



St. Mary's R. C. Church

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Newsletter

Second Sunday of Lent

February 28th 2021

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

I am very glad to share with you the good news that our churches are to re-open in time for Easter. Even though our numbers will once again be limited to twenty people it is another small step in the right direction. As your parish priest I am deeply consoled that at least a few of us will be able to celebrate the liturgy of Holy Week and the moving ceremonies which mark the Passion, Death and Resurrection of Our Lord Jesus Christ. Of course those of us who gather for the liturgy always do so in the name of all who belong to the parish. Let us continue to pray that we will steadily emerge from the trials and tribulations of the pandemic and enjoy once again the wonderful freedom to gather together around the altar of the Lord; it is a freedom we will never again take for granted.

This weekend, on the Second Sunday of Lent, the church invites us to reflect on the Transfiguration of Jesus on Mount Tabor. In preparing for the Liturgy I came across these words, which you may find helpful:

“When one has the grace to live a strong experience of God, it is as if one is living an experience similar to that of the disciples during the Transfiguration: a momentary foretaste of what will constitute the happiness of Paradise. No one, however, is permitted to live ‘on Tabor’ while on earth. Indeed, human existence is a journey of faith and as such, moves ahead more in shadows than in full light, and is no stranger to moments of obscurity and also of complete darkness. While we are on this earth, our relationship with God takes place more by listening than by seeing. And so, this is the gift and duty for each one of us during the season of Lent, to listen to Christ, like Mary: to listen to him in his Word, contained in Sacred Scripture; to listen to him in the events of our lives, seeking to decipher in them the messages of providence; finally, to listen to him in our brothers and sisters, especially in the lowly and the poor, for whom Jesus himself demands our concrete love. (Pope Benedict XVI)

Perhaps part of our Lenten journey can include the conscious attempt to listen with the heart to what the trials and tribulations of the Pandemic really mean to me. What are the moments of obscurity or indeed of complete darkness? Can I describe these moments and speak to God about them? How do I feel about the intense human suffering we are still witnessing on a daily basis around our beautiful world? What type of response do I feel moved to make? We can also ask, what are the moments of transfiguration as I journey on through a pandemic that continues to ask so much of all of us? When do I feel consoled, uplifted or inspired? Can I speak to God from the heart about what all of this means to me? Can I share these thoughts with those close to me and can I listen quietly and with compassion to how others continue to experience all that is happening? In this type of listening and speaking we are on sacred ground. Suffering and joy have the power to transfigure the human heart, so it is important to listen to what the heart is saying.

On Mount Tabor, we hear the voice of the eternal Father, who speaks so rarely. And what does he say? : *“This is my Son the Beloved One, listen to him.”* So the second week of Lent really is an invitation to listen, to the Beloved One, to our own heart and to the hearts of others. We are singular

creatures, privileged to have this capacity, so let us treat it with the sacredness it deserves. Let us honour one another as fellow pilgrims on the journey of life and faith,

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. Please consult this website for other correspondence from the bishop and for other valuable links.

Sacramental Celebrations at St. Mary's and St. Paul's: as you can imagine there is a bit of catching up to do with celebrations that have been postponed and of course others scheduled for this school year. It will be a challenge because of the restricted numbers allowed in the church. Hopefully things will ease further and we will be able to celebrate in a prayerful way the baptisms, weddings, First Confessions, First Holy Communions and Confirmations. With good will and co-operation we can do it! Father O'Brien will try with St. Mary's and St. Paul's Primary Schools to offer some dates for sacramental celebrations.

A Message from the Catholic Men's Society (CMS): you are invited to join in praying the Stations of the Cross on the remaining Fridays of Lent. To receive the link, please contact Mr. Harry Doyle at h.doyle@blueyonder.co.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. 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. *The UK Government is doubling all donations to SCIAF until the end of Ma, so well done to the Government.*

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 immanent 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."

The UK Government recently doubled donations to Mary's Meals and the charity reached their £2 million target, so again well done to the Government.

International Refugee Trust (IRT): this small Catholic Charity, whose first patron was St. Teresa of Calcutta, helps support some of our brothers and sisters who live in the most challenging of circumstances. It deserves to be better known! Further insight into the projects they support can be found at www.irt.org.uk.

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, Jim Devine (Wifflet), Angelina (Ange) Philips, Thomas (Tam) McGurk, Aidan McCall Hagan, Roseann Markey, Eric Murphy, John McInnes, Fr. Angus (Robert) McLaughlin OP, Jacqueline Equi, Therese Norton, Stuart Campbell, and Margaret Anne (McWilliams) Foldenauer, who died in Munich.

Special Remembrance: Eilidh McHugh, Gerard Falsey, Tom Lynch, Frank Docherty, Bobby and Barbara Jones, James O'Donnell, Alex and Esther Malone, Kathleen Tiernan, James and Helen O'Donnell, John, James and Elizabeth Fulton, Dietmar Beck, Harry Watts, John Durnian, and all our deceased relatives and friends and the benefactors of St. Mary's and St. Paul's, *requiescant in pace*.