

NEWSLETTER

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

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31st Sunday of Ordinary Time, 5th November 2023

(Page 149 in Mass Book)

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

Dear Parishioners

I write in advance of the Inauguration of Saint Mary's as a Co-Cathedral of the Archdiocese. It's been a hectic few weeks getting everything ready on time. Until a few days ago the Archbishop's chair hadn't arrived. My prayer now is that the Archbishop himself arrives without a problem and that all of our guests travel safely in spite of predictions of inclement weather. Next week's newsletter will contain a massive list of thanks.

I copy below, the final reflection given this week by **Father Timothy Ratcliffe OP** to the bishops and lay people gathered in Rome for the Synod as they return home to their dioceses across the world. Fr Timothy speaks of the Synod but the image of the garden applies equally to the church at all levels - and even to our new Cathedral in the Isle of Man. He also quotes Carmelite mystic Simone Weil **'We do not obtain the most precious gifts by going in search of them but by waiting for them.'** So much for my obsession with Google.....

In a few days' time, we shall go home for eleven months. This will apparently be a time of empty waiting. But it will probably be the most fertile time of the whole Synod, the time of germination. As Jesus said: 'The kingdom of God is as if someone would scatter seed on the ground, and would sleep and rise night and day, and the seed would sprout and grow, yet he does not know how'.

We have listened to hundreds of thousands of words during these last three weeks. Sometimes we have thought: 'Too many words!' Most of these words have been positive, words of hope and aspiration. These are words sown in the soil of the Church. They will be at work in our lives, in our imagination and our subconscious, during these eleven months. When the moment is right, they will bear fruit.

The Austrian poet Rainer Maria Rilke wrote:

*In spite of all the farmer's work and worry,
He can't reach down to where the seed is slowly
'Transmuted into summer'. The earth bestows.*

Although nothing may appear to be happening, we can be confident that if our words are loving they will bud, flower in the lives of people who we do not know. As St Therese of Lisieux said, quoted recently by the Holy Father: "It is confidence and nothing but confidence that must lead us to Love"

These eleven months will be like a pregnancy. Abraham and Sarah are promised they will have descendants more numerous than the sand on the seashore. But nothing appears to happen. Sarah laughs when she hears this promise the third or fourth time, as she listens hidden in the tent to the strangers in Genesis 18. Probably a bitter-sweet laugh. She has heard it all before, and she remains barren. But in a year's time she will bear a child of laughter.

So we, my sisters, and my brothers, we are pregnant with new life. This is a time of active waiting. Let me repeat the words of Simone Weil I quoted during the retreat. 'We do not obtain the most precious gifts by going in search of them but by waiting for them...This way of waiting, looking is, in the first place, attentive. The soul empties itself of its own contents in order to receive the human being it is looking at, just as he or she is, in all their truth.'

This is profoundly countercultural. The global culture of our time is often polarised, aggressive, dismissive of other people's views. The cry is: On whose side are you? When we go home, people will ask, 'Did you fight for our side? Did you oppose those unenlightened other people?' We shall need be profoundly prayerful to resist the temptation to succumb to a party-political way of thinking. That would be to fall back into the sterile, barren language of much of our conflictual society. It is not the synodal way. The synodal process is organic and ecological rather than competitive. It is more like planting a tree than winning a battle. Sometimes battles are unavoidable. Think of Saint Athanasius. But as such will be hard for many to understand what we are doing, sometimes including ourselves!

But if we keep our minds and our hearts open to the people whom we have met here, vulnerable to their hopes and fears, their words will germinate in our lives, and ours in theirs. And there will an abundant harvest, a fuller truth, the Church will be renewed.

Humanity's first vocation in Paradise was to be gardeners. Adam tended creation, speaking God's creative words, naming the animals. We shall have some gardening to do in these eleven months, my brothers and sisters to nurture the tender plant that is the Synod. Will we speak fertile, hope-filled words, or words that are destructive and cynical? Will our words nurture the crop or be poisonous? Will we be the gardeners of the future or trapped in old sterile conflicts? We each choose.

St Paul said to the Ephesians: 'Let no corrupting talk come out of your mouths, but only such as is good for building up, as fits the occasion, that it may give grace to those who hear' (4.9).

The **Holy Souls** will be remembered during our November Masses. Envelopes are available at the back of church for you to include the names of those you wish to be remembered. These can then be placed in the box in front of the altar.

- **IOM Interfaith Community invite you to Which Way to PEACE. A forum to exchange views and thoughts at the Christian Science Church Woodbourne/Hilary Road, Douglas on Saturday 4th November from 2 - 4pm.**
- The **Memory Support Group** will meet on **Tuesday 7 November at 10.30am to 12noon** in St Anthony's Pastoral Centre. Everyone will be warmly welcomed; refreshments will be served. Contact Josie 406063 or Sally 642879.
- **St Anthony's Bingo** will take place on **Thursday 9 November at 7.30pm**. Everyone welcome.
- **Island Spirituality Meeting** will be held on **Saturday 11 November at St John's Mill from 10.00am - 1.00pm**. The speaker will be the celebrated priest-poet, **Revd Dr Malcolm Guite** and his theme will be Poetry & Prayer and how the poetic imagination enriches our prayer life.
- The **Red Mill Hill Missionary Boxes for St Anthony's Church, Onchan**, will be emptied this week. If you have a box, please leave it in the church porch in the usual place.
- *Save the Date:* **St Peter's Mother's Union, Onchan** would like to invite ladies from our church to an afternoon of Christmas entertainment with Wendy McDowell and refreshments on **Tuesday 5 December 2023 at 2pm** at the Village Hall, Onchan (top of Royal Avenue) along with our friends from the Methodist Church in Onchan.
- **Offertory Collections:** St Anthony's £560; St Mary & St Joseph £1,359. 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 4th November			
31 st Sunday of Ordinary Time	5.00pm	St Mary's	Felixberto Rosales, recently died
Sunday 5th November	9.30am	St Anthony's	Deceased members of the Wheeler, McNally & Kelly families
31 st Sunday of Ordinary Time	11.00am	St Mary's	People of our Parishes
Monday 6th November	<i>No Mass or Service</i>	St Mary's	<i>No Mass or Service today</i>
Tuesday 7th November	10.00am 12.10 noon	St Anthony's St Mary's	<i>Eucharistic Service</i> Holy Souls
Wednesday 8th November	10.00am 12.10 noon	St Anthony's St Mary's	Requiem Mass: Catherine Farrell Teresita Artil, recently died
Thursday 9th November Dedication of the Lateran Basilica	12.10 noon	St Mary's	Elendu Family Intentions
Friday 10th November St Leo the Great	12.10 noon	St Mary's	Edward Fargher, anniversary
Saturday 11th November	11.00am to 12noon	St Mary's	Exposition and Confessions
32 nd Sunday of Ordinary Time <i>Remembrance Sunday</i>	5.00pm	St Mary's	Shaun O'Hare, 2 nd anniversary
Sunday 12th November <i>Remembrance Sunday</i>	9.30am	St Anthony's	People of our Parishes
32 nd Sunday of Ordinary Time	11.00am	St Mary's	For all our Faithful Departed

We remember in our prayers the family of **Catherine Farrell** whose funeral Mass will take place on Wednesday.

On Thursday, 2 November, Pope Francis celebrated Mass for All Souls' Day at Rome's Military Cemetery. In his homily the Pope remembered those who have gone before us, particularly those whose lives have been "cut short" by war.

"A celebration like today," said Pope Francis, "brings with it two thoughts: Memory and Hope." All Souls' Day, he said, brings to mind "the people who went before us", both "those who did good" and "those who did not do so much good, but were received in God's mercy."

At the same time, Pope Francis suggested, the Commemoration brings to mind "Hope, which is memory looking forward." We hope, he said, for a future encounter in God's Kingdom "with everyone", saints and sinners alike.

Looking at these graves, Pope Francis said, "I could not help but think of today's wars." There are, he said, "so many deaths. Life is destroyed without any awareness." Echoing an appeal, he has made consistently over the past few months, the Pope said, "Wars are always a defeat. Always." "Let us pray to the Lord for our dead, for everyone," he urged.

May the Lord receive them all."