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Saint Mary's Roman Catholic Church
Catlow Hall Street, Oswaldtwistle
Lancashire
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DIOCESE OF  SALFORD

Parish Priest: Rev. Fr. S D O'Brien
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Sunday 10th January 2021
The Baptism of the Lord

Dear brothers and sisters,

This weekend we celebrate the Baptism of the Lord. One of the readings at Mass for this solemnity comes from the first letter of St. John and it was this verse that struck me:

**'Who can overcome the world?
Only the man who believes that Jesus is the Son of God (1 Jn 5:5)**

Many people fall into the trap of seeing Jesus as a teacher who shared some wise advice about kindness and love. Others see him as a prophet who imparted sage wisdom about peaceful living. More heart-breaking is that many young people think Harry Potter is real and Jesus Christ is a fictional character in a book called the Bible! St. John reminds us in his letter that Jesus Christ is God. Not a teacher, guru, prophet, philosopher or fictional character but **'The Word made Flesh and lived among us!'** That is why he writes that those who have faith in Jesus can overcome anything because they are dependant not on human help but on divine help, the mercy of God Himself.

During the last 10 months at St. Mary's living through the Covid-19 pandemic, we as a parish dependant on the grace of God, are still here at the start of 2021. Masses have continued to be offered, Baptisms have been celebrated, Confessions have been heard, converts have been received, First Communions have taken place, funerals have been prayed at and despite the poverty of my words I have been able to give witness through letters and reflections on the parish website. As we begin this new year of 2021 let's not waver in our faith but continue to reach out to Jesus Christ, Our Lord and Our God, and ask daily for his love and mercy.

THANK YOU!!!!!!!!!!!!!!

St Paul spoke of every member of the Body of Christ having a unique part to play. Those words are evident by what parishioners have freely volunteered and done here at St. Mary's. Thank you to all those who have played a part, no matter how big or small, in allowing our parish to be a living witness to Jesus Christ. Thank you to stewards, cleaners, gardeners, internet facilitators, Mass booking teams, Christmas crib installers and flower/Advent wreath arrangers. Thank you to those who have helped me out with trips to the bank, buying cleaning supplies, helping to grit paths and steps. Thank you to those who have adhered to the numerous rules and regulations in regards to Covid-19 health and safety practices. Thank you to those who have done shopping for others, checked on parishioners and printed off my reflections and letters to those who have no internet access. Thank you to those who have prayed and prayed. Thank you to those who have come to church to visit the Lord in the Tabernacle. Thank you to all and may God continue to bless you for this new year of 2021.

Covid-19 Health and Safety Reminder

The government has allowed places of worship to remain open during this third national lockdown but we must not become complacent. The diocese have asked us to remind people of the following procedures:

- Please make sure you are wearing a face mask before you enter the church building. Nobody should be putting a mask on once they are sat down at a pew or in the entrance/foyer near the stewards.
- Please do not remove your mask to speak to a steward or another parishioner in church. This shows a lack of safe respect for others. We all need to care and look out for each other.
- Please wear your mask when you are coming forward to receive Holy Communion. Once, and only once, you are stood before the priest then you can remove your mask. Communion is not a race so please take your time and do not rush. Once you have received the Blessed Sacrament then replace your mask and leave the church building.
- Please do sanitise your hands at the stations provided at both entrances and exits of church.
- Please keep the Two Meter Rule. This new strain of Covid-19 is more easily transmitted therefore it's important that we all keep to this practice.
- Please do not congregate to socialise on church property before or after Mass/Liturgy.
- Please do not come to church if you have Covid-19 symptoms, have tested positive for Covid-19 or are in isolation.

Telephone Bookings

To book a place at Mass via our telephone service then please ring (01254) 232 433 on Wednesdays between 5pm – 6pm.

Online Bookings

To book a place at Mass online please visit the parish website www.saintmarysoswaldtwistle.co.uk Sadly, some volunteers have had to return to work and therefore you will only be able to book online during the week (Monday to Friday).

Stewards, Cleaners & Gardeners

If you would like to serve Our Lord as a volunteer steward then please email Jennifer Pickles (St. Mary's Steward Co-ordinator) at: jennifer.pickles@virginmedia.com or to volunteer as a cleaner please contact Karen Beard (Parish Housekeeper) at jakey9998@aol.com. The parish grounds are always crying out for attention. If you could help please contact Navada Keenan (Parish gardens facilitator) at keenannavada@gmail.com

Books For Lockdown

I thought I'd recommend some books, as I did in the first lockdown, that may help people in their spiritual and devotional lives. All these books can be ordered from online bookshops like Amazon.

- *The Mass and the Saints* by Thomas Crean
- *Eucharist* by Robert Barron
- *7 Secrets of the Eucharist* by Vinny Flynn
- *Meeting St. Mark Today, Understanding the Man, His Mission and His Message* by Daniel J. Harington
- *The Case for Jesus. The Biblical and Historical Evidence for Christ* by Brant Pitre
- *Hail Holy Queen, The Mother of God in the Word of God* by Scott Hahn
- *The Lives and Times of The Forty Martyrs of England and Wales 1535-1680* by Malcolm Pullan
- *Consecration to St. Joseph, The Wonders of Our Spiritual Father* by Donald H. Calloway
- *Life is Worth Living* by Fulton J. Sheen

Parish Christmas Crib Appeal

Sadly we were unable to raise the full amount to restore the three shepherds and Ox for this year. So with the kind donations given so far totalling £312.93 we are at least on the way to £700.

Parish Devotions to St. Joseph

As you will already know our Holy Father Pope Francis has dedicated this year to St. Joseph. Bishop Arnold has written the following:

'... 8th December 2020, marked the 150th anniversary of Blessed Pope Pius IX placing the Universal Church under the Protection of St. Joseph. To mark the anniversary Pope Francis has written a powerful meditation on St. Joseph, particularly in the light of the current pandemic. It is well worth reading and is a rich stimulus to prayer. The link is here:

<http://www.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/events/event.dir.html/content/vaticanevents/en/2020/12/8/letteraapostolica-patriscorde.html>

Petition Box

In front of the statue of St. Joseph there will be a prayer box. I invite you to place any petitions that you may have in that box the next time you are at church. You may want to ask St. Joseph to pray for a loved one, to intercede for a soul in purgatory, to keep vigil over a friend or family member you have not been able to visit because of the pandemic. Your petition could be for a family going through financial troubles, mental health issues or your prayer to St. Joseph maybe for a person who has lapsed and walked away from Christ and His Church. Whatever your prayer write it at home and then place it in the box before St. Joseph who will always bring your needs to God.

Votive Mass

Wednesdays, for us as Roman Catholics, is the weekday traditionally given to St. Joseph. Why? Wednesday is halfway between Sunday, the day of Our Lord, and Saturday, the day of Our Lady. It is the mid-point of the week and on any journey pilgrims often become tired midway through. However, just as St. Joseph carried Mary and her unborn child safely to Bethlehem and later on to Egypt, so to his prayers carry us when we are tired or distracted. The practice of a Wednesday Votive Mass in honour of St. Joseph has slowly started to return and each Wednesday in this year dedicated to our spiritual father I too will be offering up this votive Mass (dependant on funerals and obligatory liturgical feasts). If you find yourself tiring in prayer or doubting in faith then come to St. Joseph so that he may bring you closer to his foster Son who said:

'Come to me all you who labour and are overburdened and I will give you rest.'

Seven Sundays

At the end of the month there will be an opportunity to pray this devotion as a parish. More details to follow.

Online Prayer

As you know I completed a diocesan safeguarding course last autumn via the internet on a thing called Zoom. This Zoom allows you to meet interactively and if a parishioner would like to organise and facilitate an event, like the rosary or a bible study group, where we could pray together online I would be very happy for that to happen. You will need to contact the diocesan safeguarding office in regards to appropriate procedure and practice when hosting a Zoom meeting. If you would like to organise this then please email me and I can pass on the safeguarding contact details to you.

Rock Salt & Gritters

Normally I ask for money which the parish still desperately needs but I'm also asking for rock salt/grit. If you are out and about (safely) and come across a bag of rock salt and would like to donate it to St. Mary's then it will be gratefully received. Just leave it by the front door of the presbytery and know a prayer will be offered up for you. It would also be good if we could have a number of people who would be prepared to volunteer their time and services to grit the paths when we do have bad weather. If you can do this then please email keenannavada@gmail.com

God Bless and keep praying.

Our Lady of Oswaldtwistle, pray for us.

Saint Joseph, pray for us.

Fr. O'Brien