

NEWSLETTER

Parishes of St Anthony of Padua, Onchan; St Mary of the Isle & St Joseph, Douglas
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6th Sunday in Ordinary Time, 11th February 2024

World Day of Prayer for the Sick and Those who Care for Them

(Page 137 in Mass book)

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

Dear Parishioners

It's hard to believe that **Lent** starts this week, so close on the heels of Christmas. I still have a Christmas pudding in the cupboard. Maybe I'll save it for Easter Sunday. Mass times on **Ash Wednesday**, with distribution of ashes, are marked in this newsletter. Next week's newsletter will include some suggestions of how we might personally choose to make this time of renewal special.

Lent culminates in the celebration of **Good Friday and Easter Sunday**. The death of Jesus is the lens through which we try to fathom the meaning of death in our own lives. There have been many deaths in recent weeks. The reality of death can rock our personal faith yet the suffering and death of Christ is at the heart of every celebration of the Mass. The following passage from the **Second Vatican Council document 'Gaudium et Spes' (1965)** gives a helpful summary of the church's teaching on **the mystery of death**:

*In the face of death, the enigma of human existence reaches its climax. Man is not only the victim of pain and the progressive deterioration of his body; he is also, and more deeply, tormented by the fear of final extinction. But the instinctive judgement of his heart is right when he shrinks from, and rejects, the idea of a total collapse and definitive end of his own person. **He carries within him the seed of eternity, which cannot be reduced to matter alone, and so he rebels against death.** All efforts of technology, however useful they may be, cannot calm his anxieties; the biological extension of his life-span cannot satisfy the desire inescapably present in his heart for a life beyond this life.*

Imagination is completely helpless when confronted with death. Yet the Church, instructed by divine revelation, affirms that man has been created by God for a destiny of happiness beyond the reach of earthly trials. Moreover, the Christian faith teaches that bodily death, to which man would not have been subject if he had not sinned, will be conquered; the almighty and merciful Saviour will restore man to the wholeness that he had lost through his own fault. God has called man, and still calls him, to be united in his whole being in perpetual communion with himself in the immortality of the divine life. This victory has been gained for us by the risen Christ, who by his own death has freed man from death.

Faith, presented with solid arguments, offers every thinking person the answer to his questionings concerning his future destiny. At the same time, it enables him to be one in Christ with his loved ones who have been taken from him by death and gives him hope that they have entered into true life with God.

Certainly, the Christian is faced with the necessity, and the duty, of fighting against evil through many trials, and of undergoing death. But by entering into the paschal mystery and being made like Christ in death, he will look forward, strong in hope, to the resurrection.

This is true not only of Christians but also of all men of good will in whose heart grace is invisibly at work. Since Christ died for all men, and the ultimate vocation of man is in fact one, that is, a divine vocation, we must hold that the Holy Spirit offers to all the possibility of being united with this paschal mystery in a way known only to God.

Such is the great mystery of man, enlightening believers through the Christian revelation. Through Christ and in Christ light is thrown on the enigma of pain and death which overwhelms us without his Gospel to teach us. Christ has risen, destroying death by his own death; he has given us the free gift of life so that as sons in the Son we may cry out in the Spirit, saying: Abba, Father!

Our **Parish Council** met this week. Members are drawn from those engaged in all aspects of life in both of our parishes. Fr John thanked all those who had helped make the **cathedral inauguration ceremony** such a success, especially given the comparatively short notice of the event. It was remarked how positively news of St Mary's new status had been received, not just by parishioners, but also by the wider community. Attendance at Christmas was greater this year perhaps as an indirect consequence of this. The enthusiastic response from those who join our Masses and services online from far and wide was also noted.

It was agreed that the new status would inevitably bring greater scrutiny to the quality of what we offer at Mass. Already St Mary's is recognised as a venue for a greater number of ecumenical and community events. This places an increasing burden on our diminishing number of **parish volunteers**.

Advance notice was also given of the **Silver Jubilee of Father Brian Dougherty's Ordination to the Priesthood**. Father Brian holds a unique place in the heart of the Manx community. **A special Mass and Reception will take place at Saint Mary's on the evening of Friday 12th July**. Bishop Tom Neylon will be travelling to the Island for the occasion and the Lieutenant Governor and Lady Lorimer have been invited. The Mass and reception will be open to all. Further details will be available later. We are looking forward to a joyful celebration on a fine summer evening.

Fr John reported on the necessity of restricting use of the newly refurbished **toilets** to official Mass and service times. Members of the public have been entering the church solely to make use of these facilities. They are often left in a disgusting state. This required the toilets to be cleaned and unblocked on an almost daily basis – an unreasonable further demand on the good will of our volunteers and daily Mass goers.

It was also remarked that some parishioners choose to stand at the back of the church during weekend Masses and allow their **young children** to roam and play unsupervised. This presents **health and safety issues** when they play unchecked with lighted candles and block access to the toilets by wheelchair users. The noise they make is a distraction to the priest and congregation. It was agreed that it should not be left to the priest to challenge parents but that our stewards have the full support of the parish council in requesting parents to sit with their children in the pews rather than standing at the back of church.

A short update on **maintenance** highlighted provision of an extra handrail outside St Mary's, addressing damage caused by dampness in the presbytery and choir loft and the installation of a CCTV system to protect the site of St Mary's.

All are invited to the launch of a new book '**Christ's Seven Words from the Cross**' by **Canon John Mann**, to take place at **7pm at St Mary of the Isle on this Monday 12th February**. Drinks and nibbles will follow. The former Dean of Belfast Cathedral, Canon Mann lives in retirement on the Island. His book helps us, week by week during Lent, to prepare for Good Friday and Easter. Influenced by his time in Ireland during the 'Troubles', he relates his own experience of human suffering with the events of Good Friday. Everyone welcome.

- **Onchan Churches Lenten Course** will take place during the Tuesday evenings in Lent at **St Peter's Church, Onchan at 7pm**. The course will use 'The King's Speech' which focuses on finding our voice and identity in Christ. The full film will be shown on **this Tuesday 13th February** in church with pancakes. Everyone will be made welcome.
- **Lenten Lunches** of homemade soup, bread and butter, desserts, tea and coffee will be served in St Anthony's Pastoral Centre **beginning Thursday 15th February** and each Thursday during Lent from 12.30 until 2pm. Cost £8. All proceeds to IOM Hospice. Everyone welcome.
- **World Day of Prayer Service, Friday 1st March at 10.00am** will take place in the Cathedral Church of St Mary of the Isle. The 2024 Theme is 'I beg you, bear with one another in love'. A Service for Everyone. All welcome.
- **Come and See Group:** Thank you to those who have already been in touch. We will contact you soon with further information and start date. This Group is for adults (over 18) who wish to become Catholics or for those who, although Baptised in the Catholic church, have never been Confirmed or made their First Holy Communion. 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:** Parents and Guardians of Year 4 children attending non-Catholic schools, who have contacted us and received application forms, should have been advised of the dates and times of the evening preparation sessions 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.
- **Offertory Collections:** St Mary and St Joseph £995, St Anthony's £605. This does not include standing orders or the tap and pay machine at the back of church. Thank you for your generosity.

Masses and Services for the coming week
All Masses and Services from St Mary's are live-streamed

Saturday 10th February			
6th Sunday in Ordinary Time	5.00pm	St Mary's	Josie Ridsdale, anniversary
Sunday 11th February <i>Day of Prayer for the Sick</i>	9.30am	St Anthony's	People of our Parishes
6th Sunday in Ordinary Time	11.00am	St Mary's	Joe Estella, recently died
Monday 12th February	12.10pm 7.00pm	St Mary's St Mary's	May & John Reynolds, anniversary Launch of book by Canon John Mann
Tuesday 13th February	10.00am 12.10pm	St Anthony's St Mary's	<i>Eucharistic Service</i> Thanksgiving Joel Marquez, 18 th b'day
Wednesday 14th February Ash Wednesday	12.10pm 7.00pm	St Mary's St Anthony's	Mary M ^c Carthy-Glynn, birthday anniv John Byrne, recently died
Thursday 15th February	10.00am 12.10pm	St Anthony's St Mary's	<i>Eucharistic Service</i> Derek Kenna, recently died
Friday 16th February	12.10pm 1.30pm	St Mary's St Mary's	A.M.T. McMullin Funeral Service: Paulene Barry
Saturday 17th February	11.00am to 12noon	St Mary's	Exposition and Confessions
1st Sunday of Lent	5.00pm	St Mary's	People of our Parishes
Sunday 18th February	9.30am	St Anthony's	David Moon, 4 th anniversary
1st Sunday of Lent	11.00am	St Mary's	Marcus & Martin Reaney, recently died

We remember in our prayers **Paulene Barry, Rita O'Connell** and **Helen Curmi Tonna** who died this week. Further funeral details to follow in next week's newsletter. We think of their grieving families and friends in their loss. May they rest in eternal peace.

Today, in Asia and other parts of the world, millions of families are celebrating the lunar new year. I send them my heartfelt greetings in the hope that this feast may be an opportunity to foster loving relationships and acts of care to build a fraternal society. *(Pope Francis X)*

Prayer for Lent

Most High, Glorious God,
bring light to the darkness of my heart,
give me right faith, certain hope, and perfect charity.
Lord, give me insight and wisdom
so I might always discern
your holy and true will.
Amen.

This Sunday 11th February is the date of the feast of **Our Lady of Lourdes**, which is set aside as Day of Prayer for the Sick. We think of all our sick parishioners and sick family members, as well as those who care for them, many of whom must travel a long, difficult and lonely journey. Pope Francis' prayer intention for February is for the terminally ill – **'We pray that those with a terminal illness, and their families, receive the necessary physical and spiritual care and accompaniment'**.