



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

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**4<sup>th</sup> Sunday of Lent, 10<sup>th</sup> March 2024**

*(Page 162 in Mass book)*

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

Dear Parishioners

Some weeks ago, I quoted a passage from Niall Williams's novel **'This is Happiness'**. It spoke of incessant rain in rural Ireland. Several people got back to me, including a regular live-stream attendee at Mass living in the UK. This week I quote a passage from the same novel on the first rays of sunshine on a spring day.

*The sun bore down, Spanishing the air. Swallows, returning, must have questioned their coordinates. The birdsong was just hectic. Though the day was already warm and the sky cloudless, people still lit fires for cooking, pale turf smoke sitting in small plumes above the chimneys wondering where the wind had gone. It made for a dreamlike scene, if your dreams ever take you to idylls. Down the valley you could see the townlands of Kilmac and Corry, the fine hill fields of the Murrihys, the bad bog ones of the Murphys. There were cattle standing in the puzzle of puddles gone, the ground hardening and the grass sweetening as it sucked the sun out of the sky. You could almost hear it happening.*

*And because old men no longer need adhere to the convention of time, and because memory dissolves it, I can be there still. I can be sat on the grass at our lesser picnic on the top of Master Quinn's field and feel the sun striking down and know something of the peace of that pause, the dawning that opens in a person, which is not yet at the point of understanding, not yet anything solid or sure as a thought, but happens in a way that you may not realise until years later and miles away when it comes to you that just then, just there, you were brushed with nothing less than eternity, catching a sense of a place that has been before you and will be after you, and both were contained in that moment. In the mid-distance birds were landing and lifting that were the same birds since forever and would be forever, and you in that forever too, sitting on the dry grass of a hill field in Faha aware that your whole life is an instant, knowing it for what it is, and so too then knowing something of the deep sleep of the fields, the smile of spring and what mercy there is in a fall of sunlight.*

In this passage just quoted, a fleeting moment of time stands still. Without mentioning God, it confirms all the elements of a spiritual experience. The main character has a sense of his smallness but also the realization that he is part of something much bigger than himself. An old man now, he describes a moment that occurred in his youth and he re-lives that experience over and over again throughout his life. In an attempt to record and freeze such moments artists are inspired to paint, poets write verse, and novelists tell stories. We reach for our smart phones to capture moments that move us. But our photos rarely do justice to the inner picture imprinted on our mind's eye. These are Transfiguration events. On such occasions we echo the words of St Peter: 'Lord, it is good for us to be here'.

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Ahead of **International Women's Day** on Friday, Pope Francis received in audience participants in the International Inter-University Conference 'Women in the Church: Builders of Humanity', taking place in Rome. The Pope said, 'You have chosen an eloquent title for your Conference in referring to women as "Builders of Humanity". This expression brings out even more clearly the nature of women's vocation as "builders", cooperating with the Creator in the service of life, the common good and peace. I would like to emphasize two aspects of this mission, dealing with style and with education.

First of all, style. Ours is a time seared by hatred, in which our human family, which needs to feel the power of love, is instead frequently scarred by violence, war and ideologies that stifle the noblest feelings of the human heart. Precisely in this context, the contribution of women is more necessary than ever. For women know how to bring people together with tenderness. Saint Therese of the Child Jesus said that she wanted love in the Church. She was right: women, in fact, with their unique capacity for compassion, their intuitiveness and their connatural inclination to "care", are able, in an outstanding way, to be for society both "intelligence and a heart that loves and unites", to bring love where love is lacking, and humanity where human beings are searching to find their true identity.

Secondly, education. You have organized this Conference in cooperation with various Catholic academic institutions. In the context of pastoral care within university communities, in addition to the academic study of the Church's doctrine and social teaching, every effort to present students with testimonies of holiness, especially of feminine sanctity, can encourage them to aim higher, to broaden the horizons of their dreams and their ways of thinking, and

to aim to pursue high ideals. Holiness can thus become a cross-disciplinary educational path within the greater pursuit of knowledge. For this reason, I express my hope that your educational settings, in addition to being places of study, research and learning, places of "information", will also be places of "formation", where minds and hearts are opened to the promptings of the Holy Spirit. That is why it is important to make the saints better known, especially women saints, in all the depth and reality of their humanity. In this way, education will be increasingly capable of touching each person in his or her wholeness and uniqueness.

A final word about education: in a world where women still suffer so greatly from violence, inequality, injustice and mistreatment - something scandalous and all the more so for those who profess faith in the God "born of woman" (Gal 4:4) - one serious form of discrimination has to do precisely with the education of women. In certain contexts, it is a cause of fear, yet the way to the betterment of societies is through the education of girls and young women, which benefits overall human development. Let us pray for this and commit ourselves to this! I entrust the fruits of your Conference to the Lord and I accompany you with my blessing. And I ask you, please, not to forget to pray for me. Thank you.'

*Fr John*

**Assisted Dying Bill:** Alex Shadenberg of the Euthanasia Prevention Coalition in Canada will be on-island next week. A public meeting has been arranged at the Manx Museum Lecture Theatre at 7pm on Tuesday 12<sup>th</sup> March with Alex and Duncan Gerry, consultant in elderly care medicine at Nobles. This should be an excellent opportunity for members of our CAIM churches to hear an up-to-date talk on the issues around the Assisted Dying Bill. Posters at the back of church.

- **Ecumenical Lent Course** continues at **St Peter's Church, Onchan on Tuesdays at 7.30pm** on 12, 19 & 26 March. This is a gentle reflective course using **'The King's Speech'** which focuses on finding our voice and identity in Christ.
- **Community Connect** is an initiative by the **Salvation Army** at Ballacottier Crescent, IOM Business Park, Braddan, IM2 2QZ to reach out to those in our community who feel isolated and lonely. This café style space offers a relaxed and welcoming environment, a place where it's OK not to be OK. **Connect** meets each Thursday from 10.30am to 12 noon.
- **Lenten Lunches** are served in St Anthony's Pastoral Centre **each Thursday during Lent** from 12.30 until 2pm. Cost £8. All proceeds to IOM Hospice. Everyone welcome.
- Everyone welcome to **St Anthony's Bingo** at 7.30pm on **Thursday 14<sup>th</sup> March**.
- **Offertory Collections:** St Mary and St Joseph £960, St Anthony's £605. This does not include standing orders or the tap and pay machine at the back of St Mary's church. Sincere thanks for your generosity.

### Masses and Services for the coming week

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

<b>Saturday 9<sup>th</sup> March</b> <b>4<sup>th</sup> Sunday of Lent</b>	5.00pm	St Mary's	Peter Lees, anniversary
<b>Sunday 10<sup>th</sup> March</b> <b>4<sup>th</sup> Sunday of Lent</b>	9.30am 11.00am	St Anthony's St Mary's	People of our Parishes Sue & Kevin Manning, anniversaries
<b>Monday 11<sup>th</sup> March</b>	12.10pm	St Mary's	Michael Cusack, recently died
<b>Tuesday 12<sup>th</sup> March</b>	10.00am 12.10pm	St Anthony's St Mary's	<i>Eucharistic Service</i> Teresita Artil
<b>Wednesday 13<sup>th</sup> March</b>	12.10 noon 7.00pm	St Mary's <b>St Anthony's</b>	Walter Corbett, recently died (Ireland) <b>Stations of the Cross</b>
<b>Thursday 14<sup>th</sup> March</b>	10.00am 12.10 noon	St Anthony's St Mary's	Gabrielle Hamer, anniversary Special Intention
<b>Friday 15<sup>th</sup> March</b>	12.10 noon	St Mary's	Mary Cummins, deceased
<b>Saturday 16<sup>th</sup> March</b> <b>5<sup>th</sup> Sunday of Lent</b>	11.00am to 12noon 5.00pm	St Mary's St Mary's	Exposition and Confessions People of our Parishes
<b>Sunday 17<sup>th</sup> March (St Patrick)</b> <b>5<sup>th</sup> Sunday of Lent</b>	9.30am 11.00am	St Anthony's St Mary's	Eilish Mellon, recently died Quintin Larkin, 2 <sup>nd</sup> anniversary