

## OUR LADY OF THE SOUTHERN CROSS

Isaiah 9:2-17

Gal 4:4-7

Jn 19:25-27

Today is the feast of our Ordinariate's primary patron, namely Our Lady of the Southern Cross, Help of Christians. This feast was first decreed in 1815 after Pope Pius VII was released after 5 years in prison at the hands of Napoleon Bonaparte.

Our Lady is the most powerful woman in the world. Prayers for her help had been sought for centuries before this feast was established, especially in troubled times. One of those times was known as the Dark Ages, the period from the collapse of the Roman Empire in the 5<sup>th</sup> century AD until the 10<sup>th</sup> century. In this period, paganism rules, but C K Chesterton considered it to be the time when the evils of the Roman Empire were expelled and its pagan obsession with sex, infanticide, beauty, corruption and hedonism was challenged by Celtic and European Christians.

Following the Dark Ages, people like SS Norbert, Bernard, Francis and Dominic, together with the recitation of the Rosary by the lay faithful, became part of the life of the Church. The result was that small creative faithful communities helped to usher in a new age in which adoration of our Lord in the Blessed Sacrament became a feature and some stability was established.

There are similarities between our current pagan secularist, post-modern relativist culture and the Dark Ages. Today we also use St John Paul II's phrase, are a culture of death in which the unwanted, imperfect and unproductive and non-politically correct are cancelled, and assisted suicide is passed off as compassionate terminal care. It was Arnold Toynbee who said that "Civilisations die from suicide not by murder."

Our Lady Help of Christians is portrayed as a strong woman, presenting her Son to the world. She is not only the mother of Christ but the mother of all disciples and the Church. We pray for her support that the Ordinariates will become creative communities in our own 'Dark Age.' Like her we must listen to God and subject ourselves to his will. We pray that like her we may be faithful and courageous. We must be nourished through the Scriptures and Sacraments and empowered by the Holy Spirit to hold fast to the faith once delivered to the Saints.

It was St John Henry Newman who described Our Lady as "Our happier world because she leads her spiritual children to her Son and helps them recover what has been lost."

Happy Patronal Festival. May Our Lady of the Southern Cross, Help of Christians pray for us that we might be a beacon of light in the Church and the world at this time.

Msgr Harry