



St. Mary's R. C. Church

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Newsletter

First Sunday of Lent

February 21st 2021

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

I hope this newsletter finds you and your family well; I continue to hold you dear each day as I celebrate the Eucharist, praying that you find the inner strength and resolve needed to face the ongoing challenges of the pandemic. My hope is that the Holy Season of Lent will help each one of us to turn our gaze lovingly towards the great mystery of Christ and his passion, death and resurrection, and towards Our Lady and the saints who have walked the path of discipleship before us. This is our moment!

In preparing for this week's liturgy I came across these words by Pope Benedict and thought you might like to reflect upon them:

“What does ‘entering Lent’ mean? It means we enter a season of special commitment in the spiritual battle to oppose the evil present in the world, in each one of us and around us. It means not off-loading the problem of evil onto others, onto society or onto God, but rather recognising one's own responsibility and assuming it with awareness. In this regard Jesus' invitation to each one of us Christians to take up our ‘cross’ and follow him with humility and trust is particularly pressing. Although the ‘cross’ may be heavy it is not synonymous with misfortune, with disgrace, to be avoided on all accounts; but rather it is an opportunity to follow Jesus and thereby to acquire strength in the fight against sin and evil.” Pope Benedict XVI

On a daily basis, through the media, we are confronted by some of the great evils that cause terrible pain and distress to the human race: warfare and hatred, brutality and contempt for truth, racism in all its forms and disguises, the debilitating effects of all types of abuse on another person and of course indifference to human suffering. Jesus shows his disciples that there is another way, God's way, and he invites each one of us to follow him on that path. Of course this involves the ‘cross’.

Lent invites us to stop, to step aside from our usual ways and to reflect on the pilgrimage we are making through life. During the six weeks of Lent we are invited to be in touch again with our own soul, the sacred space where we sense the holiness of the life entrusted to us. The church asks us to use the time-honoured ways of fasting, prayer and almsgiving in our Lenten journey.

Prayer is our personal relationship with Jesus, talking to him, listening to him and following him. What might Jesus ask me to fast from? It could be one of many things, but usually we think of food and for sure this type of fasting creates space in which we become much more aware of those who are hungry in our world, those who are fasting and not by choice. Prayer and fasting often result in almsgiving, wanting to share something of our own good fortune with those in our world who have nothing and sometimes no one. The poor are waiting and they are waiting for us.

Lent is a six week journey of love; the Lenten days invite us to a fresh love of God, a compassionate love of oneself and others, especially the poorest of the poor who live side by side with us on our beautiful planet. No wonder then that the church thinks of Lent as a new Spring,

May it be Springtime for us here at St. Mary's and St. Paul's,
Father O'Brien

Bishop Toal has written a Pastoral Letter for Lent to the people of Motherwell Diocese and it can be read on the diocesan website www.rcdom.org.uk

Catholic Charities: we have some wonderful charities in the life of the church, which seek to be alongside people living in very challenging situations. As was mentioned above, Lent is a time of almsgiving and the following charities would be grateful for any donations:

Scottish Catholic International Aid Fund: details at www.sciaf.org.uk.

Usually we have the Wee Box for Lent and you can collect one from the church house if you wish or you could use an empty jar and bring it along at the end of Lent.

Mary's Meals: details at www.marysmeals.org.uk.

This charity, which helps to feed over a million children every day, is having a special Lenten appeal for the people of Tigray in Ethiopia. The following paragraph is from a letter sent to the parish by Magnus MacFarlane-Barrow, founder of Mary's Meals:

"The people of Tigray are living in fear of imminent starvation. The brutal fighting has forced many to flee their homes. The city of Mekelle is being overwhelmed by displaced people arriving with nothing at all. Many are unaccompanied children who have lost their parents. Probably amongst those children are some who used to eat Mary's Meals at school. The lives of those children have now been changed beyond recognition. Therefore our plans have too. For now, it is just about doing whatever we can to help keep these children alive in a city where everyone is clinging to survival."

Some further charities will feature in next week's newsletter.

Please remember in your prayers:

St. Mary's Primary School and St. Paul's Primary School as they welcome the return of pupils in Primary One, Two and Three. We pray every blessing on the staff and pupils.

All who are sick in the parish and who have asked us to pray for them.

Recently Deceased: Tom Ward (**Requiem at St. Mary's on March 3rd at 10.30am**), Andy Gallacher, Roseann Markey, Eric Murphy, John McInnes, Fr. Angus (Robert) McLaughlin OP, Jacqueline Equi, Therese Norton, Stuart Campbell, Helen Connor, Stephen Hunter.

Special Remembrance: Charlie Boyle, Alex and Agnes Grant, Helen and James Lennon, Joan and Patrick Lennon, Margaret and Sandy Paterson, Sarah Turner, John, James and Elizabeth Fulton, John and Julia O'Neill, Edward and Betty Smith, Margaret Phairs, Patricia and James Connor, Hugh Connor, Tom McCabe, Teresa McCartney, James and Mary Neary, John and Mary McCaig, Minnie and Edward Morgan, Christopher Norris, John Lynas, and all our deceased relatives and friends and the benefactors of St. Mary's and St. Paul's, *requiescant in pace*.