**NEWSLETTER**

 **Parishes of St Anthony of Padua, Onchan; St Mary of the Isle & St Joseph, Douglas
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 **3rd Sunday of Lent, 23rd March 2025**

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

 *(Page 449 in Missal for Order of the Mass) (Page 829 for Mass readings)*

Dear Parishioners

This week **Professor Ian Linden**, former director of the Catholic Institute for International Relations and adviser to the Catholic Bishops Conference of England and Wales, spoke of Pope Francis’s reputation as a defender of truth and integrity way beyond the borders of the church – a legacy he will share with the Founding Fathers of what was to become the United States of America. Ian Linden suggests that many Mass-going Catholics fail to appreciate the role Pope Francis plays in articulating Gospel values with their commitment to the poor, excluded and under privileged – a set of priorities dismissed by some as ‘woke’……….

‘Prayers for seriously ill Pope Francis seem to have been answered. But will we hear his voice again, speaking from the heart, truth to power, at this critical time? It is so badly needed. …. It says something when a Guardian editorial (17 March) describes Francis' pontificate as making the Catholic Church "one of the west's most combative defenders of the liberal democratic values".

We are in a global crisis with the moral, the military, the economic and the political intertwined. We have moved from low key realpolitik to different forms of strident proclamation, echoing across continents, that might is right. Or to use Francis' more pointed words in his 10 February letter to the US bishops: the imposition of "an ideological criterion that distorts the life of society and imposes the will of the strongest".

We have moved from an America imagined by President Kennedy, recalling the words of the first Governor of Massachusetts Bay colony, John Winthrop in his 1630 'city on a hill' sermon, to an America looked on in shock, dismay and apprehension by other democratic countries. To the modern forms of tyranny found in Russia and China is added the bizarre political dynamics of the present USA ruling clique at full throttle.

Kennedy, as a political not a religious leader, did not repeat Winthrop's appeal "to follow the counsel of [prophet] Micah: to do justly, to love mercy, to walk humbly with God. For this end", Winthrop continued, ***"we must hold each other in brotherly affection; we must be willing to rid ourself of our excesses to supply others' necessities; we must uphold a familiar commerce together in all meekness, gentleness, patience, and liberality".*** This inspiring vision of the Pilgrim Fathers stands in stark contrast to the current reality, a great country torn asunder, beggaring its neighbours.

Social division within the USA has increased the gulf between the values projected by political and religious discourses. Think of what Pope Francis has said about, Ukraine, Gaza and particularly about immigration: ***"The true common good is promoted when society and government, with creativity and strict respect for the rights of all - as I have affirmed on numerous occasions - welcomes, protects, promotes and integrates the most fragile, unprotected and vulnerable".*** You will not find such vision in any Party-political broadcasts.

Some of the US evangelical Churches, and indeed many Catholics, demonstrate that there is an overlap between values claimed by Trump and some aspects of the Christian faith. Some Christian teachings, notably condemnation of the death penalty, solidarity with the poor, feeding and clothing the hungry, welcoming the stranger are rejected whilst those on abortion and gender are embraced. But there can be little doubt that, as far of the Trump presidency is concerned, this overlap is consciously fostered and, to a large degree - perhaps less cynically after his near-assassination - manipulated. On the President's passion for peace the jury is out.

Using religion to fool the masses, as Marx pointed out, works. A large part of Christian America is willing to overlook Trump's sense of entitlement to millions of dollars, unlimited power and sex, if he waves a bible, bows his head in prayer but expresses what they are feeling, makes them laugh, and promises to raise their standard of living. Some also seem to believe in a theology in which God, to preserve the nation's saviour, deflects a bullet.

As Europe's politicians are increasingly discovering, it is difficult to deal with the Trump Presidency. And a no less intractable problem is how should people of goodwill approach his followers. Or more pointedly what kind of theology might bring about a hang-on-a-bit moment, the beginning of a Christian *prise de conscience* amongst the MAGA millions, or indeed amongst populists in Europe. These are all people who have a right to the truth, and to a theology which speaks to their condition in a language they can understand. As Massimo Faggioli recently wrote in La Croix - and in correspondence with me - the problem is not just Trump's supporters, who mainly have missed out on college education, but also the many, particularly theologians, who seem unable to see that they have to turn from speaking to people who agree with them and talk to people who, for a variety of reasons, voted for Trump. As Faggioli wrote: "It's not just a moral problem but also practical, that is, how to save this country."

Pope Francis has been more than willing to take the lead in changing thinking. But if the UK is typical, very little of the Pope's teachings reaches Mass-going Catholics. The **"option for the poor"** is a formative principle of Francis' pastoral concern as Pope. But talking recently with three committed, active, educated Catholics, I realized they were only vaguely aware of the term. Living in my own bubble, I thought for Catholics the phrase was common knowledge. But why should they have heard of it if expounding of the liturgy of the Word takes up all the sermon time and there is never any mention of papal guidance and seldom the contemporary relevance of the biblical texts? The persistent fear of being political isn't an adequate excuse. What could be more political than the Samaritan narratives, the Magnificat, the Beatitudes and the behaviour of the biblical Jesus, His incarnational identification with the Poor.’ *Fr John*

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Thanks to the parents who have returned completed forms and Baptism Certificates to register their children for the **Sacrament** **of** **Confirmation.** Dates and details of the preparation courses, which will take place after Easter at the end of the school day in Ballakermeen High School, will be emailed this coming week to those who have enrolled.

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* **Stations of the Cross** will take place at **7pm in St Anthony’s** for the remaining Wednesdays in Lent.
* **St Peter’s Parish Church, Onchan** are running a Lent course each Tuesday at 7pm based on the film ‘Les Misérables’. The next session takes place on Tuesday 25th March at 7pm**.** All are welcome.
* **Columba Club AGM** will be held in the Club this coming **Tuesday 25th March** **at** **8pm.** 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 Soup Lunches** will be served on Wednesdays during Lent from 12noon - 2pm until Wednesday 16 April at St Anthony’s Pastoral Centre. £8 or donation. Proceeds to Hospice. All welcome.
* **T & Chat** will next meet on **Tuesday 1 April** at **10.30am - 12noon.** Graeme Jolly from the Family Library will join the group. Everyone will be warmly welcomed. Refreshments will be served. Thanks to Caitlin Dancox who gave an excellent presentation on ID fraud/scamming at the last meeting.
* **The Warm and Cosy Hub** will continue in the meeting room at the back of St Mary’s Churchfrom **10am to 2pm** next Monday and Friday. The **final day of the Hub will be Monday 31 March**. A Big Thanks to the volunteers who not only provided a warm welcome but prepared and served homemade soups, cakes and other goodies.

**Masses and Services for the coming week**

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

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| **Saturday 22nd March**3rd Sunday of Lent | 5.00pm | St Mary’s | People of our Parishes |
| **Sunday 23rd March**3rd Sunday of Lent | 9.30am11.00am | St Anthony’sSt Mary’s | Peter Lees, anniversaryMichael McCarrick, anniversary |
| **Monday 24th March** | 12.10pm  | St Mary’s | Fr Joe Robinson, deceased |
| **Tuesday 25th March**The Annunciation of the Lord | 10.00am12.10pm | St Anthony’sSt Mary’s | Breda Hannon, recently diedRoy Newson, deceased |
| **Wednesday 26th March** | 12.10pm***7.00pm*** | St Mary’s***St Anthony’s*** | Brian Leneghan, deceased***Stations of the Cross*** |
| **Thursday 27th March** | ***10.00am****10.00am*12.10pm | ***Crematorium****St Anthony’s*St Mary’s | ***Funeral Service: Maria Velasquez****Eucharistic Service*Dec’d members of McNally family |
| **Friday 28th March** | 12.10pm***2.00pm*** | St Mary’s*St Mary’s Church*  | Naro, Daryl, Jack, Cyrus & Brenda ints***Resurrection Rock - School pupils***  |
| **Saturday 29th March***Laetare Sunday*4th Sunday of Lent | 11.00am to 12noon5.00pm | St Mary’sSt Mary’s | Exposition and Confessions People of our Parishes |
| **Sunday 30th March***Laetare Sunday*4th Sunday of Lent | 9.30am11.00am | St Anthony’sSt Mary’s | Attracta & Paul McKeever, anniv Mary McCarthy-Glynn anniversary |