



**St. Mary's R. C. Church**

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**St. Paul's R. C. Church**

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**Fr Henry O'Brien – Parish Priest**

**Charity Number - SC011041**

**[www.stmarysandstpaulsparishhamilton.org](http://www.stmarysandstpaulsparishhamilton.org)**

**Newsletter**

**Fifth Sunday of the Year**

**February 7<sup>th</sup> 2021**

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

I hope this finds you and your family well and in good spirits despite the challenging circumstances we continue to find ourselves in. With the First Minister of Scotland's update on Tuesday it is clear that our long Eucharistic fast is to continue at least until March. I know from meeting people in the street and from speaking with others on the phone that you miss taking your place at the eucharist, together with the other members of our parish community here at St. Mary's and St. Paul's. As your parish priest it is painful for me to see and hear how the closed doors of our churches are affecting you. All I can say to you is that I too miss your good presence very much and in all sorts of ways. It is not the same without you. How could it be?

It seems to me that this sense of longing for the eucharist and for the eucharistic community tells us something very important, namely, we are made for the eucharist and the eucharist is made for us. In a very real sense we can say that the celebration of the eucharist makes us who we are. Jesus is the Bread of Life and, in the devout reception of Holy Communion, it is Christ himself who calls us to a new and deeper life with him and with one another; he creates the bond of communion between us. In other words, Jesus invites us to swim in the ocean of love that is the eucharist. No wonder we miss it! Let us offer the painful circumstances of our closed doors to God and prayerfully ask that, in his mercy and love, he bring our long eucharistic fast to an end. I look forward very much to opening the doors of St. Mary's and St. Paul's in welcome to you. Until then let us be in solidarity with all who are making great sacrifices to care for others and to keep one another safe from all harm.

**This Thursday, February 11<sup>th</sup> is the feast of Our Lady of Lourdes** and designated as World Day of Prayer for all who are ill in mind or body. It was in 1858 that the Immaculate Virgin Mary appeared to Bernadette Soubirous near Lourdes in France, in the grotto of Massabielle. Through this poor child, Mary called sinners to repentance and to penance, and thereby there arose in the church a marvellous spirit of prayer and charity, especially in helping the poor and sick. This continues to this day. I thought you might like to read and reflect on what happened during the apparitions. What follows is taken from a letter written by St. Bernadette herself in 1861:

*“One day, when I had gone with the two girls to collect wood by the banks of the river Gave, I heard a sound. I turned toward the meadow and saw that the trees were not moving at all. I looked up and saw a Grotto. And I saw a Lady wearing a white dress with a blue sash. On each foot she had a yellow rose; her rosary was the same colour.*

*When I saw her, I rubbed my eyes. I thought I must be mistaken. I put my hand in my pocket, where I kept my rosary. I wanted to make the sign of the cross, but I could not lift my hand to my forehead; it fell back. Then the Lady crossed herself. I again tried, and although my hand was trembling, I was eventually able to make the sign of the cross. I began to say my rosary. The Lady slipped the beads of her rosary through her fingers, but she did not move her lips. When I finished the rosary, she immediately disappeared.*

*I asked the two girls if they had seen anything. They said, 'No,' and asked what I had to tell them. I told them that I had seen a Lady wearing a white dress but that I did not know who she was. But I warned them to keep silent about it. Then they urged me not to go back there, but I refused. I went back on Sunday feeling drawn by an inner force.*

*The Lady spoke to me a third time and asked me if I was willing to come to her over a period of a fortnight. I replied that I was. She added that I must tell the priests to have a chapel built there. Then she told me to drink at the spring. Not seeing any spring I was going to drink from the river Gave. She told me that she did not mean that, and pointed with her finger to the spring. When I went there I saw only a little dirty water. I put my hand in it, but I could not get hold of any. I scratched and at last a little water came for drinking. Three times I threw it away; the fourth time I was able to drink it. Then the vision disappeared and I went away.*

*I went back there for fifteen days, and each day the Lady appeared to me, with the exception of a Monday and a Friday. She reminded me again to tell the priest to build the chapel, asked me to wash in the spring, and to pray for the conversion of sinners. I asked her several times who she was, but she gently smiled at me. Finally she held her arms outstretched and raised her eyes to heaven and told me she was the Immaculate Conception.*

*During that fortnight she also revealed three secrets to me, and forbade me to disclose them to anyone. I have kept them faithfully to this day."*

(Letter to P. Gondrand, 1861)

Miracles are part of the Divine dialogue of love with humanity: the apparitions at Lourdes in 1858 were a moment of gracious dialogue between the Immaculate One and Bernadette, as poor a child as one could ever imagine. If you have access to 'You Tube' there are some lovely videos about Lourdes that might be encouraging at this challenging time.

### **Please remember in your prayers:**

**Mr Eric Murphy**, who served as sacristan at St. Mary's for many years and who died on Wednesday evening in Hairmyers Hospital. Many parishioners will remember Eric with great affection; he served us all with such sincerity, kindness and gentle humour. May he rest in peace. As his parish priest I am only sorry that we cannot gather as we would like for his Requiem.

**Recently Deceased:** John McInnes (Requiem at St. Mary's, Wednesday at 11.30am), Eric Murphy (Requiem at St. Mary's on Friday at 10am), Helen Connor, Stephen Hunter, Betty Hutcheson, Kathleen McArthur, Anne Connelly, Owen Mcvey, William McCaffrey, David Waterton, James Cahill (Falkirk), Janet Gaffney, Owen Warner, Sheila McGurk, John Smillie, William Ward

**Special Remembrance:** Mark Hughes, Thomas, Elizabeth and John Kane, Mary Dorman, Wullie Savage, Bill Kane, Catherine Devanney, Lynne Devanney, Daniel Devanney, Barbara and Bobby Jones, John and Irene Docherty, Michael McCafferty, James O'Donnell, Jean McAvoy, David McManus, Brian Ward, Batty Ward, James Lynas, Josephine Lynas, Agnes Sheerin, Mary Malone, Jim Canning, Kevin Bryant, Ella and Joe Paterson, Cornelius McMurray, Essie and David McDonald, Michael Morris, Laraine Fox 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*.

**Ash Wednesday, February 17<sup>th</sup>** is a Day of Fasting and Abstinence from Meat, which helps to prepare us for the great spiritual pilgrimage of Lent. It will be possible to make the Stations of the Cross online in the afternoon by contacting Mr. Harry Doyle at [h.doyle@blueyonder.co.uk](mailto:h.doyle@blueyonder.co.uk)