

of the risk of disinheritance. But one of his visitors said that *“his long-haired head (was) full of nonsense regarding the Church of Rome. His room full of photographs of the Pope and Cardinal Manning”*. Before his final examinations in 1878 he came very close to converting after discussion with Fr, Bowden from the Brompton Oratory. He was offered a date for being received into the Church. Instead of turning up he sent a large package of a bunch of lilies. As his biographer writes: *“It was Wilde’s polite way of flowering over his renunciation”*. His turning away and rejection lasted some two decades. After the scandals and his release from imprisonment in 1897, he died impoverished in November 1900, exiled in France. Three weeks earlier he had told a newspaper correspondent: *“Much of my moral obliquity is due to the fact that my father would not allow me to become a Catholic....I intend to be received before long”*. When Wilde was dying, his Catholic friend, Ross, brought Father Dunne to his deathbed. The final scene is recorded as: *“Ross asked Wilde if he wished to see Dunne, and Wilde, unable to speak, held up his hand. Dunne asked Wilde if he wished to be received and he once more held up his hand. On this sign Dunne gave him conditional baptism, and absolved and anointed him”*. So died he who had previously quipped: *“The Roman Catholic Church is for saints and sinners alone – for respectable people, the Anglican Church will do.”* **-Stephen. S**

Entrance antiphon: Turn your eyes, O God, our shield; and look on the face of your anointed one; one day within your courts is better than a thousand elsewhere.

First Reading: Isaiah 56:1, 6-7

Responsorial Psalm: 66. Response: Let the peoples praise you, O God; let all the peoples praise you.

Second Reading: Romans 11: 13-15, 29-32

Gospel Acclamation: Alleluia, alleluia! The sheep that belong to me listen to my voice, says the Lord, I know them and they follow me. Alleluia!

Gospel: Matthew: 15: 21-28

Memorial Acclamation: We proclaim your Death, O Lord, and profess your Resurrection until you come again.

Communion Antiphon: With the Lord there is mercy; in him is plentiful redemption.



Twentieth Sunday in Ordinary Time

Cycle A, 2023 Weekly Reflection: Converts: (2) 19th/20th century authors: The earlier part of the 20th Century produced an amazing crop of

conversions by English literary figures, They included Chesterton, Evelyn Waugh and Graham Greene. Chesterton was baptised an Anglican, became fascinated with the occult when a young man, married an Anglican in 1901, this leading him back to the C of E, until in 1922, aged 48, he became a Catholic. One of his famous quotations is; *“To become a Catholic is not to leave off thinking, but to learn how to think.”* Waugh was also Anglican, went through a period of atheism, and converted in 1930. He said something which, although superficially witty, warrants reflection, namely: *“I always think to myself: ‘I know I am awful.’ But how much more awful I should be without the Faith.”* Finally, Graham Greene, a non-believer, converted in 1926 after his future wife, Vivien, rejected his first proposal of marriage because of his atheism. Throughout his life he had an uneasy relationship with the Faith, having at least four mistresses and describing himself as a ‘Catholic agnostic’. Yet he regularly re-affirmed his Catholicism in letters of condolence, while on the other hand failing to practise his religion, saying: *“If I went to communion, I would have to confess and make promises. I prefer to excommunicate myself”*.

My main focus is even more problematic than Greene. In Richard Ellman’s fine biography of Oscar Wilde (1987) there is a treasury of religious nuggets. Wilde’s father was a resolute Protestant and Oscar and his brother were so baptised. Wilde’s mother was occasionally attracted by Catholicism and at her request, Father Fox, of Glenree, Co. Wicklow, baptised her sons as Catholics. Oscar was about 5 years old. He continued to be brought up as a Protestant. At Trinity College, Dublin, he had tinkered with Catholicism, but remained a Protestant, attributing this to his father’s threat to disinherit him. At Oxford, against the background of the earlier conversions of Manning, Newman and Gerard Manley Hopkins, and under strong persuasion from his close friend, Blair, Wilde again held out against conversion because (he said)