**NEWSLETTER**

 **Parishes of St Anthony of Padua, Onchan; St Mary of the Isle & St Joseph, Douglas
 Tel** 01624 675509 **Email** saintmaryiom@rcaol.org.uk **Website** [www.manxcatholic.org](http://www.manxcatholic.org)

 **22nd Sunday in Ordinary Time, 31st August 2025**

  **(**Year C for Sundays; Cycle 1 for weekdays)

 *(Readings: Page 952) (Page 449 for Order of the Mass)*

Dear Parishioners,

On this my final weekend on the Isle of Man I leave with three memories of our Cathedral Church of Saint Mary of the Isle. One is of the church full and at its best on a Sunday morning. The congregation joins in with the choir to sing the Our Father with gusto. I’m always moved when everyone chimes in with the words: **‘For the Kingdom the Power and the Glory are yours, now and forever. Amen’**.

My second memory will be our Novenas to Mary Untier of Knots. There’s an unspoken solidarity among those attending. Each have their own personal burdens, knots and sorrows to carry. Each person is different but they are united in their devotion to Mary. Their shared faith is palpable as they sing the words of the closing novena hymn ‘Hail Queen of Heaven’: *‘pray for the wanderer; pray for the sinner; pray for the mourner; pray for thy children, pray for me’.*

My third memory will be opening and locking the empty church first thing in the morning and last thing at night. I think not only of you, the present congregation, but also those who have prayed here since 1859. Generations have gathered for joyful occasions and also wept in grief. Individuals have popped into church with their troubles and lit their candles in the shadows of the empty church. In the words of Pope Francis this building has been a ‘field hospital’ for you and for generations now dead. And I think of the number of priests who have come and gone and prayed here and will do so after me.

Welsh Anglican priest and poet RS Thomas speaks of praying alone in his empty and silent church on a Sunday evening when the people have all gone home. I identify with his description of the *‘air recomposing itself’* and when *‘Shadows advance from their corners to take possession of places the light held for an hour’* as *‘the uneasiness of the pews ceases’*. However, there’s a sadness in his poem which I don’t’ share. These will be happy memories for me. My dog Scamp will also miss Saint Mary’s. When I let him off the lead in the empty church it releases his inner greyhound as he races up and down the empty aisles.

[**In church**](https://allpoetry.com/poem/8519805-In-church-by-R-S-Thomas)I often I try
To analyse the quality
Of its silences. Is this where God hides
From my searching? I have stopped to listen,
After the few people have gone,
To the air recomposing itself
For vigil. It has waited like this
Since the stones grouped themselves about it.
These are the hard ribs
Of a body that our prayers have failed
To animate. Shadows advance
From their corners to take possession
Of places the light held
For an hour. The bats resume
Their business. The uneasiness of the pews
Ceases. There is no other sound
In the darkness but the sound of a man
Breathing, testing his faith
On emptiness, nailing his questions
One by one to an untenanted cross. *(RS Thomas)*

St Mary’s is just one of our churches. Many of you belong to St Anthony’s and indeed attended St Joseph’s and Sacred Heart before then. Wherever you feel at home, our church is not an exclusive church but inviting and open. Many stay away because they have lost the church-going habit in a world that demands so many other calls on their time. Some who were brought up as Catholics no longer feel good enough to belong. They’re on the back foot as soon as they step inside. All grown up Catholics carry the scars of failure, disappointment and compromise. That’s OK. We’re invited to come as we are.

I identify with this statement displayed outside the Abbey on the Isle of Iona: *The table of bread and wine is now to be made ready. It is the table of company of Jesus, and all who love him. It is the table of sharing with the poor of the world, with whom Jesus identified himself. It is the table of communion with the earth, in which Christ became incarnate. So come to this table, you who have much faith and you who would like to have more; you who have been here often and you who have not been for a long time; you who have tried to follow Jesus, and you who have failed; come. It is Christ who invites us to meet him here.*
I’ve been overwhelmed by the many cards, letters and gifts I have received. I’ll be treasuring them all as I re-read them at leisure in the months and years ahead. Thank you to everyone for allowing me to accompany you over the last ten years. If I ever get to heaven, it will be on the back of your faith and commitment.

On Monday Canon Philip takes over as parish priest and dean. I know you will support him as you have supported me. *Fr John*

* **T & Chat** will meet on **2 September 2025** from **10.30am to 12 noon** at St. Anthony’s Pastoral Centre. Refreshments will be served. Everyone welcome. The Group would like to thank Suzanne and Sylvia from the Samaritans for joining them in August with their very interesting and informative presentation on their roles with the Samaritans.

**Masses and Services for the coming week**

*All Masses and Services from St Mary’s are live-streamed*1

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| **Saturday 30th August**St Margaret Clitherow 22nd Sunday in Ordinary Time | 5.00pm | St Mary’s | Alan Lynch, 8th anniversary |
| **Sunday 31st August**22nd Sunday in Ordinary Time | 9.30am11.00am | St Anthony’sSt Mary’s | Special IntentionPeople of our Parishes |
| **Monday 1st September**World Day of Prayer for the Care of Creation | *No Mass today* |  | *No Mass or Service today* |
| **Tuesday 2nd September** | *10.00am*12.10pm | *St Anthony’s*St Mary’s | *Eucharistic Service*Armondas Burinskas, anniversary |
| **Wednesday 3rd September**St Gregory the Great | 12.10pm | St Mary’s | Gus Clump, recently died |
| **Thursday 4th September**St Cuthbert | 10.00am12.10pm | St Anthony’sSt Mary’s | Michael & Margaret Gaffney, annivTommy Loressa, recently died |
| **Friday 5th September** | 12.10pm | St Mary’s | Dec’d members of Simpson family |
| **Saturday 6th September**23rd Sunday in Ordinary Time | 11.00am to 12noon5.00pm | St Mary’sSt Mary’s | Exposition and Confessions Washington Sia, 4th anniversary  |
| **Sunday 7th September**23rd Sunday in Ordinary Time | 9.30am11.00am | St Anthony’sSt Mary’s | People of our ParishesPaul Douglas, 1st anniversary |

Welcome back to all those who have been away for the holidays. I wish our pupils, students and school staff a happy return to school. To those who have finished school I hope you have a successful transition to working life or a fulfilling step to higher education. Thanks to our school staff and parents. I wish you every blessing in the new academic year.