

NEWSLETTER

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

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2nd Sunday of Advent, 10th December 2023

(Page 85 in Mass Book)

(Year B for Sundays) (Cycle 1 for weekdays)



Dear Parishioners

This Advent there is so much in our broken world that needs 'fixing'. As Pope Francis told COP 28 last week, not only is there unspeakable bloodshed and suffering in the Holy Land, there's the war in Ukraine. Meanwhile humankind is collectively destroying our beautiful planet. We long for peace, healing, stability and security. I've always thought I am a Christmas person rather than an Easter person. American Franciscan Fr Richard Rohr agrees with me....

In the first 1200 years of Christianity, the greatest feast was Easter with the high holy days of Holy Week leading up to the celebration of the resurrection of Christ. But in the 13th century, a new person entered the scene: Francis of Assisi felt we didn't need to wait for God to love us through the cross and resurrection. Francis intuited that the whole thing started with incarnate love, and he popularised what we now take for granted as Christmas, which for many became the greater Christian feast. The Franciscans popularised Christmas. Maybe their intuition was correct.

Francis of Assisi realized that if God had become flesh—taken on materiality, physicality, humanity—then we didn't have to wait for Good Friday and Easter to "solve the problem" of human sin; the problem was solved from the beginning. It makes sense that Christmas became the great celebratory feast of Christians because it basically says that it's good to be human, it's good to be on this earth, it's good to be flesh, it's good to have emotions. We don't need to be ashamed of any of this. God loves matter and physicality.

With that insight, it's no wonder Francis of Assisi went wild over Christmas! (I do, too: my little house is filled with candles at Christmastime.) Francis believed that every tree should be decorated with lights to show their true status as God's creations! And that's exactly what we still do 800 years later.

Remember, when we speak of Advent or preparing for Christmas, we're not just talking about waiting for the little baby Jesus to be born. That already happened 2,000 years ago. In fact, we're welcoming the Universal Christ, the Cosmic Christ, the Christ that is forever being born in the human soul and into history.

And believe me, we do have to make room, because right now there is no room in the inn for such a mystery. We see things pretty much in their materiality, but we don't see the light shining through. We don't see the incarnate spirit that is hidden inside of everything material.

The early Eastern Church, which too few people in the United States and Western Europe are familiar with, made it very clear that the incarnation was a universal principle. Incarnation meant not just that God became Jesus; God said yes to the material universe. God said yes to physicality. Eastern Christianity understands the mystery of incarnation in the universal sense. So, it is always Advent. God is forever coming into the world (see John 1:9).

We're always waiting to see spirit revealing itself through matter. We're always waiting for matter to become a new form in which spirit is revealed. Whenever that happens, we're celebrating Christmas. The gifts of incarnation just keep coming. Perhaps this is enlightenment. (An Advent Meditation with Richard Rohr, CAC 2017)

To help us prepare for Christmas, there will be an **Advent Service on Wednesday 13th December at 7.00pm in St Mary's Church**. We will reflect with **Mary Untier of Knots** on the coming birthday of her Son, accompanied by our choir.

- **Hosanna Rock:** We look forward to welcoming to St Mary's church the pupils, teachers and staff from **St Mary's School** on **Monday 18 December at 10.30am** when the children will perform their Christmas celebration "**Hosanna Rock**". Thanks to the teachers, school staff, parents and pupils who together put a lot of work into this performance. "**Hosanna Rock**" will be livestreamed for family members who are unable to attend.
- An **Evening of Festive Music and Verse** with the **Tallis Consort** will take place in St Mary's church on **Thursday 21 December at 7.30pm**. Admission is free. Everyone welcome.
- The '**Warm and Cosy Hub**' is open on Mondays and Fridays from 10am until 2pm for the winter months in the Columba Club, Circular Road, Douglas. Hot soup with bread & butter will be served with tea, coffee and biscuits.

- **Living Hope at St Joseph's Church, Willaston** are offering a **free Community Christmas Day Meal** from 12 noon to 3pm on Christmas Day. Booking essential. For transport or more information please call Sue on 07624 470802.
- **Offertory Collections:** St Anthony's £410; St Mary & St Joseph £740. Thank you for your generosity.

Masses and Services for the coming week

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

Saturday 9th December 2 nd Sunday of Advent	5.00pm	St Mary's	People of our Parishes
Sunday 10th December 2 nd Sunday of Advent	9.30am 11.00am	St Anthony's St Mary's	Josie Lees, 30 th anniversary Pearl & Hugh McFeat, anniversary
Monday 11th December	12.10 noon	St Mary's	Christine James, recently died
Tuesday 12th December Our Lady of Guadalupe	10.00am 12.10 noon	St Anthony's St Mary's	Rosa Leonetti, anniversary The Smith Family, special intention
Wednesday 13th December St Lucy	12.00 noon 7.00pm	St Mary's St Mary's	Requiem Mass: Pat McCarthy Marian Advent Service
Thursday 14th December St John of the Cross	10.00am 10.00am 12.10 noon	Crematorium St Anthony's St Mary's	Funeral Service: Peter Hall <i>Eucharistic Service</i> Frances Tynan, anniversary
Friday 15th December	12.10 noon	St Mary's	Patricia Howell, recently died
Saturday 16th December 3 rd Sunday of Advent <i>Gaudete Sunday</i>	11.00am to 12noon 5.00pm	St Mary's St Mary's	Exposition and Confessions Jim Kneen, anniversary
Sunday 17th December 3 rd Sunday of Advent <i>Gaudete Sunday</i>	9.30am 11.00am	St Anthony's St Mary's	Scarlet Linehan, anniversary People of our Parishes

We keep in our prayers the family and friends of **Peter Hall** whose funeral service takes place in Douglas Crematorium on Thursday 14 December. May Peter rest in eternal peace.

Advent Prayer

Loving God,

as your light grows in the dark of winter,

bring its strength and its hope

to the people of the Holy Land and to all people

who suffer through war and conflict.

Just as you sent the star of Bethlehem

to lead the way to your Son,

guide all people - leaders and citizens

to follow your ways of peace and justice.

As we remember the difficult journey of Mary and Joseph,

may the Holy Family be a source of courage for each of us,

helping us to reach out in friendship

to the oppressed and displaced of this world.

Help us to see in the Christ-child we welcome this Christmas,

the one who came to bring an end to all divisions.

Through Christ our Lord, Amen.

And may the Lord bless us and keep us safe

this Advent day and always.

Come Lord Jesus, Prince of Peace

