

NEWSLETTER

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

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

2nd Sunday in Ordinary Time, 14th January 2024, Peace Day

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

Dear Parishioners

This weekend we welcome **Fr Sean Riley** at all of our Masses. A familiar visitor to the Island, Fr Sean is now Chancellor of the Archdiocese. I am grateful that his visit gives me the opportunity to take a post-Christmas break. I know you will make him welcome. **Today is Peace Sunday and the theme chosen by Pope Francis is 'Artificial Intelligence and Peace'**. Whilst this might seem a strangely technical theme, we do need to think about the consequences of the advances in Artificial Intelligence (AI) for peace and justice.

Governments around the world are taking the development of Artificial Intelligence seriously. In November, UK Prime Minister Rishi Sunak invited experts and world leaders to a summit, expressly to look at AI and safety. Prior to the summit, he affirmed that, whilst we should not be alarmist, and that there are undoubtedly benefits for humanity in the development of AI, "get this wrong," he said, "and AI could make it easier to build chemical or biological weapons." Further he said, in the most extreme case, there is even a risk that humanity might lose control of AI completely, experts warning earlier in the year that, "Mitigating the risk of extinction from Artificial Intelligence should be a global priority alongside other societal-scale risks such as pandemics and nuclear war."

In that light, Pope Francis is raising a highly contemporary theme and one he has spoken on before when he has addressed the risks in the development of technology, not least in *Laudato Si'* and *Laudate Deum*.

For many of us, the first question is: **'what exactly is 'Artificial Intelligence?'** It is a concept that has entered our everyday language and yet we are not quite sure what it encompasses. Inevitably, there are a number of definitions but that used by the UK Information Commissioner is helpful:

"Artificial Intelligence is an umbrella term for a range of technologies and approaches that often attempt to mimic human thought to solve complex tasks. Things that humans have traditionally done by thinking and reasoning are increasingly being done by, or with the help of, AI."

We are already familiar with a number of its uses – internet search engines like Google, the ability of applications like Amazon, YouTube and Netflix to recommend something to buy, watch or listen to, based on our previous choices, software like ChatGPT which can generate articles and essays, or design software that can generate images.

What are our concerns as peacemakers in the development of Artificial Intelligence? First there is the direct impact of AI on war and weapons. Drone Wars UK warn that AI is seen by the world's military powers as a way to revolutionise warfare and gain an advantage over enemies. Worrying military applications of AI are already being rolled out and those in development pose threats to our lives, human rights and wellbeing.

Then there are the fundamental concerns that Pope Francis raised when he announced his theme for the World Day of Peace: the need to be vigilant that a "logic of violence and discrimination" doesn't take root in the development of AI at the expense of the most fragile and excluded; that the advancement of AI does not fuel injustice and inequality and therefore conflict, and, of course, that AI is developed so that it serves humanity and the protection of our common home. It is a theme we will need to keep returning to.

Pax Christi Prayer

God our creator and sustainer,

We thank you for the gifts of creativity you have given us, for the ability to explore science and understand your creation.

We ask your forgiveness for the times we have used science for evil and not for good, for war and not for peace.

Make us vigilant as we develop technology, that violence and discrimination may not take root, that injustice and inequality will not be fuelled, that the poor and vulnerable will not pay the cost. May all that we create contribute to peace and justice. **Amen**

Our own Archbishop Malcolm McMahon, National President of Pax Christi, has written this letter to every parish in England and Wales:

Dear Father,

When I wrote to promote Peace Sunday 2023, I said that 2022 had been a year of war and rumours of war. As we approach the end of 2023, the last twelve months have been no different. The war between Russia and Ukraine continues, as do conflicts around the globe. As I write this, the conflict in Palestine and Israel has erupted once more

into terrible violence and suffering with thousands dying, injured and displaced.

Advocating for a just peace in Palestine and Israel is a part of the ongoing work of Pax Christi, alongside building a culture of nonviolence, campaigning against war, nuclear weapons and the arms trade. Supporting its members and the church, Pax Christi produces resources on peace and nonviolence issues, organises events and vigils, represents the Catholic church in the peace movement and works with young people in both schools and churches.

The theme for Peace Sunday is Pope Francis' theme for the World Day of Peace - **'Artificial Intelligence and Peace'**. I am sure you will agree that it is a highly relevant theme as Governments across the world, including our own, wrestle with the ethics and consequences of significant and potentially dangerous developments in technology. **Pope Francis' overriding concern is that artificial intelligence should be used in the service of humanity and the protection of our common home and not to further injustice and inequality or to fuel division and violent conflict.** Finally, Peace Sunday is an important opportunity for Pax Christi to raise funds. Our small team of staff and volunteers are highly dedicated and work hard to support and encourage us all in working for peace. I greatly appreciate the support our parish communities give through collections and donations and would ask that you take this opportunity to support us this year.

With every blessing, Most Rev Malcolm McMahon OP, National President of Pax Christi England and Wales

There will be a retiring collection this weekend at all Masses for the work of Pax Christi.

- We regularly received enquiries from adults (over 18) who wish to become Catholics or from those who, although Baptised in the Catholic church, have never been Confirmed or made their First Holy Communion. In a few weeks' time we will be reconvening our 'Come and See' group which meets every few weeks to explore our Catholic faith. Please get in touch with us at saintmaryiom@rcaol.org.uk if you wish to be part of the group.
- **First Holy Communion 2024 Preparation:** Thank you to Parents and Guardians of Year 4 children attending non-Catholic schools who wish to make their First Holy Communion in 2024 for registering their names with the parish office saintmaryiom@rcaol.org.uk. Those parents will receive an application form in the next 2 weeks followed by an invitation to attend evening classes at St Anthony's, Onchan. Six sessions of preparation are required, taking place during March and April. Thank you to our parish catechists who lead the preparation course. *Fr John*
- **Koru Hospital Fund IOM** is holding a **Fund Raising & Thank You Event** in **St Anthony's Pastoral Centre** on **Saturday 20 January 2024** from 10am onwards. There will be Screen Shots, Display Boards, Presentations, Stalls and a Raffle to raise funds to support the School Feeding Programmes. Refreshments will be served. Presentation and Thanks at 3pm. Please see poster at back of church or contact Mary Stewart for details.

Masses and Services for the coming week

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

Saturday 13th January 2nd Sunday in Ordinary Time	5.00pm	St Mary's	Tony Gillespie, recently died
Sunday 14th January 2nd Sunday in Ordinary Time <i>Peace Day</i>	9.30am 11.00am	St Anthony's St Mary's	People of our Parishes Derek Kenna, recently died
Monday 15th January	12.10pm	St Mary's	Pat McCarthy, recently died
Tuesday 16th January	10.00am 12.10pm	St Anthony's St Mary's	<i>Eucharistic Service</i> Peggy Meehan, deceased
Wednesday 17th January St Anthony, Abbot	12.10pm	St Mary's	Adrian Humphries, recently died
Thursday 18th January	10.00am 12.10pm	St Anthony's St Mary's	Funeral Service – Patricia Cousins Wendy Reed, anniversary
Friday 19th January	10.45am 12.10pm	Crematorium St Mary's	Funeral Service – Mandy Davies Theresa & John Smith, thanksgiving
Saturday 20th January St Fabian, St Sebastian 3rd Sunday in Ordinary Time	11.00am to 12noon 5.00pm	St Mary's St Mary's	Exposition and Confessions Margaret Duffy, sick
Sunday 21st January 3rd Sunday in Ordinary Time <i>Sunday of the Word of God</i>	9.30am 11.00am	St Anthony's St Mary's	Albert Gubay, anniversary People of our Parishes