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Saint Mary's Roman Catholic Church
Catlow Hall Street, Oswaldtwistle
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Sunday 30th May 2021
The Most Holy Trinity

Dear brothers and sisters,

Next week is the start of June, the month dedicated to the Sacred Heart of Jesus. One of my favourite scripture verses that reminds me every time about the Sacred Heart is from St. John's Gospel. The scene is the Last Supper when Jesus announces that He will be betrayed:

'The disciple Jesus loved was reclining next to Jesus; Simon Peter signed to him and said, 'Ask who it is he means,' so leaning back on Jesus' breast he said, 'Who is it, Lord?' (John 13:23-25)

What I like about this passage is the posture of John, the Beloved disciple. Why? Well look at the picture below. By leaning on Our Lord's breast John effectively has his ear resting over the heart of Jesus. That position allowed him to hear the beating heart of God Himself!



St. John's experience of the beating Sacred Heart, lets us know that God's love for us is real, tangible and concrete. It's not some saccharine sentiment or a woolly notion but Truth. God loves us. We are loved. The heart is the place of love and passion and the Sacred Heart truly beats and thuds for love and passion for us. St. John heard and felt it – it is real!

However devotion to Jesus' Heart has not been passed on or even fully understood in recent times. This is heart breaking. In a world so fragmented and divided the need for embracing the Sacred Heart has never been as relevant and essential as it is today. When we know that we are loved, truly loved, then no matter what obstacles and challenges come our way we have that power and grace to overcome them. This June let's follow the example of St. John the Beloved disciple and listen to the heart beat of God. Let's continue to draw closer to Jesus and foster a deeper more intimate relationship with Him. How? By undertaking the First Friday Devotion.



What is the First Friday Devotion? Where did it begin? In 1673, a French Visitation nun called Margaret Mary Alacoque had visions of Jesus, where He asked the Church to honour His Most Sacred Heart. In particular, Jesus asked that the faithful “...*receive Communion on the First Fridays, for nine consecutive months.*” The request was connected to a specific promise made to all who venerated and promoted devotion to the Sacred Heart. After Margaret Mary’s canonization in 1920 the devotion spread rapidly throughout the Church and was promoted by various popes and saints.

Why Nine Fridays? The number nine is traditionally associated with a novena and finds its origin in the nine days that the apostles spent in prayer before Pentecost. A novena provides an extended amount of time for preparation and interior renewal.

How do you pray the First Friday Devotion to come closer to Jesus and know His love? Go to Mass and if you are in a state of grace receive Holy Communion with the intention of honouring Christ’s Sacred Heart. It’s that simple. The greatest prayer we have which offers perfect worship, adoration, thanksgiving and atonement is the Holy Mass. If you love someone and want to feel close to them then a person will move heaven and earth to be in their beloved’s presence. It’s at Mass that we find ourselves in the True Presence of Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament.

The wonderful thing about the Sacred Heart is that He is loving and merciful! He has given us the Sacrament of Confession to heal us if we are not in a state of grace so that we can receive Him in Holy Communion.

What are the “promises” connected to this devotion? There are 12 promises Jesus spoke of that are connected to the Sacred Heart First Friday Devotion:

(1) I will give them all the graces necessary in their state of life.

(2) I will establish peace in their homes.

(3) I will comfort them in all their afflictions.

(4) I will be their secure refuge during life, and above all, in death.

(5) I will bestow abundant blessings upon all their undertakings.

(6) Sinners will find in my heart the source and infinite ocean of mercy.

(7) Lukewarm souls shall become fervent.

(8) Fervent souls shall quickly mount to high perfection.

(9) I will bless every place in which an image of my heart is exposed and honoured.

(10) I will give to priests the gift of touching the most hardened hearts.

(11) Those who shall promote this devotion shall have their names written in my Heart.

(12) I promise you in the excessive mercy of my Heart that my all-powerful love will grant to all those who receive Holy Communion on the First Fridays in nine consecutive months the grace of final perseverance; they shall not die in my disgrace, nor without receiving their sacraments. My divine heart shall be their safe refuge in this last moment.

The promises above, that Our Lord shared with St. Margaret Mary, remind us how deeply we are loved by God and how powerful the devotion to the Sacred Heart is! These promises are the real fruits that come from entering into a loving relationship with Jesus.

Are the First Fridays a “ticket” to heaven? Philip Kosloski, a Catholic author for *Aleteia* writes:

It is not as simple as going to Mass for nine months and then clocking out, never going to Mass again and leading a sinful life! The entire purpose of this devotion is to draw a person closer to the heart of Christ. If a person fulfils these obligations with sincere faith, it is natural for he or she to be closer to God and better prepared for death. The moment that this devotion is observed in a superstitious manner, neglecting the need to live a virtuous life, all bets are off and Jesus’ promise is null and void.

The First Friday this year begins on the 4th June with the Solemnity of the Sacred Heart taking place on Friday 11th June. Why not copy St. John the Beloved this year and listen to the Sacred Heart of Jesus beating out of love for you. Why not embrace the First Friday Devotion and be transformed by the life giving love that Jesus wants to bestow on you. Why not adore and honour the Sacred Heart in your prayers this year and allow your relationship with Jesus to dispel all worries and fears.

The Sacrament of Confession & The Holy Rosary

On Saturday 5th June the Sacrament of Confession will be available from 9am – 10am. Those who haven’t taken the opportunity to come to Confession during the last few months will testify to the safe and prayerful way in which it is celebrated. The Rosary will be publicly prayed in church, by kind volunteers, during Confessions. The intention for each rosary will be that all faithful disciples of the Lord will return to Him in this most merciful Sacrament that He instituted. The invitation is there, the welcome is warm and His forgiveness is REAL! Will you come?

Update: Mass Bookings

Following government procedures and diocesan guidance, from the second week of June (beginning Monday 7th) there will no longer be the need to book for a ***weekday*** Mass. However, numbers will still be restricted because of the ongoing pandemic and therefore it will be '*First come, First Serve*'. Church will be open 30minutes before each Mass/Liturgy. We are still obliged to continue the Test and Trace system for public health reasons and so stewards will require contact details from those who turn up to church. The dates and times of weekday Masses will appear on this regular e-newsletter.

Due to increasing numbers, especially on a Sunday, people will still need to book for a weekend Mass. This can be done via the parish website www.saintmarysoswaldtwistle.co.uk or by calling Ursula on a Wednesday between 5pm -6pm on (01254) 232 433. Let's pray that as we move on through summer to autumn more restrictions can be safely lifted. As always, on behalf of all parishioners at St. Mary's, we thank those volunteers who have given up their time to keep church open. Thank you and God Bless.

Memorials for the coming week..

Wednesday 2nd June Memoria of Ss Marcellinus and Peter, Martyrs

Ss Marcellinus and Peter were martyred in the persecution of Diocletian 300 A.D. Peter, in prison, invited the priest Marcellinus to baptise his gaoler, whom he had converted; the authorities had the two men executed. You will recognise their names from Eucharistic Prayer I, more commonly known as the Roman Canon.

Restart

The Bishop has initiated a programme called Restart to assist clergy and religious in the next coming months regarding the wide range of changes on the restrictions affecting sacramental and pastoral ministry. One of the recent complications to the Restart initiative has been the increase in Covid-19 cases in the north of the diocese which we are all too well aware of – Blackburn & Darwen, Bolton, Burnley, Hyndburn and the Rossendale Valley. Due to this fact the deaneries within these areas, like ours of St. John Vianney, have been asked to continue with our current Covid health and safety implementations until we are further instructed.

The God who Speaks through Mark

As we return to Ordinary Time after Pentecost, the Department for Formation is pleased to offer four online evenings on the Gospel according to Mark.

Wednesday 2 June 2021- *The Humanity of Jesus in Mark* (with Fr Eamonn Mulcahy CSSp)

Wednesday 9 June 2021 – *The Disciples in Mark* (with Fr Michael Deas)

Wednesday 16 June 2021 – *The Little People in Mark* (with Fr Michael Winstanley SDB)

Each presentation will be from 7.00 to 8.30 pm and will include time for discussion and questions. They are offered free of charge. To reserve a place on one or all the evenings and to receive the Zoom link in advance, please email formation@dioceseofsalford.org.uk

Gift Aid and Envelopes

On behalf of the parish I would like to thank Rob Harrison for all his voluntarily work concerning the gift aid scheme and donation envelopes. Over the next few weeks, as people book to come to the Holy Mass, those who have signed up to the gift aid scheme will receive their envelopes from a steward. In line with GDPR, envelopes can only be given to the individual whose name and address is printed on the box. If you do not contribute to the gift aid scheme but would like a box of donation envelopes then please ask a steward when you come to church. For more information about helping the parish through gift aid you can contact Rob: giftaid@stmarysoswaldtwistle.org.uk

Eco Thought of the Week - 30th May Trinity Sunday

In our Psalm we hear *'by his word the heavens were made, by the breath of his mouth all the stars. He spoke; and it came to be. He commanded; it sprang into being.'*

Our God is a Creator God. God has created all that is by his Word and by his Breath (the same word as Spirit). The Lord is God on earth as in heaven, as Moses proclaims in the First Reading.

How can we care for God's creation which he has entrusted to us?

Update: Fire Safety Maintenance

On Wednesday (26th May) Walker Fire UK Ltd carried out the annual legal maintenance check on all fire extinguishers both in the church and the presbytery. Our one failing was that none of the extinguishers were on wall brackets or had the correct information safety tab displayed above them.

The engineer has now rectified these issues so that the church is fully legally compliant.

Fire extinguishers can be found in the Lady Chapel, the sacristy, the Sacred Heart Chapel, by the side door exiting onto Hawthorn Ave and the in the Narthex.

Update: Tree Maintenance

Special Branch Tree Surgeons Ltd carried out all the work requested by the surveyor and Hyndburn Borough Council on Thursday (27th May). The Ivy around the base of the tree trunks, at either side of the grotto, was removed and cleared. The tree by the green bins was cut down because of rot through the centre of its trunk. Various other trees with 'dead wood' branches were taken down across the church grounds. The next legal inspection is due in 18 months' time.

Miles that Matter

Caritas is proud to have supporters, staff and volunteers who are walking in solidarity and in the 'virtual' footsteps of so many people who have fled war and conflict and seek a new life on these shores and in Greater Manchester and Lancashire in particular. Miles that Matter is running from 1st May until International Refugee Week in June. If you are interested in finding out more, or wish to participate, please call Rachel Taylor 0161 817 2285 or visit the website www.caritassalford.org.uk/miles-that-matter

Reopening of Christian Heritage Centre at Stonyhurst

Theodore House, on the Stonyhurst estate, will be reopening from 11th June, and welcoming groups from 21st June in line with Government de-restrictions. A spacious and comfortable venue for retreats, away-days and conferences for any parish or diocesan group, in uniquely beautiful and historic surroundings and with access to St Peter's church next-door. For more information, please visit www.theodorehouse.com or contact bookings@christianheritagecentre.com

Christian Heritage Centre Event - Faith & Reason: A Catholic Integration

A short, residential summer course exploring the relationship of faith with philosophy, science and culture. Particularly helpful for catechists and teachers fielding commonly-asked questions around Catholicism, besides anyone wanting to deepen their understanding of the Faith. Runs 5th – 8th August. For more info and registration, www.christianheritagecentre.com/events/faith-and-reason

Online Parish Events

Parishioners from different parishes have been organising online rosaries, online sing-a-longs and virtual coffee mornings for their churches. I think this is a wonderful idea as many children and grandchildren have been stepping up to help older family members link up and use computers, mobile phones, i-pads etc. Any parishioner here at St. Mary's who would like to facilitate this has my complete support and I am happy to put them in touch with diocesan safeguarding department so that all correct procedures and online safety protocol can be followed.

Covid-19 Health and Safety Reminder

- 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.

God Bless and keep praying.

Our Lady of Oswaldtwistle, pray for us.

Saint Joseph, pray for us.

St. John the Beloved, pray for us.

St. Margaret Mary Alacoque, pray for us.

Fr. O'Brien