what little they have.

There is a promise that God will teach them his ways, like a shepherd he will gather them in, especially the lame, the outcasts, the afflicted and restore them to health. The new King will come from Bethlehem, from David's line, fulfilled by Jesus.

God's love is steadfast but the people must respond, they are to Act Justly, Love Tenderly and Walk Humbly with their God.

Zephaniah

He fiercely denounces idol practices, judges who do not give justice, and merchants who exploit. There are oracles against foreign nations but also a prediction that the Day of the Lord will come, but it will be one of moaning and darkness. Those who defy the Lord will suffer yet there will be hope for the humble (the anawim), sometimes referred to as the faithful few.

Nahum

He focuses on the fall of Assyria, even major powers can fall. Many of the passages rejoice in destruction. The name Nahum means 'comfort'. God has not forgotten his long suffering people, but many have forgotten him.

Anniversary Masses

Leitrim

Sat 7 th	11am	Tony Clarke (MM)
	12noon	Sarah Lennon (MM)
	7.30pm	Paddy O'Hare; Hugh Morgan Bernard and Ellen Cunningham

Dromara

Sun 8 th	Sean McKay Mary E McKay (Dree)
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Cairn Sunday Walk

Peter Morgan's Cottage, Cairn Sunday morning, circular walk to Slieve Croob, 11k approx. Boots recommended. Road/track/rough ground/boggy in places. No dogs. Meet at the cottage at 9:00am for 9:30am start. Refreshments at the cottage on return. Everyone welcome.

Blood Donation Session at St Malachy's High School, Mon 2nd Aug, 1:00pm – 4:00pm and 5:00pm – 8:00pm. Donation sessions are by appointment only, please book an appointment, on 08085 534 653 between 10:00am and 4:30pm.

There will be no Weekday Masses this week

Weekend masses

Sat	6:00pm Dechomet 7:30pm Leitrim
Sun	9:00am Gargory 11:00am Dromara

I will be on holiday from Sun 18th Jul (after mass) until Sat 7th Aug. If there are any emergency sick calls or deaths, please try Fr Brian Brown (074 9673 1619). (I turn my mobile phone off on holiday).

Changes to guidance about church attendance

On Mon 26th Jul, the NI Executive decided to remove the **legal** requirement to wear a face covering within a place of worship.

Many people have expressed a concern about the non-wearing of face coverings. Please feel free to continue wearing face coverings whilst in the church, it does help to protect others and therefore yourself. I strongly encourage people to wear them; especially as we begin the adjustment which will allow more people to attend mass.

The 2m social distance will be reduced to 1m in a church setting. The change in social distance space will not be introduced into the parishes until the weekend I return, 7th/8th Aug.

The help of Eucharistic Ministers will be very welcome. If the Eucharistic Ministers let their coordinator know if they are comfortable to take up this role again. It will take time for things to settle down, please be patient with yourself and with others during change.