

NEWSLETTER

Parishes of St Anthony of Padua, Onchan; St Joseph, Willaston; St Mary of the Isle, Douglas

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19th Sunday of Ordinary Time (Year A for Sundays) (Cycle II for weekdays)

9th August 2020

Dear Parishioners

There's been an increase in email traffic from both parishioners and from those further afield who take advantage of our live streamed Masses. There are requests for prayers for the sick, for those who have died and for those celebrating special events. There are also emails of appreciation. It might seem strange, but I feel I have got to know many parishioners better in these restricted times. People have shared their stories with me, albeit by email. And as we have prayed for each other at Mass, members of our three parishes have grown closer to each other as well. Has all this happened *in spite of* the restrictions we have endured? I believe that this sense of solidarity has come about *because of* the abandonment of our routine way of life that we have all experienced. The Holy Spirit has draw closer to us in these difficult times. The Lord works best when our self-sufficiency is challenged. As St Paul declares '*When I am weak, then I am strong*'. (2 Cor 12:10).

There is a shortage of priests. What is the Holy Spirit telling us? Is he telling us that we're not praying hard enough? Is he telling us that our young people aren't good enough to be priests? Or is he trying to tell us something else? Has the coronavirus introduced us to an experience of church that is less dependent on priests? Maybe some people who have been deprived of the Mass during lockdown will never come back. For others their faith has deepened. For over a year we have been asking the Lord in our Synod 2020 prayer to '*help us become the church you are calling us to be*'. Maybe the Lord is taking advantage of the pandemic to move us along.

Since the day of our Baptism those of us who are cradle Catholics are invited by the Lord to discover his presence with us everywhere: in each other, in the world around us and deep within ourselves. Nobody can do this for us, neither our parents, nor any priest. And God waits patiently for that discovery to take place in each of us, in our own way and in our own time. It often happens in the second half of life.

My time in South America taught me two things: the people were poor and they had no priests. For five years I looked after 34 churches in the high Andes. For some of that time I was the sole priest. I only managed to say Mass in some places once per year. On these visits I also baptised babies – 30 or 40 at a time. Yet the people's faith was strong. They loved the Mass. They looked forward to my visits. They wished I came more often but they had a sense it was *their* church not mine. They didn't rely on me to make things happen. There was no way I could imagine that anything they achieved was dependent on me. Their faith was portable and personal. They carried their faith around within themselves. It was the work of the Holy Spirit.

As a priest it's always been my aim to set people free to take ownership of their own faith. For centuries the priest has been seen as the middle man, the link between God and man. That was the church I grew up in. 'Father knows best'. In Old Testament times the priest offered sacrifice in the temple on the people's behalf. The priest was seen as a different species; a man set apart. What was revolutionary about the coming of Jesus is that He himself is the intermediary. He is God and man. He is Emmanuel, *God with Us*. Every baptised person has direct access to him.

Lots of people have asked for copies of the Prayer of Spiritual Communion that I use at live-streamed Masses. It goes like this:

Lord Jesus Christ,

You promise to be with us when two or three are gathered together in your name.

You promise to be with us until the end of time.

You are with us when we hear your Word in the Sacred Scriptures.

You are with us in those who are hungry and thirsty, sick or in prison and in the face of the stranger. You are with us in our beautiful world and in the very stuff of the entire Universe.

You are with me in the very depths of my being;

And you are with us in the consecrated bread and wine of the Eucharist.

Today I am unable to receive you in this Sacrament of your Body and Blood.

Lord Jesus, strengthen my belief that you are always with us until you come again.

I believe that one day I will see you face to face when there will be no more suffering, no more tears and no more sadness.

Lord Jesus, stay with me and with those I love throughout this day and for the rest of my life.

You who live and reign for ever and ever. **Amen**

Fr John

- Thank you to all those who have contributed so generously to the collection for **Fr Brian's Retirement Presentation**. It is hoped that we will be able to suitably celebrate Fr Brian's service to the church on the Island at an event in the autumn. Many people are experiencing hard times but I know you need no prompting to contribute what you can afford. Contributions by cash or cheque (payable to St Mary of the Isle) will continue to be gratefully received at the parish office.
- This year our traditional May time celebrations of **First Holy Communion** did not take place. Some parents have chosen to delay their child's celebration until next year. Others have opted to have their child make their First Holy Communion informally, in small groups, over successive weeks at the 5pm Saturday evening Mass in St Mary's. Our live streaming facility allows wider participation of family members and friends unable to travel.

Live Streamed Masses and Services for the coming week

Saturday 8th August 19 th Sunday of Ordinary Time	5.00pm St Mary's <i>Public Mass</i>	Helen & John Cowburn-Wood, deceased
Sunday 9th August 19 th Sunday of Ordinary Time	9.30am St Anthony's <i>Public Mass (not online)</i> 11.00am St Mary's <i>Public Mass</i>	People of our Parishes Mary Hardinge, anniversary
Monday 10th August St Lawrence	12.10 noon <i>Public Mass</i>	Brian Keenan, anniversary
Tuesday 11th August St Clare	12.10 noon <i>Public Mass</i>	Sheila Kearsley, recently died
Wednesday 12th August St Jane Frances de Chantal	10.00am St Anthony's <i>Public Mass (not online)</i> 12.10 noon <i>Public Mass</i>	People of Beirut Tom Flanagan, special intention
Thursday 13th August	12.10 noon St Mary's <i>Public Mass</i>	Maurice Hayes, sick
Friday 14th August St Maximillian Kolbe	12.10 noon <i>Public Mass</i>	John Smith, recently died
Saturday 15th August <i>Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary</i>	5.00pm St Mary's <i>Public Mass</i>	Fr Gerald Hurst, 3 rd anniversary
Sunday 16th August <i>The Solemnity of the Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary</i>	9.30am St Anthony's <i>Public Mass (not online)</i> 11.00am St Mary's <i>Public Mass</i>	People of our Parishes Sheila Hennessy, anniversary

Good decisions mean a wholehearted Yes to both the positives and negatives that come with any choice. Every state of life, every decision, includes some pain that must be accepted if you are to enter fully into those decisions and into new life. "All symphonies remain unfinished," said Karl Rahner. There is no perfect decision, perfect outcome or perfect life. Embracing imperfection helps us relax into reality. When we accept that all choices are conditional, limited and imperfect our lives become paradoxically more satisfying, joyful and peaceful.

All this points us to the unconditional, unlimited and perfect One to whom we say 'yes': God. All of our decisions should be focused on this reality. "Our only desire and our one choice," said Ignatius, "should be this: I want and choose what better leads to God's deepening his life in me." James Martin SJ, The Jesuit Guide to (Almost) Everything

Pope Francis on today's gospel

"The boat of our life is often storm-tossed and buffeted by winds. Even when the waters are calm, they quickly grow agitated. When we are caught up in those storms, they seem to be our only problem.

But the issue is not the momentary storm, but how we are navigating through life. The secret of navigating well is to invite Jesus on board. The rudder of life must be surrendered to him, so that he can steer the route.

Let us invite Jesus into the boat of our life. Like the disciples, we will realize that once he is on board, the winds die down and there can be no shipwreck."

The cap on numbers at Masses continues – 100 at both St Mary’s and St Anthony’s. Retaining the 5.00pm Mass at St Mary’s for the moment, rather than re-locating back to St Anthony’s, allows us to maintain the advantage of our live streaming facility – a service greatly appreciated by so many parishioners from all our Island parishes. If live streaming were to be lost on a Saturday evening it would leave many without this option.

When attending public Mass at both St Mary’s and St Anthony’s please be aware of the following:

- The Sunday obligation is still suspended.
- Please adhere to social distancing guidelines. Any children accompanying you must do the same.
- There will be no hymn books, Mass books or newsletters.
- Please sanitise your hands when you enter and leave the church. Holy water fonts are not in use.
- You will be guided to a bench by a volunteer steward. It may not be where you usually sit.
- Toilets will remain closed at all times except for a genuine emergency.
- Only the priest will be on the sanctuary – without deacons, servers, readers etc.
- There will be no children’s liturgy or choir and no live singing.
- There will be no Sign of Peace.
- Holy Communion will be distributed **after the final dismissal of the Mass.**
- The words “The Body of Christ” and the reply “Amen” will only be said once at the beginning of distribution. These words will not be repeated for each person receiving Holy Communion.
- The priest will wear a visor during Holy Communion.
- The volunteer stewards will direct you to approach the altar to receive Holy Communion.
- People receiving Communion are instructed to approach the altar with their arms outstretched so as to maintain a reasonable distance from the minister.
- You may only receive the Sacred Host in your hand and not on your tongue. Communicants must avoid skin to skin contact with the minister’s hands.
- Please then step to one side, place the Sacred Host in your mouth and follow directions to leave the church immediately.
- Please do not gather at the back of church to chat.
- Baskets will be available at the entrance (and exit) for your weekly Offertory collection.
- The doors will be closed immediately after Mass to allow the stewards to sanitise all surfaces.

The opening of our churches is only possible with the support of our volunteer stewards. We are really grateful to all our volunteers who help to make our churches safe places.

