

NEWSLETTER

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

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The Baptism of the Lord, 12th January 2025

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

(Page 449 in Missal for Order of the Mass)

(Page 74 for Mass readings)



Dear Parishioners

Today marks the end of the Christmas season, but not quite: ***‘Three wonders mark this day we celebrate: today the star led the Magi to the manger; today water was changed into wine at the marriage feast; today Christ desired to be baptised by John in the river Jordan to bring us salvation.’*** These words are taken from the official Evening Prayer of the Church for the feast of the **Epiphany**. Last Sunday we celebrated the arrival of the **Three Kings** at the crib. Next Sunday we will hear the gospel story of the **Marriage Feast at Cana**. Today we celebrate the feast of the **Baptism of the Lord**.

On Sunday 29th December we marked the opening of the **Jubilee Year**. The priest knocked on the door of the church to be allowed in. This reminded us both of Jesus knocking on our door but also his invitation for us to knock on his door in order to allow him to enter into our lives. We then venerated the magnificent Mission Cross at the back of St Mary’s which dominates the back of the church. Finally, we processed to the Baptismal Font before blessing the congregation with holy water. Today, the Feast of the Baptism of the Lord, we revisit the font.

Baptism is a sacrament of commitment. Central to every Baptism ceremony are the **Baptismal Promises**. The first Christians were adults who spoke for themselves. Our brothers and sisters in the Baptist Church revived that practice at the time of the reformation and follow it to this day. Other churches, ourselves included, practise infant baptism and require parents and godparents to make these promises on behalf of the child in the hope that one day the child will be old enough to make their inherited faith their own. **It is the parents’ commitment that makes infant baptism possible.** Without that commitment the ceremony can be reduced to a meaningless formality.

Our faith is a gift. This is symbolised in the Baptism ceremony by the lighting of a baptismal candle from the Easter or Paschal Candle. The Paschal candle represents Christ himself. The flame of the baptismal candle is a striking metaphor of that gift of faith. Candles are certainly less reliable and intense than a modern LED. Candles flicker, they are easily blown out. **One aspect about the gift of faith is that each of us only gets a little bit.** But it’s enough. If my candle goes out, I can always relight it from the person next to me – and *vice versa*. The weak support the strong. Our faith fluctuates. We can carry each other at different times in our lives. The Church is a community of faith. If we all have a little bit of faith, together we can make a difference. St Paul speaks of fanning into a flame the gift of faith that God has given us. Sometimes I think that my faith is like the pilot light in a gas central heating boiler. It remains lighted but dormant until I turn it on and activate the boiler. The church’s hope is that every child who is baptised may one day do just that.

The church requires a period of preparation for parents seeking baptism for their children. The request itself can be a recognition that the spiritual dimension of life is important to them even though it does not find expression in regular attendance at church. Attendance by parents and godparents isn’t just a hoop for them to jump through. Faith can be difficult to put into words but it is in the process of struggling to do so that our faith can come alive. Often the first enquiry for baptism comes from grandparents. But it’s the parents who are required to speak on their own behalf in the baptism ceremony. Sometimes it’s in asking for baptism that the first real appreciation of the parents’ own baptism begins to make sense. Some may not have thought about their faith since their First Holy Communion or Confirmation. The church does not demand watertight guarantees of commitment from parents. Baptism is never refused. But it could be delayed. The parish priest, as the church’s custodian of the sacraments, may seek some reassurance of parents’ good will and that the renewal of their own baptismal promises during the ceremony will not be empty words.

Today, the Feast of the Baptism of the Lord, gives us all an opportunity to renew our Baptismal promises. This is an exercise we undertake every Easter Sunday. This year, the Jubilee Year, we are called to re-embrace our faith in a special way.

Fr John

Masses and Services for the coming week

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

Saturday 11th January The Baptism of the Lord	5.00pm	St Mary's	David Corkill, anniversary
Sunday 12th January The Baptism of the Lord	9.30am 11.00am	St Anthony's St Mary's	People of our Parishes Mary & Matthias Kaddu, deceased
Monday 13th January	12.10pm	St Mary's	Carlo Signorio
Tuesday 14th January St Kentigern	10.00am 12.10pm	St Anthony's St Mary's	<i>Eucharistic Service</i> Sarah Cassidy deceased
Wednesday 15th January	12.10pm	St Mary's	Patricia Smedley, recently died
Thursday 16th January	10.00am 12.10pm	St Anthony's St Mary's	David Moon, anniversary Les Winterbottom, recently died
Friday 17th January	12.10pm	St Mary's	Mgr Michael M ^c Kenna
Saturday 18th January 2nd Sunday in Ordinary Time <i>Peace Day</i>	5.00pm	St Mary's	No Expositions or Confessions Wendy Reed, anniversary
Sunday 19th January 2nd Sunday in Ordinary Time <i>Peace Day</i>	9.30am 11.00am	St Anthony's St Mary's	Rosa & Cesare Leonetti, anniversary People of our Parishes

- **The Warm and Cosy Hub** is open in the meeting room at the back of St Mary's Church **every Monday and Friday** from **10am to 2pm** until further notice. Hot soup with bread and butter will be served - tea, coffee and biscuits with a warm welcome. Thanks to the volunteers who help.

You will be aware that Archbishop Malcolm has submitted his resignation to Pope Francis who has asked that he stay in post until his successor is appointed. The Vatican Synod clearly says that in the appointment of bishops the voice of the laity must be heard. *"This Assembly desires that the People of God have a greater voice in choosing Bishops."* (70) XVI ORDINARY GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF THE SYNOD OF BISHOPS 2024

Everyone in the Archdiocese is invited to contribute to this process and to have your voice heard. There will be two meetings, held with the blessing of Archbishop Malcolm, on:

- **Thursday 16th January 2025** at St Mary's Leyland, PR25 1PD (7.00pm – 9.30pm) and
- **Saturday 18th Jan 2025** at St Margaret Clitherow Centre, L17 1AA (10.30am - 1.00pm)

Each gathering will be the same – so only come to one of them. There will be two parts to the meeting: Firstly, we will begin by looking at where we are as a diocese and our future development and secondly, we will consider the qualities needed in our future Archbishop.

This is open to all members of our community here in the Archdiocese. To reserve a place at one of the meetings please fill in the online form in the link: bit.ly/ASCMeetingAOL

Obviously, it will be difficult for parishioners on the Island to attend. However, if you are unable to take part in person, but would like to take part in the Saturday meeting by Zoom, please follow the link below on Saturday 18th January at 10.30am: <https://us02web.zoom.us/j/89983555285?pwd=GbHwdzCo42YoaRMvllq8GgZBz5M5NW.1>

Pope Francis: Baptism is the gift not only of a new life, but of becoming, in Jesus, beloved children of God forever. *"Let us make a commitment to seek and remember the date of our Baptism; and today let us thank the Lord because since then He is not only with us, but in us"*

"Let us also thank Him, for the parents who brought us to the font, for those who administered the Sacrament to us, for the godfather and godmother, for the community in which we received Him." Questions to ponder:
 "Am I aware of the immense gift I carry in me because of Baptism? *"Do I recognize, in my life, the light of God's presence, who sees me as His beloved son, as His beloved daughter?"*

"May Mary, temple of the Spirit," the Pope prayed, "help us to celebrate and welcome the wonders the Lord performs in us."