



St. Mary's R. C. Church

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St. Paul's R. C. Church

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Newsletter

The Most Holy Body and Blood of Christ

June 11th 2023

My dear parishioners,

I hope this finds you well and enjoying these early days of summer. As we gather for the liturgy, we celebrate the beautiful Solemnity of The Most Holy Body and Blood of Christ, this precious gift which means so much to us.

As your parish priest I need to raise an important matter with you and I ask you to prayerfully reflect on what follows. Just after Easter Bishop Toal wrote a Pastoral Letter to the priests and people of Motherwell Diocese addressing some of his concerns for the future. A copy of the full Letter is available online and at the back of our churches. I will quote some passages here:

“In the earlier decades of the Diocese, a great effort was made in providing new parishes, particularly in housing estates which were being built in the Lanarkshire towns. The number of churches, halls and chapel houses increased, and a good number of priests came from Ireland to help build up and serve these parishes. We don't have the same number of priests now, nor the same number of people attending the services in our churches. That being the case, it is time to pay attention to the number and state of our buildings as they age, recognising that the cost of maintenance is clearly more difficult, with fewer parishioners participating in the church's life and worship. It is an issue we face with some reluctance but we need to be realistic about the number of buildings we now need to serve our communities and how we will care for them. It does seem inevitable that the future of some buildings will have to be assessed and difficult decisions made. Such decisions will require careful consideration of the work required and its cost, as their possible loss, particularly that of a church, will be keenly felt by its parishioners.

Clearly it is right that other considerations, as well as costs, merit attention; these include proximity to other churches, the difficulty for some of travelling further to attend Mass, the loss to the particular community of the church in their midst, the proximity of the local Primary School to the church. While all these points are valid, it also has to be recognised that the numbers attending Mass and participating in the Sacramental and Devotional Life in our parishes, have been falling over a number of years. Covid has influenced the numbers attending also, and although there are signs greater numbers still like to attend church for great feasts and special occasions, the struggle to maintain some buildings may be too difficult for those who are fully active members of the parish, whose generosity remains outstanding. It is fair to say that those who most appreciate the Church and get the most benefit from their faith are those most likely to be penalised by taking away a particular church. At the same time they are likely to be the most resilient members of the faithful and most willing to accept change and the additional sacrifice needed to sustain the future presence of the Church in your area. Sometimes we can wish that we could resurrect the past but the reality is that people and situations change and we have to adjust our thinking and practice to present realities and respond positively to the challenges we now face. I envisage that does mean that the Diocese of Motherwell will consolidate its presence and celebration of our Catholic Faith in fewer buildings and I ask the faithful to embrace this reality and be ready to adapt to changing times.”

As your parish priest I raise this matter with you because it affects our parish of St. Mary's and St. Paul's. One of the buildings being assessed by the Diocese is our church of St. Paul's. I suspect that this will not be a surprise to you, for on quite a number of occasions recently parishioners have asked me about the possibility of St. Paul's closing.

Of course this is difficult for us all, and so what I ask of you is that we face this together, priest and people, in the good and sincere spirit of the Bishop's letter. Over the next few weeks and months let us make a sincere and open assessment of the pastoral and financial demands of this parish which we all hold dear, St. Mary's and St. Paul's Hamilton. I realise you may have some initial reactions to this news and so I suggest that we meet at St. Paul's Church on **Tuesday 20th June at 6pm**. It matters a great deal to me to hear what you are thinking and feeling. Let us commend the journey ahead to our two great patrons, St. Mary and St. Paul, for we have every reason to trust in their intercession for us.

Father O'Brien

I offer now the times of the Liturgy for the coming week:

Monday June 12th: Mass at St. Mary's at 10am
Rosary 9.40am; Novena to Our Lady in the evening at 7pm

Tuesday June 13th: Requiem for Lauren Docherty at St. Mary's at 10am
Reception on Monday at 6.15pm

Wednesday June 14th: Confirmation at St. Mary's at 7pm

Saturday, June 17th
Vigil at St. Paul's at 4pm
Vigil at St. Mary's at 5.30pm

Sunday June 18th
Mass at St. Paul's at 9.15am
Mass at St. Mary's at 10.30am

Welcome to Fr. Ronnie Fernandes SJ, parish priest of St. Ignatius, Lethem, Guyana, who will be visiting for some days next week.

Credo: Parish Faith Sharing Group will meet this Tuesday at 1pm.

St. Mary's and St. Paul's Parish Council: thank you for all the comments, ideas and suggestions; an update of the Council's response is on the notice board in St. Mary's and in the porch at St. Paul's. Our next meeting is in August and we will continue to monitor the e-mail over the summer.

Please remember in your prayers:

Recently Deceased: Lauren Docherty, Margaret Walker, Rick Anderson, Angela Kelly, William and Mary Drummond, Lesley Hughes

Special Remembrance: John Carney, Cornelius (Neil) McMurray, Jim Bryson Snr and Jnr, Peter Patrick Harkin, Tom Bridges, Wullie McKane and all our deceased relatives and friends and the benefactors of St. Mary's and St. Paul's, *requiescant in pace*.

For Reflection: "When one is really searching for the truth, one is doing it for good. You don't look for the truth to divide, confront, attack, belittle or dissolve." Pope Francis