



St. Mary's R. C. Church

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Newsletter

Fourth Sunday of the Year

January 28th 2024

My dear parishioners at St. Mary's and St. Paul's,

At the beginning of the year Bishop Toal sent a Pastoral Letter to be shared with the people of the Diocese on the important topic of **Blessings**. I happened to be away in Ireland for a wedding when the Pastoral Letter should have been read and so I offer it now for your information and reflection.

Dear Brothers and Sisters,

I wish you all every blessing for 2024. The first reading at Mass on the Solemnity of Mary Mother of God is a very fitting blessing for all God's people from the Book of Numbers: *'May the Lord bless you and keep, may the Lord let his face shine upon you and be gracious to you, may the Lord uncover his face to you and bring you peace.'*

The desire for God's blessing is very strong in people of faith and it is particularly sought after at times in life when we feel weak and vulnerable, we ask for this blessing frequently in our personal and communal prayer and at times we ask a priest or deacon to pray with us and make the sign of the cross over us. This offers us a sense of God's love and mercy, and his consolation and protection in our particular time of need.

The recent declaration from the Dicastery for the Doctrine of Faith, **Fiducia Supplicans**, offered a reflection and direction on the **Pastoral Meaning of Blessings**, extending the possibility of giving a blessing to couples who are living in irregular relationships, in the eyes of the Catholic Church, including same-sex couples. In the foreward to the document, Pope Francis makes it clear the Declaration remains firm on the traditional doctrine of marriage, not allowing any type of liturgical rite or blessing similar to the Rite of Marriage or other liturgical rites, so that any confusion is avoided. The value of the document is that it permits a *broadening* and *enrichment* of the classical understanding of blessings, based on the pastoral vision of Pope Francis. Since this is a development that has caused much comment and debate in the Church, I recommend that you read the Declaration and gain an appreciation of the rich teaching offered on blessings. I quote paragraph 31 from the document:

'Within the horizon outlined here appears the possibility of blessings for couples in irregular situations and for couples of the same sex, the form of which should not be fixed ritually by ecclesiastical authorities to avoid producing confusion with the blessing proper to the Sacrament of Marriage. In such cases a blessing may be imparted that descends from God upon those who ask that all that is true, good and humanly valid in their lives and in their relationships be enriched, healed and elevated by the presence of the Holy Spirit. These forms of blessings express a supplication that God may grant those aids that come from the impulses of his Spirit so that human relationships may mature and grow in fidelity to the Gospel, that they may be freed from their imperfections and frailties, and that they may express themselves in the ever-increasing dimension of divine love.'

The possibility of blessings being given by the clergy to those in irregular situations is very much in line with Pope Francis' often repeated desire that the Church reaches out to all her children, particularly those who feel isolated or on the margins. Such blessings can reassure that God loves and cares for them in their particular circumstances and that the church accompanies each of us in the often difficult journey of Christian faith and love. As Bishop I welcome the initiative taken, and the possibilities it offers, and pray that it will assist the clergy in caring for those who seek our pastoral care and support, so that they experience the desired blessing of the Lord, who loves us so much that he took on our nature in order to save us all.

May Our Blessed Lady, Mother of God, be with all her children, and help us to grow in faith and love.

Yours in Christ
+Joseph Toal
Bishop of Motherwell

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

Monday January 29th: Requiem Mass for James Kincaid at 9.30am

Confessions at 6.30-7.50pm; Novena to Our Lady of Perpetual Help at 7pm

Tuesday January 30th: Mass at St Mary's at 10am

Rosary at 9.40am

Wednesday January 31st: Mass at St. Mary's at 10am

Rosary at 9.40am

Thursday February 1st: Mass at St. Mary's at 10am

Rosary at 9.40am

CREDO, the parish faith-sharing group meets this Tuesday in the parish meeting room at 1 o'clock; new members are always welcome and some tea and biscuits are shared together at the end of the meeting.

St. Mary and St. Paul's Walking Group meets on Tuesday mornings at 11am outside the Museum at the bottom of Muir Street; new participants are always welcome and after the walk, which lasts for one hour, some gather in the coffee shop at the Museum.

Recently Deceased: James Kincaid, Edwina Ward, William Higgins, Theresa Henderson-Forsyth, Jackie Hughes, Isobel Lochiel, Maureen Guinane, Vittorio Ventisei, George Terrett, Frances Howden, Rose Herraghty, Patricia Stewart, Martin Francis Cullen

Special Remembrance: Frank McBride, Sally Ann Murray, Barbara Jones, Rita Kane, William and Mary Burns, Alex and Anna Darragh, Margaret Scanlan, Rose Terrett, Ann Terrett, Owen and Bella Currie and all our deceased relatives and friends and the benefactors of St. Mary's and St. Paul's.

A Prayer for the Success of 'Project Wellspring'

*Grant us O merciful God
that our offering may find
acceptance with you
and that through it
the **Wellspring** of all blessing may be laid open before us.
We ask this through Christ our Lord. Amen*