

NEWSLETTER

Parishes of St Anthony of Padua, Onchan; St Mary of the Isle and St Joseph, Douglas

Tel 01624 675509 Email saintmaryiom@rcaol.org.uk Website www.manxcatholic.org

25th Sunday of Ordinary Time, 24th September 2023

Day of Prayer in Thanksgiving for Harvest/Fruits of Human Work

World Day of Migrants & Refugees

(Page 131 in Mass Book)

(Year A for Sundays) (Cycle 2 for weekdays)

Dear Parishioners

The Holy Father, Pope Francis has granted cathedral status to the church of Saint Mary of the Isle, Douglas.

What does this mean?

The town of Douglas, capital of the Isle of Man, was awarded city status as part of the late Queen Elizabeth's Platinum Jubilee celebrations in June 2022. Just over a year ago I was approached by officers of Douglas Borough Council. They pointed out that city status usually goes hand in hand with having a cathedral. Their dilemma was that the Isle of Man already has a cathedral, in Peel. The council enquired if it might be possible to elevate the church of Saint Mary of the Isle, Douglas, to the status of a cathedral. I responded by explaining that a cathedral is literally the place where the bishop of a diocese has his chair or *cathedra*. And that the catholic church in the Isle of Man, as part of the Archdiocese of Liverpool, already has its cathedral in the city of Liverpool. However, further research revealed that there is a precedent within the world-wide Catholic church for 'co-cathedrals', although there is no such cathedral within the British Isles. Co-cathedrals exist where two former dioceses, each with its own cathedral, amalgamate, or when a diocese spans two separate civil jurisdictions.

I therefore wrote to Archbishop Malcolm to ask if he thought it would be appropriate for him to seek co-cathedral status from the Holy Father. He agreed that it was a good idea and so the lengthy year-long process began. With support from Archdiocesan canon lawyers the following case was submitted to the Vatican Dicastery for Bishops via the Apostolic Nunciature in London (ie the Holy See's embassy in the UK). The submission had to assume a lack of awareness of the unique position of the Isle of Man geographically, historically and politically alongside its unique faith history and traditions.

- The Isle of Man is an independent legal jurisdiction. It is not part of the United Kingdom. It is self-governing and was never part of the European Union. The head of state is the sovereign of the United Kingdom who sits not as king but as 'Lord of Mann'. The Lord of Mann is represented on the Island by the Lieutenant Governor.
- Positioned in the middle of the Irish Sea, it is equidistant from England, Scotland, Wales, Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland. On a clear day all these nations can be seen from vantage points on the island.
- Throughout its history, the Island has been governed successively by the Kings of Norway and the Kings of Scotland. Tynwald, or the Manx parliament, is of Norse origin and is over 1,000 years old. It is the oldest continuously sitting parliament in the world. It has two chambers: the House of Keys and an upper chamber – the Legislative Council.
- The Isle of Man has its own national anthem. It has its own language, flag and banknotes.
- The Isle of Man is financially independent and is self-governing apart from defence and foreign affairs, for which it makes a payment to the UK government from its own tax revenues.
- Prior to the Reformation, the church on the Island formed the Diocese of Sodor and Man along with the Hebrides and west coast of Scotland. Since the Reformation it continues as an Anglican diocese but without the Scottish territory. It is part of the Church of England with its own Bishop resident on the Island with its own cathedral in the historic town of Peel.
- The post Reformation Catholic church on the island is now part of the Archdiocese of Liverpool. Separated from Liverpool 80 miles across the Irish Sea, it constitutes one third of the land mass of the Archdiocese with a total population of 85,000. The diversity of Catholics among the population is strengthened by recently arrived families from the Philippines, Eastern Europe and many other Western European, African and South American nations with Catholics from Southern India. They come to work in the Island's financial sector and in the health and social care sectors.
- The present church of St Mary of the Isle, built in 1859, is situated directly across the main street from the Tynwald Parliament building.
- The church is regularly visited by the Archbishop of Liverpool and his auxiliary bishops. It is the venue for ordinations to the priesthood, the diaconate and the sacrament of Confirmation.

- St Mary of the Isle is frequently the venue for civic occasions such as the Isle of Man Government Christmas Carol Service and the annual Holocaust Memorial Service. These are attended by the Chief Minister and his cabinet along with the Lieutenant Governor and civic leaders and officials.
- Formal ceremonies to mark the change of status from town to city are being planned. It is anticipated that a senior member of the Royal Family will attend. There will also be a special ceremony in St Mary's in the future when the Archbishop will formally take his seat and the Chapter of Canons will be installed.
- It was an unexpected approach from the civil authorities. There is a history of sectarian division on the Island. But for three years the Roman Catholic Dean was invited to serve as official chaplain to the Mayor of Douglas. This was a first. It required attendance at every council meeting in the Town Hall to lead prayers. The chaplain's support was also required at other civic events. These sometimes included social occasions with elected members and officers. Little did I realise what these hours of attendance, and the building up of trust and friendship, might lead to. I have now been asked to serve in the same capacity again for the current Mayor. The Dean also plays a prominent role in civic occasions alongside other church leaders such as the annual open-air sitting at the ancient site of the Tynwald parliament. This year there was an additional sitting of Tynwald to proclaim King Charles III as Lord of Mann. Once again, the Catholic Dean was invited to lead prayers.
- Painstaking commitment by the Catholic church by many priests over the years to ecumenical co-operation and partnership has borne fruit. For example, the Anglican Bishop of Sodor and Man traditionally leads one day of our annual Novena to Mary Untier of Knots. He has also personally dedicated our statue of Our Lady of Walsingham at St Anthony's Onchan. As well as excellent local ecumenical relations with other Christian denominations on the Island, the individual leaders of each denomination meet monthly as CAIM – 'Churches Alive in Mann'. We speak jointly on public policy issues such as Abortion, Famine Relief and Climate Change. We are unanimously opposing the current Assisted Dying Bill in its passage through Tynwald. We also collaborate in jointly funding a Manx churches' Safeguarding Officer. The Anglican bishop was fully supportive of this request for co-cathedral status as are the other church leaders.
- Not just a distant mission station of the church in Liverpool, the Catholic church on the Island has a proud Celtic Christian tradition reaching back to the time of St Patrick and St Maughold. Yet the Isle of Man is often overlooked by the majority of Catholics in the wider Archdiocese. The elevation of St Mary's to co-cathedral status will strengthen our unity with the Archdiocese of Liverpool of which it forms a significant part. The installation of the Archbishop's *cathedra* or chair at Saint Mary of the Isle will be a permanent reminder to the Island's Catholics that the Archbishop of Liverpool is their spiritual leader. Visitors to our Cathedral in Liverpool will equally be made aware of their co-cathedral in the Isle of Man. It is hoped to commission and install an appropriate religious artifact of Manx design in our Liverpool Cathedral to celebrate this.
- The raising of the church of Saint Mary of the Isle to co-cathedral status will give a boost to members of the Catholic church on the Island and give them a sense of pride in their own unique tradition. It will also raise the profile of the Catholic community in the eyes of the Government and wider Manx society, underlining the significant contribution that the Catholic church makes to religious and civic life.
- It had been suggested that bestowing 'basilica' status on St Mary's church would have the same effect. However, the population of the Island, both civic and Catholic, would not recognise the significance of that term. The word 'Cathedral' is understood by all. A permanent 'cathedra' from which the Archbishop of Liverpool will preside on his visits, will provide clear and unambiguous recognition of the long-standing mission of the Catholic church on the Isle of Man.

The Holy See responded to the Archbishop's initial approach with a request for further detailed information. This required a complete survey of the building both interior and exterior along with detailed plans of where the Archbishop's seat will be situated. Copies of letters of support were requested. These included a letter from the President of Tynwald and the Chief Executive of the Council. The detailed submission formed an eighty-page dossier.

Final word of the Pope's approval was conveyed to the Archbishop by the Apostolic Nuncio in London, marking the end of the year-long process. It is an honour not just for the church and parishioners of Saint Mary of the Isle but a significant moment for the Catholic church across the Island and for the rest of the Archdiocese. It is fitting that this good news has arrived to coincide with our Civic Service at St Mary of the Isle at 11am this Sunday.

- This Sunday we welcome Douglas City Council leaders and other dignitaries to join us at the 11.00am Mass for their annual **Civic Service**. A welcome feature of this celebration will be the presence of children's choirs from our own St Mary's School alongside children from Manor Park Primary School. If you usually park in Hill Street, access to it will be closed from 10.30am to accommodate the civic procession from the City Hall. Please stay behind for refreshments after Mass to greet our guests at the back of church. *Fr John*

Dates for your Diary: We will be holding our annual **Novena to Mary Untier of Knots** in St Mary's from **Tuesday 3rd to Wednesday 11th October**. The 6th Day of the Novena, Sunday 8th October will include celebration of the **Sacrament of the Sick** at 3.00pm. More details later.

- **Lourdes Youth Pilgrimage 2024:** Following a successful Archdiocesan Centenary Pilgrimage in July, application forms will go online on 2 October. Young people aged 15-22 can apply at www.liverpoolourdesyouth.co.uk.
- A **Macmillan Coffee Morning** will be held in St Anthony's Pastoral Centre on **Saturday 30 September** from 10am to 12 noon, in memory of Canon Brendan. Offers of cakes would be gratefully accepted. All proceeds will go to Macmillan Cancer Research. Please contact Sheila on 475990.
- The **Memory Support Group** will meet on **Tuesday 3 October** at 10.30am to 12 noon in St Anthony's Pastoral Centre. The leaders will welcome **John Struthers** from **Ellan Vannin Pipes & Drum Band** who will provide the entertainment. Everyone warmly welcomed, refreshments served. Contact Josie on 406063 or Sally 642879.
- **St Marys Choir: Both Senior and Junior Choirs** have resumed their practices for the busy Autumn/Winter Season on Wednesdays. Juniors (reception age and above) meet at 5.30 - 6.15pm; then 6.15 - 7.15pm for the Senior Choir. All enthusiastic voices and abilities welcome. Please contact Debs on 402966 for further details.
- **Assisted Dying Prayer Evening** 'Standing in the Gap' at Broadway Baptist Church on Thursday 12 October at 7.00pm. See posters at the back of church.
- **Offertory Collections:** St Anthony's £441; St Mary & St Joseph £795. This does not include standing orders and credit card donations. Thank you for your continued support and generosity.

Masses and Services for the coming week

All Masses and Services from St Mary's are live-streamed

Saturday 23rd September			
25 th Sunday of Ordinary Time	5.00pm	St Mary's	Katrina Domingo & Mary Daniels anv
Sunday 24th September	9.30am	St Anthony's	People of our Parishes
25 th Sunday of Ordinary Time <i>Day of Prayer in Thanksgiving for Harvest/Fruits of Human Work</i>	11.00am	St Mary's <i>(Civic Service)</i>	James Stack, anniversary
Monday 25th September	<i>No Mass today</i>	St Mary's	<i>No Mass or Service today</i>
Tuesday 26th September	<i>10.00am</i>	<i>St Anthony's</i>	<i>Eucharistic Service</i>
St Cosmas, St Damian	12.10 noon	St Mary's	Renee O'Neill
Wednesday 27th September	12.10 noon	St Mary's	Ann Morgan, Mary O'Callaghan & Patsy Morgan
St Vincent de Paul			
Thursday 28th September	10.00am	St Anthony's	Monica Caley, recently died
	12.10 noon	St Mary's	The Roney Family
Friday 29th September	12.10 noon	St Mary's	William Robert Corran
Sts Michael, Gabriel & Raphael			
Saturday 30th September	11.00am	<i>St Mary's</i>	<i>Sacrament of Confirmation with Archbishop Malcolm</i>
26 th Sunday of Ordinary Time	5.00pm	St Mary's	Angelina Lacadin, birthday anniv
Sunday 1st October	9.30am	St Anthony's	People of our Parishes
26 th Sunday of Ordinary Time <i>Rosary Sunday</i>	11.00am	St Mary's	Rose & William Keenan, anniversary

God, Father Almighty, grant us the grace to work tirelessly for justice, solidarity and peace, so that all your children may enjoy the freedom to choose whether to migrate or to stay. Grant us the courage to denounce all the horrors of our world, and to combat every injustice that mars the beauty of your children and the harmony of our common home. Sustain us by the power of your Spirit, so that we can reflect your tender love to every migrant whom you place in our path; and to spread in hearts and in every situation the culture of encounter and of care, Amen.
(Pope Francis)

