**NEWSLETTER**

 **Parishes of St Anthony of Padua, Onchan; St Mary of the Isle & St Joseph, Douglas
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 **1st Sunday of Lent, 9th March 2025**

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

 *(Page 449 in Missal for Order of the Mass) (Page 819 for Mass readings)*

Dear Parishioners

We continue to pray for Pope Francis. **Fr Brian D'Arcy,** Passionist priest and religious broadcaster, spoke recently about him:
**‘I was heartened and pleasantly surprised at the many people making a special effort to pray for Pope Francis …..** young and old, believers and non-believers; people recognise Francis is a good and genuinely holy man. His vision for the world and the Church is straight from the heart of the Gospel. His honesty impresses even doubters.

Just before his predecessor, Pope Benedict, resigned, I was under pressure to leave the priesthood. You do not understand how consoling it was to know that now Pope Francis was saying the same things his predecessors wanted to silence me for saying. Many of his enemies plotted in secret to bring him down.……

‘Francis didn’t hide the undercurrent of discontent…… I have no problem with people disagreeing with the Pope - I have done it myself in the past - but it should be done openly and respectfully….. They are outraged that the Pope encourages theological debate…… Discussion and debate are how theology develops, which is essential if the Church is to communicate with people in the 21st Century…….

‘Pope Francis has warned us that life is too precious to waste on divisions*.* ***“Don’t fight with people, don’t criticise your body so much, don’t complain so much, and don’t lose sleep over your bills. Look for the person who makes you happy,” he has preached. “If you make a mistake, let it go and keep seeking happiness. Never stop being a good parent. Don’t worry so much about buying luxuries and comforts for your home, and don’t kill yourself trying to leave an inheritance for your family…. “Why not pray now instead of waiting until before you sleep? Why not call now? Why not forgive now? Why wait so long for Christmas, for Friday, for Reunions, for another year, for ‘when I have money’, for love to come, when ‘everything is perfect’ ... look ... Everything perfect doesn’t exist.”….***

‘Francis welcomed the very people others looked down upon. One group that doesn’t experience compassion in the Church is the LGBT+ community. That group has as many opinions about morality and religion as any other group. Included among them is a solid group that wants to find a home within their Church but is constantly rebuked. The Pope assured them: ***“I prefer to return to how Jesus did things. It’s important to know that the original disciples and the many followers of Jesus did not come to know him through reading theological books. They experienced a kind, compassionate saviour who was different. They reflected prayerfully on their experience of his life”…***

‘Pope Francis pushed the boat out for the LGBT+ community and those in second relationships. The handed-down faith condemns them as sinners who cannot approach the altar. The compassion of Jesus teaches something else entirely. **The hallmark of the Pope’s compassion tells us that the Kingdom of God is not for the perfect, but for the struggling.…..*“My calling is to encourage good people to be their best. God finds them where they are,”*** he insisted. He was confident enough to trust people to listen to the Holy Spirit within. The good people who have been forced out of the Church will find God, and God will find them, and they will be blessed, accepted, forgiven and encouraged. “That’s what God does because that’s what God is,” is one his favourite sayings.

‘If you are seeking happiness, the following prayer is helpful: ***“You can have flaws, be anxious, and even be angry, but do not forget that your life is the greatest enterprise in the world.…To be happy is not to have a sky without a storm, a road without accidents, work without fatigue, and relationships without disappointments. To be happy is to find strength in forgiveness, hope in battles, and love in discord.”….*** With such words as these, Pope Francis finds hope for himself and all of us. No wonder the world prays for him.’

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**We are now into the season of Lent**. We accompany Jesus in his forty days in the desert and we renew our commitment to him in preparation for Holy Week and Easter. Lent is a period of solemnity and austerity in the church’s year. The liturgical colour changes from green to purple and there are no flowers in church.

This **Wednesday, 12th March, at 7.00pm** we will gather around the Mission Cross at St Mary’s Cathedral Church to renew our dedication to the Crucified Christ. With our choir to support us, this **Special** **Jubilee Year Service** will celebrate our relationship with the Cross of Christ; an opportunity to make this Jubilee Year Lent extra special. Parishioners from across the Island are invited to join us. Stations of the Cross will take place at St Anthony’s at 7pm on the remaining Wednesdays of Lent commencing Wednesday 19th March.

Thanks to the anonymous person who kindly left bags of coins with a sincere note of gratitude. The cash donation will go towards our Lourdes Youth Pilgrimage. *Fr John*

In the **Sacrament** **of** **Confirmation** our young people have the chance to make their own, the faith they have inherited from their parents. They had no choice in their Baptism. They can now choose to be Confirmed. Their interactions and discussion within a group of peers is invaluable in the development of a grown-up faith. It doesn’t mean that their understanding and questioning of that faith is over. Faith is not static. It flexes and bends throughout our lives and sometimes even seems to disappear. In Confirmation a young person is committed to continuing to explore what that faith might mean for ME. And that’s a lifelong task.

This year **young people currently in Year 8** are eligible to receive the Sacrament of Confirmation. Older children under 18, who have missed out on Confirmation in previous years, will also be included.The preparation will consist of sessions in Ballakermeen High School at the end of the school day. Please email the parish office atsaintmaryiom@rcaol.org.uk if you wish to enrol your child. Details of the preparation courses will then be sent to those who have enrolled. We are hoping the sessions will begin shortly after Easter.

* **St Peter’s Parish Church, Onchan** are running a Lent course based on the film ‘Les Misérables’. The next session takes place on **Tuesday 11th March at 7pm** and the course will continue on the Tuesdays of Lent. All are welcome.
* **Lenten Soup Lunches** will be served on Wednesdays during Lent from **12noon - 2pm** from **Wednesday 12th March** until Wednesday 16 April at St Anthony’s Pastoral Centre. £8 or donation. Proceeds to Hospice. All welcome.
* **St Anthony’s Charity Bingo** will take place on **Thursday 13th March** at 7.30pm in the Pastoral Centre. All welcome.
* The next meetingof **Reflections on the Word** takes place in **St Anthony’s Pastoral Centre** on **Tuesday 18th March at 7pm.** All welcome. Something extra for Lent?
* **Columba Club AGM** will be held in the Club at **8pm on Tuesday 25 March**. This is an important meeting which will determine and shape the future of the Club and the premises. All members are encouraged to attend. If you know anyone who is not a member but would be interested in joining, they will be welcome. Voting will be open to all paid up members. Doors will open at 7.30pm. The bar will also be open.
* **Lenten Alms envelopes** can be found at the back of church. In Lent we are encouraged to be generous.

**Masses and Services for the coming week**

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

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| **Saturday 8th March**1st Sunday of Lent | 5.00pm | St Mary’s | People of our Parishes |
| **Sunday 9th March**1st Sunday of Lent | 9.30am11.00am | St Anthony’sSt Mary’s | Jenny Kinahan, recently diedQuintin Larkin, 3rd anniversary |
| **Monday 10th March** | No Mass or Service  | St Mary’s | No Mass or Service today |
| **Tuesday 11th March** | *No Service today*12.10pm | *St Anthony’s*St Mary’s | *No Mass or Service today*Dorothy Ennett, recently died |
| **Wednesday 12th March** | 12.10pm***7.00pm*** | St Mary’s***St Mary’s*** | T. I. Abraham, 2nd anniversary***JUBILEE YEAR LENTEN SERVICE*** |
| **Thursday 13th March** | *No Service today*12.10pm | *St Anthony’s*St Mary’s | *No Mass or Service today*St John Harris, sick |
| **Friday 14th March**CAFOD Lent Fast Day  | ***12.00 noon***  | ***St Mary’s*** | ***Requiem Mass: Kathleen Rooney*** |
| **Saturday 15th March**CAFOD Prayer Day for Needy2nd Sunday of Lent | 11.00am to 12noon5.00pm | St Mary’sSt Mary’s | Exposition and Confessions Pat Gaffey, recently died |
| **Sunday 16th March**2nd Sunday of LentCAFOD Prayer Day for Needy | 9.30am11.00am | St Anthony’sSt Mary’s | People of our ParishesDes Dougan, 70th birthday anniversary |

We remember in our prayers **Kathleen Rooney** and **Marion Askew** who died recently. We think of their grieving families and friends who mourn their loss. May they rest in peace.