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Saint Mary's Roman Catholic Church  
Catlow Hall Street, Oswaldtwistle  
Lancashire  
BB53EZ



Parish Priest: Rev Fr. S D O'Brien  
Tel: 01254-232433

Sunday 8<sup>th</sup> August 2021  
Nineteenth Sunday in Ordinary Time

Dear brothers and sisters,

Last week I mentioned how the Immaculate Heart of Mary is depicted on our stain glass window in the Lady Chapel. Her heart desires that we continue to come ever closer to her Son, Jesus, and that we further deepen our relationship with Him. The mysteries of the Rosary are a wonderful way in which we can do this.

This week we reflect on the First Luminous Mystery – The Baptism of the Lord. There are so many images, words and actions that we can meditate upon in this mystery, but let's focus on what it simply reveals about Jesus and who He is.

***'As soon as Jesus was baptised he came up from the water, and suddenly the heavens opened and he saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove and coming down on him. And a voice spoke from heaven, 'This is my Son, the Beloved; my favour rests on him.'* (Matthew 3:16-17)**



In the Old Testament the prophet Ezekiel lived during a time of crisis and upheaval, one of the darkest periods in the history of Judah. The Babylonians had invaded the land, taken over the capital city Jerusalem, and deported vast numbers of God's people. The exiles in Babylon felt homesick and isolated while those who remained in Judah felt abandoned. God chose Ezekiel to be His messenger. A messenger who would give hope and reassurance to His people that He had not left them. What has any of this to do with helping us understand the first luminous mystery you may ask? Well let's look closer...

***‘In the thirtieth year, on the fifth day of the fourth month, as I was among the exiles on the bank of the river Chebar, heaven opened and I saw visions from God.’ (Ezekiel 1:1)***

By the flowing river Ezekiel is chosen by God to be His prophet. The heavens open to signify a new beginning; the start of Ezekiel’s ministry which will bring hope and reassurance. Similarly, Jesus came to a flowing river, the Jordan, where John baptised Him and the heavens opened. What Ezekiel’s call foreshadowed in the Old Testament is now illuminated by Christ in the New.

Our Lord is not a prophet like Ezekiel, but God Himself! He no longer speaks through another to bring hope and reassurance but comes as Himself – the Word made flesh. As the Gospels show, the Baptism of the Lord, was that moment that Jesus began His public ministry. There was a new epoch in world history, God Himself began the healing and reconciliation that humanity so desperately needed. We were no longer exiles far away from heaven but through Christ, The Way, The Truth and The Life, we were led back onto the road of salvation. As Ezekiel brought the word of hope to the exiles in Babylon so Jesus, the Son of God, brought hope to us all through Himself.

As the heavens opened at Ezekiel’s calling, so much greater were they at Our Lord’s baptism. St. Cyril of Jerusalem explained this, especially in regards to the descent of the Holy Spirit in the form of a dove:

***‘Just as salvation came in the time of Noah by the wood and the water, and there was the beginning of a new creation, and as the dove came back to Noah in the evening with an olive branch, so, the Holy Spirit came down on the true Noah [Jesus], the Author of the new creation, when the spiritual dove came down upon Him at His baptism to show that He is the One who, by the wood of the cross, confers salvation on believers, and Who, toward the evening, by His death, gave the world the grace of Salvation.’***

This first luminous mystery sheds light on who the person of Jesus is. He is not a prophet, a good moral teacher, an enlightened individual who offers an alternative way of living. No. He is Christ the Lord, fully God and fully man. He is the Word made flesh who dwelt amongst us. He is the Son of God, confirmed and revealed by God the Father at His baptism in the Jordan, ***‘This is my Son the Beloved’*** and anointed by God the Holy Spirit who descended from Heaven.

As we pray this mystery, let’s ask the Holy Spirit to descend upon us and see God’s saving love made real in the person of Jesus. Jesus who calls us everyday through our own baptism to love Him more, serve Him more and know Him more. It is only through Jesus that we are saved and it is only through Jesus that we can fully find freedom and peace.

### ***Masses & Liturgies for the Coming Week...***

**Wednesday 11<sup>th</sup> August**  
**10am Mass, St. Clare, Virgin**

St. Clare was born in Assisi in 1193 A.D. and followed St. Francis in his life of poverty and was the founder of an order of nuns (The Poor Clares). She led a very austere life, abounding in works of piety and charity. She died in 1253 A.D.



**Thursday 12<sup>th</sup> August**

**10am Votive Mass of Our Lady**

*"We never give more honour to Jesus than when we honour his Mother, and we honour her simply and solely to honour him all the more perfectly. We go to her only as a way leading to the goal we seek - Jesus, her Son." St. Louis Marie de Montfort*

**Friday 13<sup>th</sup> August**

**6pm First Friday Mass**

**(Since last week was the Feast of the Transfiguration this week will be a Votive Mass of the Sacred Heart.)**

Our Lord wants us to know how deeply we are loved by Him especially through his Passion, Death and Resurrection. He chose St. Margaret Mary Alacoque to remind the world of His life giving love by asking her to promote devotion to His Sacred Heart. Through this devotion, especially in the practice of going to Mass on the First Friday of the month, Our Lord made the following promises:

- (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.

**Saturday 14<sup>th</sup> August**

**6:30pm Vigil Mass for The Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary**

**Sunday 15<sup>th</sup> August**

**10am Mass for The Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary**

Following guidance from the diocese, we are still strongly encouraged to wear face masks in church and continue with the NHS Test & Trace system. Thank you for continuing to make St. Mary's a safe and prayerful place for the Glory of God.

**The Covid Vaccine**

"Bishop John is urging all adults, who are able to do so, to be vaccinated. Pope Francis has reminded people of the duty to be vaccinated if they are able. The Church is clear that all Catholics can take any of the vaccines on offer with a clear conscience. Even if you are at a low risk of becoming seriously ill, being vaccinated will lower the risk of transmitting the virus to somebody else who might then have a severe reaction or even die. It is particularly important that those in our parishes, clergy and lay-people who visit those who are housebound or otherwise vulnerable are vaccinated."

### **Congratulations to Mr & Mrs Daniels!**

On Monday (2nd August) we celebrated at St. Mary's the wedding of two of our parishioners, Jessica Beard and Michael Daniels. May the Lord bless them, may Our Lady and St. Joseph always pray for them, and may the angels watch over them and keep their family safe. Amen.

### **First Holy Communion**

On Saturday (Vigil Mass) one of our younger parishioners, Mayah, made her First Holy Communion. Many of you will know Mayah and her family from the Friday evening Mass at St. Mary's. Let's pray for all our young people that they will always appreciate the Sacraments of Confession and the Holy Eucharist which lead them uniquely and tangibly to Jesus Christ, Our Lord, who is the Way, the Truth and the Life.

### **Parish Readers**

As restrictions are now being eased and parishes around the diocese are adapting to new circumstances I would like to invite both existing readers and potential new readers to contact me. The Word of God is so vital and life giving! It's through the Scriptures that we encounter the Lord and He is able to speak, guide, direct, challenge, affirm and heal us. Readers are so important because through their clarity and voices they transmit the message that God wants us to hear at the Liturgy.

Covid has disturbed many peoples routines and personal circumstances which has meant that one or two existing readers have said they can no longer continue. That is perfectly understandable and I think it is so important nobody feels pressure to continue. The world has changed. If parishioners would like to volunteer to be readers or any existing readers would like to continue then please email me at [sean.obrien@dioceseofsalford.org.uk](mailto:sean.obrien@dioceseofsalford.org.uk) and we can talk about the practicalities.

### **Extra-ordinary ministers of Holy Communion**

We have been blessed over the years with dedicated parishioners who have been chosen by the various parish priests of St. Mary's to be Extra-ordinary ministers of Holy Communion. Their chief and first role is to support the parish priest by visiting the sick who genuinely cannot attend the Holy Mass and bring the Blessed Sacrament to them. That time of praying together in the Real Presence of Jesus in Holy Communion brings such healing and consolation to those who are suffering and housebound.

I am aware that many of our existing Extra-ordinary ministers of Holy Communion have found that personal circumstances and routines have changed since the start of the Covid Pandemic last year. Therefore, without anybody feeling pressure, if those existing parish Extra-ordinary ministers of Holy Communion would like to continue then please do contact me and we can work out safely and correctly the sick visits that need to be undertaken. Email [sean.obrien@dioceseofsalford.org.uk](mailto:sean.obrien@dioceseofsalford.org.uk) Similarly, if people would like to stand down I fully understand and appreciate that things have changed in parish life and nobody should feel under any pressure to continue. Thank you for what you have done for our sick and housebound in the past and may God Bless you.

I'll personally meet with those who wish to continue and go through the new format of safely distributing the Blessed Sacrament to those who are sick. At present there is no need for Extra-ordinary ministers of Holy Communion to assist me at the Mass.



### **Caritas Bishop's Fund**

Caritas is pleased to offer the Caritas Bishop's Fund to parishes and schools to provide immediate support to families or individuals facing a crisis and now also to include food shopping vouchers. (We noted how helpful this was for families in crisis during the recent distribution of the National Lottery grant). Each school or parish may be allocated up to 6 applications per year to this Fund. For more information email: [bishopsfund@caritassalford.org.uk](mailto:bishopsfund@caritassalford.org.uk)

### **Caritas Summer Appeal**

This summer, Caritas Salford will support over 5,000 families experiencing challenges and crisis. They will give practical support to those living in insecure accommodation, help alleviate poverty and provide food packs, shopping vouchers and 'in-crisis' grants to those in need. They will be there for people who need housing support, tenancy assistance and help with applications for benefits and for the high cost of school uniforms.

Gifts by post: If you would like to send a cheque to Caritas send it directly to Caritas Diocese of Salford, Cathedral Centre 3 Ford Street, Salford M3 6DP. Cheques should be made payable to Caritas Diocese of Salford. Please mark your envelope Caritas Summer Appeal and include your full name and address and how you prefer Caritas to be in contact with you.

If you can Gift Aid your donation, it is worth 25% more to Caritas, at no extra cost to you. Tick the box online, or let them know by post with your cheque. Thank you.

Thank you for donating to Caritas today to help children, families and those affected by poverty across the Diocese of Salford.

### **Thank you**

Mrs Catherine Porter would like to thank all parishioners who have sent messages of sympathy, prayers and Mass Offerings through, for her late husband Tony Porter.

God Bless and keep praying.  
Our Lady of Oswaldtwistle, pray for us.  
Saint Joseph, pray for us.

Fr. O'Brien