**NEWSLETTER**

 **Parishes of St Anthony of Padua, Onchan; St Mary of the Isle & St Joseph, Douglas
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 **5th Sunday in Ordinary Time, 9th February 2025**

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

 *(Page 449 in Missal for Order of the Mass) (Page 796 for Mass readings)*

Dear Parishioners

In his recent autobiography ‘Hope’, Pope Francis speaks of fifty-nine wars currently taking place in today’s world. There are daily reports of atrocities in Gaza, the West Bank, Syria, Lebanon, Sudan and the Democratic Republic of Congo. The invasion of Ukraine, nearing its fourth year of terrible atrocities, is the first war in mainland Europe since 1945. Other armed conflicts hardly merit a word in our news bulletins. Equally shocking have been pictures of the entire infrastructure of Gaza reduced to rubble – each pile of debris representing people’s homes and livelihoods. The sight of endless columns of Palestinian trudging back to reclaim their lives reminds us of the exiled people of Israel returning from Babylon 2500 years ago. And now, added to this violence and destruction, neighbours and allies are being provoked into trade wars, tariffs, expulsions and threats of invasion. World order is evaporating into chaos.

One gospel reading at Mass during this week told the story of the Gerasene Demoniac:
*At that time: Jesus and his disciples came to the other side of the lake, to the country of the Gerasenes. And when Jesus had stepped out of the boat, immediately there met him out of the tombs a man with an unclean spirit. He lived among the tombs. And no one could bind him anymore, not even with a chain, for he had often been bound with shackles and chains, but he wrenched the chains apart, and he broke the shackles in pieces. No one had the strength to subdue him. Night and day among the tombs and on the mountains he was always crying out and cutting himself with stones. And when he saw Jesus from afar, he ran and fell down before him. And crying out with a loud voice, he said, ‘What have you to do with me, Jesus, Son of the Most High God? I adjure you by God, do not torment me.’ For he was saying to him, ‘Come out of the man, you unclean spirit!’ And Jesus asked him, ‘What is your name?’ He replied, ‘My name is Legion, for we are many.’ And he begged him earnestly not to send them out of the country. Now a great herd of pigs was feeding there on the hillside, and they begged him, saying, ‘Send us to the pigs; let us enter them.’ So he gave them permission. And the unclean spirits came out and entered the pigs; and the herd, numbering about two thousand, rushed down the steep bank into the sea and drowned in the sea.*

It's a powerful story of demonic possession – characterised by violence, torment, aggression, frenzy, turbulence, hostility, confusion, agitation, noise, anarchy and disruption. Evil feeds on itself and multiplies. It assumes many guises. Satan, the father of lies and its hatreds, is multiplied by millions on their laptops and iPhones the world over. When challenged by even the calmest declaration of the truth, it writhes and screams and retaliates. But it carries within itself the seeds of its own destruction. As it goes it threatens to take everyone with it. This is the same face of evil in our world today. ‘Destroy me and I’ll destroy you too’…… The antidote to all of this is in the words of Jesus: ‘Come out of the man, you unclean spirit!’ and later: ‘Go home to your friends and tell them how much the Lord has done for you, and how he has had mercy on you.’

Meanwhile the Inauguration of the 47th President of the United States is reduced to another Grammy award – a superficial and sinister display of suits and ties, dresses, hats, handbags and hairstyles of the latest occupants of the White House and their sycophantic hangers-on.

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There’s an extraordinary number of parishioners who are sick and even more of our ‘virtual parishioners’ who live in the UK and beyond and follow Mass online. There is an increasing number of those who approach us asking for prayers. Some ask for their names to be read out at Mass. Others wish to remain anonymous but ask to be included in our prayers. A good percentage of those who light candles do so on behalf of those who are sick. We read in the Gospels that Jesus spent his time preaching and healing the sick. They flocked to him in their need. These included people who rarely made it to the temple or synagogue but in their desperation turned to him in droves. The message of Jesus was conducted as much through his healing as his words.

For many, the same ministry of healing is expressed in devotion to Our Lady of Lourdes. Ill health is a great leveller in the eyes of the Lord. Lourdes doesn’t discriminate between those who make it to Mass each week and those who don’t. Lourdes accepts people as they are. Lourdes doesn’t demand rash promises of a return to regular practice as a condition for healing. It is said that of the millions who travel to Lourdes only 71 officially recognised healings have taken place. But everyone who goes to Lourdes is healed. They return home with renewed hope – both those who are sick and those who accompany them. **Next Tuesday, 11th February is the feast of Our Lady of Lourdes.** It is appropriately designated as **World Day for the Sick.** We pray on that day for Mary to intercede on behalf of the sick and for those who take care of them.

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The Archdiocese of Liverpool will be celebrating the miraculous cure at Lourdes of John (Jack) Traynor with a celebration Mass on **Tuesday 18February at 7pm at the Metropolitan Cathedral of Christ the King**.

Jack was a pilgrim on the archdiocese's first official pilgrimage to Lourdes in 1923 and was cured dramatically of epilepsy, paralysis of the right arm and paraplegia during the pilgrimage.

It is the 71st official miracle to have happened in Lourdes and the first from England to be formally recognised.

Archbishop Malcolm said*: “Declaring the miraculous cure of Jack Traynor is a significant and historic moment for our archdiocese.  We have planned a fitting celebration to mark this occasion. It is set to be a celebration filled with joy and we are welcoming those from across our archdiocese and beyond to join us. It is truly fitting that this celebration will take place during the Jubilee year which calls us to be ‘Pilgrims of Hope’ as Jack’s story certainly fills us with hope.”* Fr John

* **First Holy Communion preparation for children with special educational needs**: A few parents have been in touch with us whose children missed out on making their First Holy Communion because of their additional educational needs. Some of these children are now in secondary school. We are arranging a meeting next week with these parents and children.
* **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. Thanks to the volunteers who help with this.

**Masses and Services for the coming week**

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

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| **Saturday 8th February** 5th Sunday in Ordinary Time | 5.00pm | St Mary’s | People of our Parishes |
| **Sunday 9th February** 5th Sunday in Ordinary Time | 9.30am11.00am | St Anthony’sSt Mary’s | Patcy Rice, recently diedBrian Leneghan, recently died |
| **Monday 10th February**St Scholastica | 12.10pm | St Mary’s | Christine and Nyle Inguillo, birthdays |
| **Tuesday 11th February**Our Lady of LourdesWorld Day for the Sick | *10.00am* 12.10pm | *St Anthony’s*St Mary’s | *Eucharistic Service* Sick and housebound parishioners |
| **Wednesday 12th February** | 12.10pm | St Mary’s | Baby Thomas & Beena anniversary |
| **Thursday 13th February** | 10.00am 12.10pm | St Anthony’sSt Mary’s | Gabrielle Hamer, anniversaryMary Amosin, thanksgiving |
| **Friday 14th February**St Cyril, St Methodius,St Valentine | 12.10pm  | St Mary’s | Mary McCarthy-Glynn, birthday anniversary |
| **Saturday 15th February** *Racial Justice Day*6th Sunday in Ordinary Time | 11.00am to 12noon5.00pm | St Mary’sSt Mary’s | Exposition and Confessions Josie Ridsdale, anniversary |
| **Sunday 16th February** *Racial Justice Day*6th Sunday in Ordinary Time | 9.30am11.00am | St Anthony’sSt Mary’s | People of our ParishesJoel & Elmer Marquez, thanksgiving |

We remember our parishioners **Pat Gaffey** and **Karin O’Doherty** who died this week. May they rest in peace. We think of their families and friends who mourn their loss.