

ENCOURAGEMENT ENCOURAGEMENT

May 2026 – Issue 178

‘Exploration’

While still in the Easter season properly called Eastertide, we can explore what the Lord is calling us to do as a consequence of His rising. We now have an open vision of the possibilities. Even though we had so much joy over Easter we also still have great concerns over the many wars and deep suffering of all God’s people. Recently though, we had another thing to think about and that is our never-ending search for further climbs, further knowledge, further thoughts as we watched the take off and return of the Artemis II after circumventing the earth and the moon. Whatever we think of this endeavour, and there are indeed many differing views of its importance, or not, of such attempts to conquer space, we also have four individuals and hundreds of people engaged in making such things happen. Neither can we not accept the massive achievement in the technological sense or indeed the bravery of the men and women who put themselves through the massive training and risk that this involves. There is never a certainty of a safe return.

Mankind has pushed the boundaries of knowledge throughout the ages. From thinking the earth was flat and not circular to discovering new land that we now take for granted. There have always been those who fought back and did not want things to change or question their ‘beliefs’ seen as ‘facts’. Even the invention of agricultural machinery was rejected by many, so too the printing press by Johannes Gutenberg in the 14th century. While this was rejected later its invention allowed for the Bible to be distributed, food for thought maybe. Exploration of possibilities and ideas has led to many advances in fields such as medicine, industry education and much else.

Exploring the earth has of course led to the spread of Christianity as further lands have embraced it, some

more than others and there have been benefits as well as difficulties with this and sadly sometimes coercion, never a way to evangelise.

It is interesting to note that outer space too had a place in the gospels for did not the three ‘Wise Men’, possibly astronomers, follow that star to seek Jesus a ‘king’ to be. Furthermore, does Jesus himself not refer many times to give examples of how things change in the seasons, and how people learn to read the signs. Indeed, Jesus chides them for not recognising the signs or for being able to do this yet not searching for truth further.

“The Pharisees and Sadducees came up, and testing Jesus, they asked Him to show them a sign from heaven. But He replied to them, “When it is evening, you say, ‘It will be fair weather, for the sky is red.’ and in the morning, ‘There will be a storm today, for the sky is red and threatening.’ Do you know how to discern the appearance of the sky, but cannot discern the signs of the times?” (Matthew 16 1-4)

And again: Mark 13:24-26

“But in those days, after that tribulation, the sun will be darkened and the moon will not give its light, and the stars will be falling from heaven, and the powers that are in the heavens will be shaken. Then they will see the Son of Man coming in clouds with great power and glory.”

Exploration of space but awareness of it has always been a part of ‘man’s deeper search for that which is beyond. Poets have written about it. Poets and novelists have dreamed of it and especially the moon. We refer to people as being ‘moon struck’ when in love and being over the moon when happy. Of those of a certain age, over 60 years of age, there may be recollections of the Apollo 11 mission that landed on the moon and those first picture of not just

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Spread love everywhere you go. Let no one come to you without leaving happier. Anon.

the moon but planet earth. We have learnt much about it since then, but the quest goes on.

Helen Keller was born deaf and blind, but never stopped learning and exploring said: 'It is curious to observe what different ideals of happiness people cherish, and in what singular places they look for this well-spring of their life. Many look for it in the hoarding of riches, some in the pride of power, and others in the achievements of art and literature; a few seek it in the exploration of their own minds, or in search for knowledge.'

A few days ago we had the excitement of seeing the Artemis II crew land safely back on earth. Clearly, they had learnt much and taken extensive photographs of the hidden past of the moon. They had gone further away from earth than any before them. They had learnt skills that require great knowledge and preparation. This requires technical skills far beyond the abilities of most of us.

So we would not be too surprised that on their return they would give us the technical aspects of what they had learnt and the new knowledge they acquired.

There will obviously be time for that too. Yet what they brought back was perhaps more precious, each expressing this in different ways. Three men and one woman came back with perhaps an even deeper understanding of the necessity of that which links us. In the first interviews they treated us to deep reflections of what was important to them during the voyage. Each a different personality and each with a deep appreciation of the things of earth and each other. These can be summarised in four words that give the flavour of what they felt. They expressed this with tears and joy, hope and gladness which was very moving. They had not yet gone through in their minds and absorbed everything, but four things were very clear. *'Family, God, Community and Love'* Each one expressed an aspect of this in a unique way, briefly and succinctly. No massive elaborate technical terms just sincere reflections.



The Commander (Greg) Reid Wiseman spoke of the excitement of setting off and how he could not wait to go, but after a time could not wait to see his family and return home. He learnt how utterly human he/we are.

Victor Glover could not find the words but spoke of the constant thanking of God again and again and again, for what they had seen and being with whom they were with.

Christina Koch, who had prepared a little for the moment spoke of 'community' in term of a crew and how years earlier she had said what she thought what a crew member was and realised that this was totally inadequate. She had now realised that they were a crew, not a team and that we are all *crew* members of planet earth. She also spoke movingly of how this earth is just *so bright* against the surrounding darkness and this had stuck her and how *dark space is*.

Finally, came Jeremy Hansen, the Canadian. He spoke of the Exploration and the Joy of it and how no matter what was happening, and there were moments of difficulty. However, they always returned to Joy. But finally, what was most important was Love, Love and Love. Love in the mirror and see the other. These sentiments were expressed by constant hugs and clear love they had for each other.

If it takes this to remind us of the verities that exist and that indeed are part of our faith then the real success of the mission was achieved, not just for them but for us. Ethical questions remain in respect of cost, but these truths exceed these in value.

Let us value each other and respect what we have been given and the beauty of this, our little gem of brightness in our cosmos and thank God for it and those explorers.

Halina Holman©

Feast Days in May

1st St. Joseph the Worker

2nd St. Athanasius

3rd Fifth Sunday of Easter

4th The English Martyrs

10th Sixth Sunday of Easter

13th Our Lady of Fatima

14th St Matthias Apostle

14th Ascension of the Lord (Holy Day of Ob. + 17th)

17th Seventh Sunday of Easter

21st St. Godric of Finchale

22nd St. Rita of Cascia

24th Pentecost Sunday

25th St. Bede the Venerable

26th St. Philip Neri

27th St. Augustine of Canterbury

28th Our Lord Jesus Christ, Eternal High Priest

31st Trinity Sunday

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