

NEWSLETTER

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

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1st Sunday of Advent, 1st December 2024

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

(Page 449 in new Missal for Order of the Mass)

(Page 765 for Mass readings)



Dear Parishioners

A new phrase has entered my vocabulary: 'Christmas Creep'. It describes how Christmas preparations and celebrations commence earlier and earlier each year. This year some Christmas trees and lights appeared in late October. We usually blame the Americans for the commercialisation of everything from Mother's Day to Halloween. When it comes to Christmas, however, their celebration of Thanksgiving puts a break on 'Christmas Creep'.

In the United States the last Thursday in November is Thanksgiving Day. Working alongside north American priests in Peru for several years I came to appreciate its significance. It's a wonderful occasion when families gather for a meal. It's not commercialised. There are no presents and decorations. Just nice food – always including turkey and pumpkin pie. The British speak of being 'Home for Christmas' – it's 'Home for Thanksgiving' in the USA. For them it's the busiest day of the year on the roads and for airports. Many Americans then spend Christmas on holiday away from home – skiing or chasing the sun.

Thanksgiving is always on a Thursday. The following day, (Friday) signals the start of the Christmas rush. We've been introduced to this with what's now known as 'Black Friday'. On this day in the USA Christmas shopping starts with a vengeance, but it's now on Amazon rather than in the shopping mall.

The early start to Christmas in recent years is perhaps due to the depressing times in which we live. Covid, climate change, the cost of living and the daily toll of death and destruction in Ukraine and Gaza drag us down. The Christmas tree lifts our spirits. Christmas is about hope – even for the non-religious. This can be a challenge to those of us still attached to the Church's liturgical calendar.

This week we've had painters in the presbytery. I'm reminded again that most of their time and effort goes into the preparation. The actual painting is only the final step. Advent's a bit like that. We prepare for the coming of Christ. We long in hope for the Messiah. When he comes, he connects. Skimping the preparation can reduce the impact of the feast.

Today, the First Sunday of Advent, is the day when we hear **the new translation of the scripture readings at Mass**. We have purchased **new red Sunday missals** which include the full three-year Sunday cycle of readings in one volume. They replace the set of six mass books which had to be changed every six months. We anxiously awaited their arrival. They came just in time for this Sunday, the last consignment arriving on Friday morning. Each missal was individually wrapped. Thanks to those who undertook the laborious task of unpacking hundreds of missals and inserting labels in each stating 'Property of St Anthony's Onchan' and 'Property of Cathedral Church of St Mary of the Isle, Douglas'. Since the 1960s the **Jerusalem Bible** translation has been used throughout the British Isles. From this Sunday our readings are now taken from the **English Standard Version**. Interestingly, the Irish Bishops have agreed to stick with the Jerusalem Bible translation. It's cost us (St Anthony's and St Mary's) over £6000 to make the change. The pages in the new missals are flimsy and not suitable for young children to handle.

It was a sad moment to read from the Jerusalem Bible for the last time at St Anthony's on Thursday morning and St Mary's on Friday. I put the now obsolete lectionaries in the back of the sacristy cupboard with a heavy heart. The new lectionaries are beautifully produced but I have a special affection for the Jerusalem Bible. Not only do I know much of it by heart but it was translated by a team led by Liverpool priest and internationally recognised scholar **Fr Alexander Jones**. He taught me RE as a small boy and was in my Dad's class at school. I'm going to stipulate in my will that the Bible to be placed on my coffin at my funeral should be my well-worn sixty-year-old copy of the Jerusalem Bible. (I've had it rebound twice). *Fr John*

To help us prepare for Christmas, there will be an **Advent Service** on **Wednesday 18 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.

- **Churches Alive in Mann** World Development Committee have arranged an ecumenical event called **AlterNativity** in **St Thomas's Church, Douglas at 7.30pm on Thursday 5 December**. Stories and presentations from Ukraine and Gaza will be included with Ukrainian children singing their own Christmas Carols. Please support if you can.
- **CAFOD Advent 2024:** As well as providing **ongoing humanitarian support in Gaza**, CAFOD is asking for **help for families in Ukraine** threatened by the cold and loss of power. Church partners are rebuilding walls and fixing windows to keep out the cold as well as providing fuel so families can cook and keep warm. See www.cafod.org.uk
- **The T and Chat** group will next meet on **Tuesday 3 December** at St Anthony's Pastoral Centre from **10.30-12 noon**. As this is the last gathering before Christmas, Onchan School choir will lead the festivities. Tea/coffee and mince pies/cakes will be served. Everyone will be warmly welcomed. The group is supported by the SVP who provide support to vulnerable and needy people on the island. Further information from Josie on 406063.
- The **Tallis Consort** will present '**O Magnum Mysterium**', a programme exploring the mystery of Christmas through music and poetry, on **Saturday 14 December at 7.30pm at St Mary's**. Admission is free. Everyone welcome.
- **Hosanna Rock:** We look forward to welcoming to St Mary's church the pupils, teachers and staff from **St Mary's School on Thursday 19 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.
- **St Peter's Mothers' Union, Onchan** invites ladies from our Church and Onchan Methodist Church to an afternoon of entertainment and refreshments on **Tuesday 3 December at 2pm** at the Village Hall, Onchan.
- The '**Warm and Cosy Hub**' continues each week on Monday and Friday from 10am until 2pm throughout the winter months in the Columba Club, Circular Road, Douglas. Hot soup, bread & butter and tea/coffee served.
- **Archdiocesan Synodal Council** Summary Report from meeting on 9 November available at the back of church.
- **Offertory Collections:** St Mary and St Joseph £850, St Anthony's £551. 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

Saturday 30th November			
1 st Sunday of Advent	5.00pm	St Mary's	Ann Fox, deceased
Sunday 1st December	9.30am	St Anthony's	David Killey, 5th anniversary
1 st Sunday of Advent	11.00am	St Mary's	People of our Parishes
Monday 2nd December	12.10pm	St Mary's	Deceased Clergy
Tuesday 3rd December	10.00am	St Anthony's	<i>Eucharistic Service</i>
St Francis Xavier	12.10pm	St Mary's	Thomas & Mary Hardinge, anniv
<i>Day of Special Prayer for Migrants</i>			
Wednesday 4th December	12.10pm	St Mary's	Billy Jackson & Dennis Higgins, recently died
Thursday 5th December	10.00am	St Anthony's	Peter Denver, anniversary
St John Almond	12.10pm	St Mary's	Mary Thomas, anniversary
Friday 6th December	12.10pm	St Mary's	Douglas Wheeler & Eamonn M ^c Nally, anniversaries
St Nicholas			
Saturday 7th December	11.00am to 12noon	St Mary's	Exposition and Confessions
2 nd Sunday of Advent	5.00pm	St Mary's	John Byrne, deceased
Sunday 8th December	9.30am	St Anthony's	Bob & Josie Lees, anniversary
2 nd Sunday of Advent	11.00am	St Mary's	People of our Parishes

Archdiocese of Liverpool Lourdes Youth Pilgrimage 2025: Thank you to those young people who got in touch to say they have been successful in obtaining a place on next year's Lourdes pilgrimage. If any other young people would like to go to Lourdes next summer please email directly St Mary's parish office at saintmaryiom@rcaol.org.uk.

PAX CHRISTI Merseyside Advent Service for Peace will take place on **Sunday 8 December** at 4pm at St Teresa's Church, Utting Avenue East, Norris Green, Liverpool, L11 3BW. 'Light in Dark Times' is an Ecumenical Advent Service for Peace and Justice in our city, our country and our world. Everyone welcome, including people from Isle of Man.