



St. Mary's R. C. Church

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St. Paul's R. C. Church

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Newsletter

Seventh Sunday of Easter

May 24th 2020

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

I hope this newsletter finds you well and coping with the restrictions we are living with during these challenging days. Those parishioners who are among the 'shielding group of people' are often in my thoughts and prayers. On Thursday of this past week, the church celebrated the great Solemnity of the Ascension of Jesus and while I remembered you all at the liturgy it was not the same without you. The community of the church is about loving presence and of course this means that absence is acutely felt. As I have said to you so often, no one can ever take your place at the eucharist, only you. And it is waiting for you!

Also very much in my thoughts and prayers are the children who should have celebrated First Holy Communion and the young people who were to be confirmed by Bishop Toal during this month of May. I look forward to welcoming you to St. Mary's and St. Paul's when it is safe for us to do so. May it be soon!

We have moved now to the Seventh Sunday of Easter and in one of the Missals these words by Pope Benedict are offered for our reflection:

"In his farewell discourses to the disciples, Jesus stressed his 'return to the Father', the culmination of his whole mission: indeed, he came into the world to bring us back to God, not on the ideal level – like a philosopher or a master of wisdom – but really, like a shepherd who wants to lead his flock back to the fold.

It was for our sake that he came down from Heaven and it is for our sake that he ascended to it, after making himself in all things like us, after humbling himself even to death on a cross and after having touched the abyss of the greatest distance from God.

For this very reason the Father was pleased with him and 'highly exalted him', restoring to him the fullness of his glory, but now with our humanity. God in man – man in God: this is now a reality, not a theoretical truth." Pope Benedict XVI

This means that Jesus, the crucified and risen One, is close to each one of us, to every man, woman and child, and in his Ascension we can approach Jesus with great confidence in his unconditional love for us. This is why prayer is so vital for us all, even for little children, for it is coming to know Jesus, Risen and Ascended, in a very personal way, talking with him, 'heart to heart'.

Father O'Brien

Let me share with you once more 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

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. This is the first time since Lockdown began that we have no one waiting for burial, so let us hope and pray that things are beginning to ease.

A Word about Finances at St. Mary's and St. Paul's

I mentioned in last week's newsletter that I had sent off our donation of £2,500 to SCIAF and during the week the parish received a letter of thanks and also confirmation that the UK Government would double this to £5,000, so thank you for all of that. Many of you had expressed concern that some of the poorest people in our world would loose out yet again because of the current situation. I am sure that many other parishes in Scotland have responded in a similar way to us.

I also mentioned in last week's newsletter that some parishioners have been asking how they might make their usual donations, which will support the upkeep of our parish during these unusual times. I will give this information at the bottom of the page, but before doing so I want very much to say something about the finances at St. Mary's and St. Paul's.

As you know the Catholic Church is a registered charity. It is good to remember this at times. The church is not a business. In other words, it lives from your charitable donations. So the first word needs to be one of sincere thanks for your care and support of St. Mary's and St. Paul's through the years. As your parish priest I am grateful for that and do not take it for granted.

When I first came to St. Mary's and St. Paul's I was surprised that there were two collections at the liturgy, the offertory collection at the usual time and then a second collection before leaving. I had never been in a parish where this was the custom and so I spoke with those who helped with the parish finances at the time and suggested that we stop the second collection. They advised me quite forcefully not to do that, saying the parish would need those donations for ongoing maintenance, for

restoration work and for unexpected repairs. They reminded me that St. Mary's was a listed building and that repairs were frequent and often costly. In their own way they were telling me that I had a lot to learn! All of this has proved to be true, especially the latter!

Over the years your generosity has enabled us to complete a major renovation of the church hall and meeting room, to restore the beautiful Stations of the Cross and other art work at St. Mary's, and to have the church painted and decorated. Likewise the generosity at St. Paul's has enabled us to carry out quite a major renovation of the sanctuary with a new altar and baptismal font, sanctuary lamp and carpet and have the church decorated. Of course the motivation for all of this is to make our buildings welcoming and cared for places, sacred spaces where the church can carry out its pastoral care of people, sharing the Word of God and celebrating the sacraments, and indeed life itself.

The advice given to me by those involved in parish finances at that time sounded a note of caution and encouraged prudence regarding parish finances in terms of planning for ongoing maintenance and repairs. It is your continued generosity that has enabled this. In fact, our next intended project was to be the replacement of the seating on the lower floor at St. Mary's, with fewer benches to enable wider spacing between the pews. This is something that the parishioners at St. Mary's have wanted for quite a number of years and the Parish Pastoral Council were very supportive of this project. However, in light of the effects of the Coronavirus on public gatherings, it seems wise to put this project on hold and to wait until the way ahead for the church is more certain.

I am sure by this stage you are wondering why I am sharing all this information with you now. It is because, while touched by your concern about the parish at this time, I don't want you to be worrying about St. Mary's and St. Paul's. We have funds that will help us through this period. I also share this with you because of my own worries about you, the faithful parishioners of St. Mary's and St. Paul's, especially those who may lose their employment or their business and others who may struggle to keep things going for their family. I am aware of the many demands on you, especially those with children and as your parish priest this concerns me a great deal. In other words, I hope you will feel free to look after your own family at this time and to be careful and prudent with your own funds, for the virus leaves us with considerable uncertainty regarding the months ahead. Please know that you are very much in my thoughts and prayers.

Now, having shared my concerns with you about making donations at this challenging time, I will share with you the requested information:

Some parishioners have put their donation envelopes in the little post-box at the front door of St. Mary's Church House or through the letter box at St. Paul's; others have said they will keep their envelopes at home and bring them when it is possible to come back to church.

Some parishioners have sent a cheque in the post. If you choose to do this, the cheque must be made out in the following way or it cannot be presented to the bank:

For donations to St. Mary's

Donations

Cheque made payable to: St. Mary's RC Church, Hamilton

or, **donations** through the bank:

Bank of Scotland,

Sort Code 80-08-25,

Account Number 00744576

Weekly Covenant / Gift Aid

If you are in GiftAid scheme please use the Clydesdale Bank Account

St Mary's RC Church

Account Number 60406207

Sort Code 82-70-03

Please include your name and GiftAid number (number at the top of your Weekly covenant envelope)

For donations to St. Paul's

Cheque made payable to: St. Paul's RC Church, Hamilton

or, donations through the bank:

Bank of Scotland,

Sort Code 80-08-25

Account Number 00744648

*Please do not make out cheques to St. Mary's and St. Paul's,
as we keep the accounts separate for administration purposes.*