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**Newsletter**

**Fourteenth Sunday of the Year**

**July 5th 2020**

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

**What comforting words we hear from Jesus in today's gospel:** *'Come to me, all you who labour and are overburdened, and I will give you rest. Shoulder my yoke and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. Yes, my yoke is easy and my burden light.'*

**When I was a young student** studying for the priesthood I quite often visited Nunraw Abbey, home to a community of Cistercian monks and set in the beautiful countryside of East Lothian, not far from Haddington. At that time the Abbey was a busy place, with a large community of monks and many visitors who stayed at the guest house, which was a short walk away through a lovely woodland area.

**The guest house**, a large baronial mansion, was a place of welcome to all and especially to those who were feeling overburdened by life for one reason or another. The quiet rhythm of prayer and silence as well as the beautiful countryside gave people the space they needed to be unburdened, to bring their worries and concerns to Jesus and to receive strength and courage for what would be waiting on them when they returned home. There was a sense of being fellow pilgrims on life's journey.

**After an interval of many years**, I have had the opportunity to visit the Abbey again, to visit a friend who decided to join the Cistercians and become a monk at Nunraw. It has been a deep joy to return and to stay for a few days with the community. I received the same warm welcome and quickly felt very much at home. Of course some things had changed. The guest house, *'the baronial mansion'*, was being lovingly restored by an American heiress who had purchased it as a holiday home for her family! She was also restoring the woodland walks and these were to remain open in welcome to the public.

**The most noticeable change** was the number of monks in the community; in my youth there were around forty monks at the Abbey, and now they were nine in community. Some of the monks, whom I had known in their early middle years, were now venerable old men! In conversation with one I asked if he missed being part of a large community. His response took me by surprise. He replied, "It was great in those early days when we were building the Abbey and getting things going; there was a sense of excitement, that we were doing something really special for God. But you know, somehow it feels more special to be serving God now, when there are so few of us and when times are much harder, when there is lots to be done and few to do it."

**During these weeks of Lockdown** I have thought about that conversation and the serenity in the face of the elderly monk. Where does such serenity come from? I suspect he is one who has really listened to those encouraging words of Jesus, *"Come to me, all you who labour and are*

*overburdened, and I will give you rest. Shoulder my yoke and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. Yes, my yoke is easy and my burden light.”*

**Jesus invites us to come to him with our ‘burdens’**, our genuine concerns about what might happen in the weeks and months ahead. His words remind us that we are not alone, that he really is with us, and we are with one another. There is great strength in knowing that and great serenity also. Let us do what we can to serve the Lord and one another in these challenging days, which are so very different for us all. Whatever challenges lie ahead for the church in Scotland, we can face them together, walking humbly with the Lord and learning from him.

**It is a real joy** to let you know that St. Mary’s and St. Paul’s opened the church doors last Sunday to welcome you back. Thank you to those who volunteered to assist in the re-opening by acting as stewards or helping with the cleaning of the benches. I know others would like to help and through time we will need you all as it looks as though we are in this for the long haul!

**As Scotland emerges carefully from Lockdown**, the churches will open in this phase only for personal prayer. The celebration of the Liturgy together will come later in the summer. The guidelines from the Government advise that on entering the building you will be asked to wear a face-covering (this can be a scarf rather than a face-mask) and use the sanitizing gel for your hands. You will then be shown to a seat for your period of prayer. As you leave the building you will be asked to use the gel once more. I am sure that we will very quickly adjust to this ‘new normal’ for the moment.

**Due to the social distancing requirement of 2 metres seating is very limited:** St. Mary’s has 36 spaces and St. Paul’s has 30 spaces. Please think about choosing St. Paul’s for your visit as it may well be quieter there.

**For many years now as a parish priest** I have treasured the moment when I go through to the church to open the doors each day in welcome to whoever wants to enter our buildings. It is a real privilege. As I open the doors I find myself praying quietly for all who will enter, that each one will find the grace needed for life at this moment. St. John Paul II has said that the heart of Jesus is a pledge of hope for every man and woman and child. What wonderful news! No one is excluded!

**St. Mary’s will open this Sunday and next Sunday with Exposition of the Blessed Sacrament between 10am and 1pm; the church will also open on Wednesday between 11am and 1pm.**

**St. Paul’s will open this Sunday and next Sunday with Exposition of the Blessed Sacrament between 10.30am and 12 noon.**

*I look forward very much to seeing you.  
Father O’Brien*

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## **An Invitation from the Catholic Men’s Society (CMS)**

**Day Retreat – On Line – Saturday 18<sup>th</sup> July:** all parishioners are invited to join members of the Catholic Men’s Society for a day of spiritual reflection; the retreat will be given by Fr. Daley, the GB chaplain.

### **Programme for the Retreat:**

**10am, celebration of Mass**

**break for coffee/private prayer**

**11.15am First Talk and time for reflection**

**Lunch break**

**1.30pm, Second Talk, adoration and private prayer**

**2.45pm, Music as prayer- meditation with music; Holy Hour**

**3.45pm, Closing prayer.**

**Sunday morning Mass at 10.30 would complete the retreat.**

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**Let me share with you the names of those who have died during these weeks when we have been unable to gather for Mass:**

John Boyce  
James Donnelly,  
Mary Teresa Lees,  
Silvio (Steve) Ferri,  
Tess McMahon,  
Helen Brown,  
Margaret McCluskey,  
James McDougall,  
John Henderson,  
Tom O'Brien,  
James McMenemy,  
Frances Murphy,  
Brian Porteous,  
Susan McAteer,  
Margaret Boyd,  
Julia (Sheila) O'Neill  
Stephen Mann  
William McKane  
Jane Kane

I know you will remember these men and women in your prayers and also their families, who said farewell to a loved one in the most difficult of circumstances. It is painful not to have the beauty of the Requiem Mass in the church and the comfort and strength that comes from the good presence of family and friends and neighbours.

**Special Remembrance:** Martha McCluskie, Moira Girvan, Christopher Neville, Jan Pelosi, John McGuire, Laurence and Susan Connolly, Kathleen Carney, Georgia Dickson, Elizabeth Canning, Christopher Clancy, Brian Pearson, Mark Hughes, John Kane, Elizabeth and Edward Owens, Michael Owens, John Allan and our own deceased relatives and friends and all the benefactors of St. Mary's and St. Paul's through the years, *reqiescant in pace*.

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