

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

23rd Sunday of Ordinary Time, 8th September 2024

Home Mission Day

(Page 129 in Mass book)

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

Dear Parishioners

For me the beginning of September is the start of the new year. Ever since school days I've reckoned that if I don't get something started in the autumn it won't happen in the spring. As the schools go back there's a lot of parish activity under the radar. It's a busy time in the parish office. Even regular Mass attenders don't see the half of it. They may be aware of funerals, but baptisms and weddings pass them by. It's these that take up much of the priest's work, along with supporting the sick and elderly and supporting families in distress. I have four email accounts and receive hundreds of emails each week.

I've been struck by stories of those who have attempted to buy tickets for next year's Oasis reunion concerts. Not only have they spent eye-watering amounts of money but they have waited hours online. It proves to me one thing: if people value something, they will go to endless lengths to get it.

In the old days people could spend their entire lives in one place, in the same parish. The majority married someone from the same locality. Today people meet and marry those from further afield. Young people leaving home for university end up marrying partners from opposite ends of the British Isles (a nightmare for grandparents when called on to babysit). Our increasingly diverse population on the Island massively increases the volume of paperwork for marriages of those born and baptised in distant lands. Couples can spend hours organising their wedding venue, along with dresses and outfits and flowers and the massive expense involved, but can be taken aback by the requirements of both church and state for the marriage ceremony itself. (The Manx Government requires the signing of four registers— it takes eight minutes of the marriage ceremony but another hour of parish office time to accurately prepare the registers for each marriage).

Some couples from the Island may wish to marry abroad. Their paperwork has to be completed here and sent to our Diocesan Offices. They check it out and then send to the Bishop's office in the foreign diocese where it is also checked before it is forwarded to the parish where the wedding is to take place. This process alone can take six months. The priest performing the wedding abroad has then to inform us that the wedding has taken place so that entries can be made in our Baptism registers, if the person getting married was baptised in our church. The Baptism register is the permanent record of the faith life of a parishioner where their Baptism, Confirmation and Marriage in the Catholic church are recorded.

Foreign churches and dioceses can be more stringent in their requirements than we would be. The paperwork can be returned to us as inadequate at any stage for further information. In addition to the paperwork, all couples are required to undertake a time of preparation for the marriage. This usually consists of a day's course spent with other couples. Evidence of attendance at such courses is demanded by other parishes and dioceses both home and abroad. Our courses are run by Marriage Care professionals and aim to ensure that the bride and groom clarify their expectations of marriage. Many marriages fail when couples discover over time that their marriage isn't all they dreamt it might be. When a couple approaches the church to be married, however, I always congratulate them. These bureaucratic demands can give the opposite impression. Many couples in recent times do not marry at all, even civilly. Therefore, those who wish to make a public lifetime commitment in marriage are to be applauded. They need all the support and encouragement they can get.

During the summer months we have celebrated 7 weddings here as well as preparing the paperwork for many more living here who are marrying abroad. The demands this makes on office time is considerable. Days can be spent chasing missing documents but it's great to see the happiness on the faces of those who marry. Marriage is a sacrament. It's a sign for both bride and groom that they are loved not just by each other but by God as well. And every marriage is also a sacrament for the entire community, a sign for us all of the faithful love of God at work in our lives.

We also celebrate many Baptisms in our churches – perhaps fewer over the holiday period, but most weeks there is at least one. In years past baptisms were small affairs. In recent times they can be large occasions with many guests. Some Sundays, the guests for just two baptisms can almost fill the church. Many of these guests may not be

practising Christians and so is important that the Baptism ceremony speaks to them as well. Once again, the church requires a time of preparation for prospective parents and godparents. It is the parents themselves who have voluntarily approached the priest and requested baptism for their children. The priest has not gone chasing after them.

In some places the preparation demanded of parents can be onerous, for example requiring compulsory attendance at Sunday Mass for many weeks. The Catholic church in Poland and other catholic countries require a letter from us stating that even prospective godparents from the Island intending to travel home for a baptism are themselves regular attenders at Mass. At St Mary's and St Anthony's baptism preparation consists of an hour-long meeting with the priest along with other parents and godparents. Together they are helped to identify what lies behind their wish for baptism and how the ceremony itself will celebrate that need and what it is they wish to pass on to their children as they grow up. The response of parents at these sessions is always heartening. Faith is a gift. Each of us has a small spark of faith. Sometimes we need encouragement to find it. Acting on the Archbishop's behalf, the priest is the custodian of all the sacraments. It can seem that many hoops have to be jumped through. Coming back to Oasis..... If you really value something, you will go to great lengths to make it happen.

Little Church will resume in both our churches this weekend at Sunday morning Masses. Thank you to our catechists who give freely of their time to help and guide our children. The St Mary's 11am Little Church is busy with often 40 children attending. Little Church at St Anthony's 9.30am Sunday Mass is much quieter. Parents are welcome to bring their children to St Anthony's where the catechists have use of the Pastoral Centre which is a much more spacious facility.

Parents with young children are again encouraged by our stewards and members of the Parish Council to please sit in a bench with your children rather than allowing them to run freely around the back of church. Children should be taught how to behave in church. This issue was mentioned to me by both of our visiting priests this summer.

Once again **the Mayor of Douglas, Councillor Natalie Byron-Teare** is joining us for Mass at 11.00am on **Sunday 22nd September** at our Cathedral church of Saint Mary of the Isle for their **Annual Civic Service**. In addition to elected members and officers the service will also be attended by **Mr Mark Blundell, Lord Lieutenant of Merseyside** and **Councillor Richard Kemp CBE, Lord Mayor of Liverpool**. Children from Saint Mary's school will also be joining us. There will be refreshments after Mass. *Fr John*

- **Island Spirituality Network:** Next meeting on **Saturday 14th September** at **St John's Mill** between **10am – 1pm**. The speaker will be Jesuit priest Fr Philip Harrison SJ, one of the University Chaplains at Manchester University and editor of "The Way" international journal of contemporary Christian spirituality. All welcome. Suggested donation £10 but entirely voluntary.
- **Offertory Collections:** St Mary and St Joseph £947, St Anthony's £685. 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.

Adoremus Eucharistic Pilgrimages are taking place on **Saturday 21st September** at both the Metropolitan Cathedral of Christ the King and the Cathedral Church of Saint Mary of the Isle Douglas. **Our day of Eucharistic Adoration starts at 10.00am at St Mary's and finishes with the usual 5.00pm Saturday evening Mass.** The pilgrimage is for parishioners from all our Catholic churches on the Island. St Anthony's Onchan and St Mary of the Isle parishes will take care of the period from 10.00am to 12noon; St Patrick's Peel and Our Lady Star of the Sea & St Maughold Ramsey from 12.00 to 2.00pm; and St Mary's Castletown and St Columba's Port Erin from 2.00pm until 4.00pm. St Mary of the Isle and St Anthony's will also take care of the final hour until Mass at 5.00pm.

This year's **Novena to Mary Untier of Knots will take place from Sunday 13th October to Monday 21st October.** More details soon.

Eucharistic Ministers are required to have their ministry periodically renewed. This involves a formal training session and recommissioning ceremony with the presentation to each minister of a *pagella* or certificate signed by the Archbishop authorising their ministry. This is required if they wish to continue in their role. A day of renewal was last held in November 2019. **Elizabeth Parsons**, Director of the Pastoral Development Department and **Mark Robson** are travelling to the Island to conduct a **Training and Recommissioning event on Saturday 5th October.** Further details will be announced after the holiday period. Please record this date in your diaries. All Eucharistic Ministers are requested to attend.

Masses and Services for the coming week

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

Saturday 7th September 23 rd Sunday of Ordinary Time	5.00pm	St Mary's	Leo McCaffrey, 4 th anniversary
Sunday 8th September <i>Education Day</i> 23 rd Sunday of Ordinary Time	9.30am 11.00am	St Anthony's St Mary's	Kathleen Thompson, 1 st anniversary People of our Parishes
Monday 9th September	<i>No Mass or Service</i>	<i>St Mary's</i>	<i>No Mass or Service today</i>
Tuesday 10th September St Ambrose Barlow	10.00am 12.10pm	St Anthony's St Mary's	<i>Eucharistic Service</i> Jocelyn Marquez, deceased
Wednesday 11th September	12.10pm	St Mary's	Special Intention
Thursday 12th September Our Lady of Rushen	10.00am 12.10pm	St Anthony's St Mary's	Bryan Stott, anniversary Sick people of our Parishes
Friday 13th September St John Chrysostom	9.15am 12.00 noon	St Mary's School St Mary's	Children & staff of St. Mary's School Requiem Mass: Carlo Signorio
Saturday 14th September 24 th Sunday of Ordinary Time	11.00am to 12noon 5.00pm	St Mary's St Mary's	<i>No Confessions or Exposition</i> James Stack, anniversary
Sunday 15th September <i>Home Mission Day</i> 24 th Sunday of Ordinary Time	9.30am 11.00am	St Anthony's St Mary's	People of our Parishes Dave & Anne Corkill, 60 th wedding anniversary

Pope Francis

During his Apostolic Journey to Asia and Oceania this week, Pope Francis paid tribute to the "great gift" of Indonesians in their work to promote "dialogue, mutual respect and harmonious coexistence between religions and different spiritual sensibilities." With a population of 275.5 million, Indonesia consists of 17,508 islands and has the largest number of Muslims of any country in the world.

The Pope encouraged them to cultivate this gift of harmony every day, "so that religious experiences may be reference points for a fraternal and peaceful society."

The 'Tunnel of Friendship' connecting the Istiqlal Mosque and the Cathedral of Saint Mary of the Assumption also marks "an eloquent sign" as these two places of worship not only face each other, but are linked to one another, allowing for "encounter, dialogue... a genuine experience of fraternity."

He said may each of us in our spiritual journey "walk in search of God and contribute to building open societies, founded on reciprocal respect and mutual love, capable of protecting against rigidity, fundamentalism and extremism, which are always dangerous and never justifiable."

The Pope went on to emphasize that by looking deeper at our lives, we can appreciate that in light of the common "thirst for the infinite," we can discover how we are all brothers and sisters, "all pilgrims, all on our way to God, beyond what differentiates us."

The Pope then highlighted the importance of preserving the bonds of friendship by focusing on what unites us in the midst of the richness of our diversity as we "seek the truth together" and can learn from each other's religious traditions and come together "to meet our human and spiritual needs."

We can also pursue the same goals together, the Pope observed, such as defending human dignity, helping the poor, promoting peace, and protecting the environment.

In conclusion, the Pope said "fostering religious harmony for the sake of humanity" is our common calling and the title of the joint declaration just signed. In doing so, we can respond together to the crises, wars, conflicts that are inflicting so much suffering, "unfortunately caused at times by the manipulation of religion."