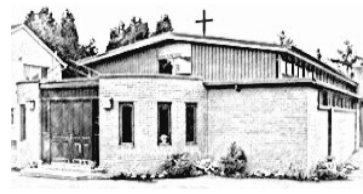




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Newsletter

Passion Sunday (Palm Sunday)

April 5th 2020

A Message for Holy Week from Father O'Brien

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

If you are reading this newsletter online then please know that you are in my thoughts and prayers each day, especially as I celebrate the eucharist. How I miss your good presence at Mass each day and especially on a Sunday; what I can say to you in a very sincere way is that absence does indeed make the heart grow fonder. I look forward to the happy day when we once more gather together around the altar of the Lord.

Today marks the beginning of Holy Week 2020; the very name reminds us that this is the most sacred week in the Church's liturgical year. We are invited to celebrate the wonderful gift of knowing Jesus the Saviour by sincerely sharing in the commemoration of his Passion, Death and Resurrection, what the church calls his Paschal Mystery. Jesus accomplishes this *for us* and *for all*. The Holy Triduum in particular is a time of intense prayer, during which we offer anew the gift of ourselves to the Mystery of Divine Love and allow the Paschal Mystery of Jesus to be the very centre of our lives.

This is a Holy Week like no other in our living memory; no one could have predicted the very challenging circumstances in which we will celebrate the liturgy of this most sacred week in the life of the church. In a very acute way this Holy Week is an experience of great human suffering across the face of the earth; the sufferings of the Christ are before us every time we listen to the news and how deeply moving that is for us all. The great Mystery of Holy Week is real to us in ways that we could never have foreseen. In the face of such human suffering it is good to know that we are not alone at this time; as Christians we are never alone. Let us make the pilgrimage of Holy Week 2020 along with Pope Francis and all the members of the church throughout the world; Christ has made us One, so let us be One in a great response of love for the suffering peoples of our beautiful planet.

In the early part of Lent I celebrated First Confession with some of the pupils from St. Mary's Primary School and during the ceremony they made their reconciliation promise with the words, "*We have decided to follow Jesus.*" Undoubtedly this is quite a decision to make, for the whole of life changes in some very significant ways when this decision is lived as sincerely as possible. It is also a life-long following, what the New Testament calls *discipleship*. This beautiful phrase, "*I have decided to follow Jesus,*" can act as a type of guiding light for us all during this moment of great human crisis, which calls on us to draw on those hidden depths of character that are within each one of us.

Each day now we are witnessing the most wonderful outpouring of courageous compassion and care from so many people in our society and we pray for the grace to be among them, to respond with tender care to family, friends and neighbours, to children and young people, to the elderly and frail, to the poor and needy.

As I celebrate the Holy Week liturgy here at St. Mary's and St. Paul's without your immediate presence please know that I carry you and all who are dear to you in my heart. Please remember that I am here at home in the church house at St. Mary's and is anyone at St. Mary's and St. Paul's needs me in any way then I am here.

With sincere affection,
Father O'Brien

Please share this message with parishioners who may not access the parish website

Again I offer some online suggestions which you might find helpful:

A good point of reference is the Vatican's website, www.vaticannews.va. This will enable you to follow Pope Francis' pastoral care of the church and the world in these most challenging days. It is well worth spending some time reading the Pope's reflections at his daily Mass and at other events. He is inviting the church and all people of good will to give a courageous response to this virus which is spreading throughout the world with such devastating effect. It is good to stay close to the Bishop of Rome in these days and to allow the successor of Peter to strengthen us.

Times for the Vatican Liturgy in Holy Week (All times UK Time BST)

April 5, Palm Sunday, 10am

April 9, Holy Thursday, Mass of the Lord's Supper, 5pm

April 10, Good Friday, 5pm Liturgy of the Lord's Passion

April 10, Way of the Cross, 8pm

April 11, Easter Vigil Mass 8pm

April 12 Easter Morning Mass 10am, followed by the Pope's blessing "urbi et orbe"

A further valuable point of reference for us all in these days is the Diocese of Motherwell website, www.rcdom.org.uk. Bishop Toal's communications with the people of the Diocese can be found there. The Bishop is holding the clergy and the people in his prayers and sends his prayerful concern to all. A good number of people are using their gifts and talents to provide information and links which may well be useful to you in various ways. Some parishes are able to stream the liturgy and this will enable you to participate in the Sunday liturgy and also the Holy Week liturgies which begin next Sunday.

The most recent addition concerns the Children's Liturgy for Palm Sunday. It can be accessed at https://youtube/sxctm/MI_V4

Please pray for those who have died recently:

I would ask your prayers for my aunt, Mrs. Tess McMahon whose funeral service took place on Thursday and Mr. Silvio (Stevie) Ferri whose funeral service took place on Friday; please remember also

Mrs Mary Teresa Lees who will be buried on Monday.

Let us remember too the many thousands of people from around the globe who have died as a result of the Coronavirus and their families who have lost a loved one in such a terrible way.

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