



St. Mary's R. C. Church

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Newsletter Solemnity of the Most Holy Body and Blood of Christ June 14th 2020

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

Today the church's sacred liturgy invites us to celebrate the Solemnity of the Most Holy Body and Blood of Christ, or Corpus Christi to use the popular name for this feast. For those of us who love the eucharist it is a moment of profound thanksgiving for the wonderful gift of Holy Communion. So much beauty flows into our lives from the celebration of the Sunday liturgy. No wonder then that some countries have the tradition of carrying the Sacred Host in procession through the streets of their village or town, an opportunity to welcome Christ, the Bread of Life, into our hearts and homes.

As your parish priest I am painfully aware that you are undergoing a long period of Eucharistic fasting due to the restrictions imposed upon us by the Coronavirus. It is no exaggeration to say that this virus has robbed us of so much that we hold dear. Of course the other side of this is that day by day we become more conscious of what we do really value and why. In this sense life has changed for us all.

After Lockdown took place it was most strange to celebrate the Liturgy without your good presence in the church. I wondered how you were managing at home and without the comfort and friendship that is ours as a Christian community and without the strength that comes from receiving Jesus in Holy Communion. After a day or two I found myself going into our side-chapel where there is a small mosaic depicting the gospel passage of Jesus feeding the five thousand. It's a lovely piece of art, saved from a church that was to be demolished.

In the scene a woman is holding her hands outstretched to receive her share of the bread that Jesus has blessed. I carried the mosaic from the chapel and placed it on the sanctuary, just in front of the lectern, where I would see it as I genuflected before beginning Mass. Daily it reminds me of you, stretching out your hands to receive Jesus in Holy Communion. It will be here to greet you when you return to take your place at the eucharist and it will be a deep joy for me to place the Body and Blood of Christ into your outstretched hands.

The eucharist is God's answer to humanity's deepest hunger, for we are all hungry for Christ, the One who is the Way, the Truth and the Life. We belong to Christ and in the devout reception of Holy Communion he belongs to us and he makes us one in him.

This unity that Christ establishes in us encourages me to share with you information that has come to the parish from Catholic charities working with some of the poorest people in our world. We are familiar with the good work carried out by the Scottish Catholic International Aid Fund (SCIAF) and I mentioned in a recent newsletter that we were able to support their Lenten appeal which focused on the distressing circumstances that many badly abused women and girls face in different parts of the world. Through the good work of SCIAF and others many women are getting

the chance to overcome brutal experiences and build a more secure future for themselves and their children. Our deepest hope is that they will live in safety and flourish.

Since then Mary's Meals has written to us to let us know that they are continuing their work of providing a nourishing meal for over one million children each day. Although the schools are closed due to the Coronavirus, the charity has adapted so that food can be collected from a central point and taken home. Without this aid many of the children would not have access to a nourishing meal. Hopefully this meal will help many to survive the present crisis and go on to get a chance at life.

Jesuit Missions also sent news of their work in India which, with its massive population of 1.3 billion, has been particularly hard hit, Fr. Peter SJ works with the Yenadi tribal group in Andhra Pradesh. The Yenadi are already amongst the poorest people in India. Their traditional work is to catch rats but Lockdown has meant they cannot earn even this meagre wage. Five thousand of these vulnerable people do not have enough to eat and Jesuit Missions has helped Fr. Peter to buy food to help them through this dangerous time.

International Refugee Trust (IRT), a small Catholic charity, has written to say that they are able to continue supporting their children's homes in Uganda, also the St. Therese Hospital in South Sudan, run by the Comboni Sisters, and also their hospitals in Jordan, which provide free treatment to refugees. Sister Elizabeth Chakkiah, the Amman Hospital Head, has said: "Poor refugees come to us every day and we try to do what we can to help them. They are coming from the camps and from all over Jordan. We try to prioritise the childbirth cases, whether they are Caesarean or not. What can they do or where will they go if we don't help them?"

Sister Elizabeth's question is both moving and disturbing. I want you to know that the parish has been able to make a little donation to these appeals and these are made in the name of the parishioners at St. Mary's and St. Paul's. So thank you for this.

I wanted to share this information with you on the great feast of the Body and Blood of Christ, who comes to us as Bread of Life and who calls us to share life with others. Yes, these are difficult times for us all, but in sharing and caring we will get through this challenge together. In the midst of so much human suffering in our beautiful world let us choose to be life-givers!

Finally, I know many of you are wondering when our churches will open their doors again. We may hear something from the Scottish Government this coming Thursday regarding the re-opening of places of worship. It looks as though the re-opening will be gradual and very different to our normal gatherings. As soon as I receive definite information then I will give the details on the parish website.

You will be in my thoughts and prayers as I celebrate the liturgy of Corpus Christi this Sunday and offer the Mass for all who belong to St. Mary's and St. Paul's; may the Lord continue to strengthen and bless you in these days.
Father O'Brien

The Bishops of Scotland have written a Pastoral Letter to the Catholic Community expressing their prayers and good wishes and it can be located on their website: www.bcos.org.uk

Children's Liturgy Resources for Trinity Sunday: <https://youtu.be/tYYdM5uUDGI>

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 McMahan,
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 (*funeral service on Monday at 11am*)
Jane Kane (*funeral service on Tuesday at 1pm*)

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: Christopher Neville (former depute head-teacher at St. Andrew's, East Kilbride), Jan Pelosi, John McGuire, Margaret Duffy, Tommy Maxwell, Angelina Di Marco, Ida Maxwell, Hugh and Mary Robertson, Patricia and James Connor.

A Greeting to the Communities at St. Mary's and St. Paul's Primary Schools

My dear friends at St. Mary's and St. Paul's Primary Schools,

You are often in my thoughts and prayers, especially when I celebrate Holy Mass each morning in St. Mary's Church or St. Paul's Church. I can tell you that Cadzow Street and Backmuir Road have become very quiet without you coming and going from school. I miss your joyful presence very much.

I have always looked forward to those special days when you walked from school to church so that we could celebrate Mass together. The parishioners and I looked forward to seeing you, from Primary 1 to Primary 7, accompanied by your teachers and the support staff. I cannot tell you how special it is for me as your parish priest to look out at you from the altar and to see the whole community gathered for Mass. It is a wonderful sight!

We are always at our very best when we gather together around the altar with Jesus, who loves each one of us very much. I miss hearing your voices reading the Holy Scriptures and saying your prayers and I miss very much listening to your wonderful singing. A day without music is like a day without sunshine!

The lovely month of May, dedicated to Our Lady would have been a very busy month for us with the celebration of First Holy Communion and Confirmation. We were all looking forward to these special moments together. Please tell your parents that I am thinking about them also and I look forward to celebrating these sacraments with you when it is safe to do so.

I would like to say a special word to the pupils of Primary 7. I cannot tell you how sorry I am that you are missing the final months of your time with us at St. Mary's Primary and at St. Paul's Primary. Normally all sorts of lovely events would be enjoyed together as a way of saying thanks for your years together at St. Mary's or at St. Paul's.

How you have grown and in so many ways! I hope you might get the chance to look at a photo of yourself in Primary 1 and then to look at yourself in the mirror. I think you will see just how much you have grown and changed since your Mum and Dad brought you into the Primary 1 classroom. I think you will agree there is so much to say 'thank you' for.

Of course you will be looking forward to beginning a new stage of your life at High School. I pray that the Holy Spirit will give each one of you the graces you need for the years ahead. May you be happy and safe at High School.

Finally, I look forward to the joyful day when we can all meet again at St. Mary's or at St. Paul's to celebrate the eucharist together. In the meantime look after each other with kindness and care,
Yours sincerely,
Father O'Brien