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Saint Mary's Roman Catholic Church  
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Sunday 7<sup>th</sup> February 2021  
Fifth Sunday in Ordinary Time

Dear brothers and sisters,

You all know the story about one of my first experiences bringing Holy Communion to the sick before I was ordained. The elderly lady I regularly brought the Blessed Sacrament to was very kind and patient. Out of nerves I would 'rabbit on' pointlessly because taking Holy Communion to those who were housebound was a completely new experience for me and God Bless that lady she would just smile and nod. However, on one particular occasion when I was in full verbal flow and she obviously had had enough, she raised her hand and said, ***'Lad, the good Lord gave you two ears and one gob – take the hint!'*** It was and still is one of the best lessons that I have been taught in life- the importance of listening.

***'Listen, Israel: the Lord our God is the One Lord.'*** (Deuteronomy 6:4)

***'Lord, listen to my prayer: turn your ear to my appeal.'*** (Psalm 142:1)

***'Jesus called the people to him and said, 'Listen, and understand.'''*** (Matthew 15:10)

***'And Jesus said, 'Listen anyone who has ears to hear!'*** (Mark 4:9)

***'Look, I am standing at the door, knocking. If one of you hears me calling and opens the door, I will come in to share his meal, side by side with him.'*** (Revelation 4:20)

Sacred Scripture is full of wisdom that calls us to just listen. Listen to who? The Lord our God. To listen for what purpose? To know how to serve and love Him better. To listen when? Each and everyday, at home, work, school or college and at church. To listen for what ends? To hear the particular path of holiness in life He is calling us to follow. This is the path which will ultimately lead us to Heaven where we will not only hear God but see Him face to face.

In the Gospel of John there is a very simple sentence that helps us tune in more clearly to listening to Christ our Lord. ***'The disciple Jesus loved was reclining next to Jesus...'*** (John 13:23)



The image above illustrates the actions of St. John. Look at his posture. See how he bends low in humility and places his ear on the chest of Christ. Look particularly to where his ear is resting. By reclining next to Jesus, St. John is listening to the very heart beat of God! He is hearing every beat of the Sacred Heart that is inflamed for love of us. God's loving and merciful heart is not a theoretical concept for St. John but a reality that he was blessed to have experienced. If he had not listened he would not have heard Love Himself.

The volume of phone calls to the presbytery has increased during this third lockdown. The majority have been people with no obvious links to the Church asking can they talk. Talk to break the silence of the day, talk to reach out to another human being, talk to ask about the Big questions such as life and death, talk so that they can be heard. They all initially ring up to talk but fundamentally what they are all seeking and yearning is to listen. To listen to God. To listen where God is at this moment in the world and in their lives. The conversations normally have ended up inviting these people, some of faith some of non, to come to church and spend time in front of the Tabernacle. The surprise in peoples voices when they hear the statement, ***'Jesus Christ our Lord and God is truly and substantially present here at St. Mary's!'*** One man remarked that if he had faith he would never leave church if it was that easy to be close to Jesus. My response was 'It is that easy, just come and listen.' 'That's the hard bit Father, the listening because I might hear something I don't like about myself!'

Brothers and sisters never be scared of spending time listening to Our Lord. He will challenge, He will disturb but all for our good and all for our salvation. St. Peter Julian Eymard, one of the saints who seems to be teaching me a great deal about the Eucharist recently, demonstrated listening to Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament. At the age of 5 he ran away from home but was soon discovered by his older sister praying in the village church. St. Peter Julian was not praying in a pew or by a statue but sat on top of a small ladder with his ear pressed against the Tabernacle.

'What are you doing?', asked his astonished sister.

'I'm praying', came the small boys reply.

'Why are you praying there?'

'So I can hear him better.'

The church is always open at least half an hour before the Sacrifice of the Mass begins. When you book to come to Holy Mass please feel free to arrive sometime before, so that in quiet contemplation you can not only look but listen to Him in the Tabernacle. He has so much love for you and wants to tell you all about it. All I ask as your parish priest is that you don't copy a young St. Peter Julian Eymard with the ladders!

***'Jesus said, 'Therefore, everyone who listens to these words of mine and acts on them will be like a sensible man who built his house on rock.' (Matthew 7:24)***

### **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.

## **Day of Prayer for Grandparents and the Elderly**

Pope Francis has designated the fourth Sunday of July as a day for prayer for grandparents and the elderly. This is the Sunday closest to the feast of Saints Joachim and Anne (the parents of Our Lady) and falls, this year, on July 25th. Please visit the link below for more information:

<https://www.vaticannews.va/en/pope/news/2021-01/pope-establishes-world-day-for-grandparents-and-the-elderly.html>

Many people who return to the Church often attribute it to their grandparents. The witness that these valuable family members give through their prayers and devotions, holy images in their homes and most importantly attendance of Mass does have an impact on their grandchildren. Make sure you give your grandparents a ring, an email or an online call today because the good ones are a gift from God.

## **New Saints Feast Days**

Pope Francis has made the following changes to the General Roman Calendar for Mass and the Divine Office. July 29th is to be the Memorial of Saints Martha, Mary and Lazarus.

<https://press.vatican.va/content/salastampa/it/bollettino/pubblico/2021/02/02/0066/00135.html#in>

The following Optional Memorials are now added:

Saint Gregory of Narek, Abbot and Doctor of the Church, February 27th

Saint John of Avila, Priest and Doctor of the Church, May 10th

Saint Hildegard of Bingen, Virgin and Doctor of the Church, September 17th

<https://press.vatican.va/content/salastampa/it/bollettino/pubblico/2021/02/02/0065/00136.html#EN>

## **Lent and Easter**

Lent begins this year with Ash Wednesday on the 17<sup>th</sup> February 2021 and the Great Easter Vigil falling on Saturday 3<sup>rd</sup> April 2021. What prayers, devotions or spiritual reading do you intend to take up this Lent to deepen your relationship with the Lord?

## **Seven Sundays Devotions for the Year of St. Joseph**

15 minutes before each Sunday Mass (Vigil 6:30pm/Sun 10am) we are continuing our prayer and meditation on the seven sorrows and seven joys of St. Joseph asking for his intercession. For those who want to participate in this devotion but are not presently able to attend the Holy Mass you will find prayers to St. Joseph on the parish website at [www.saintmarysoswaldtwistle.co.uk](http://www.saintmarysoswaldtwistle.co.uk)

## **Catholic Voices Survey**

Catholic Voices, the University of Birmingham and the Mater Dei Institute in Dublin are running a major online survey of Catholic experience in UK and Eire under lockdown. The first phase last year indicated that people had developed much stronger attachments to liturgy and sacraments. Catholics seemed to value their clergy more than the members of other denominations. The hope, in this next phase, is that members of every parish will take part, especially clergy. The clergy in England were less well represented last time despite reports of new pastoral efforts, needs and challenges.

All responses, ordained and lay, are anonymous and confidential but will provide insights for pastoral planning, giving and support in the future.

The survey is here and should take 15-20 minutes <https://www.catholicvoices.org.uk/survey>

### **A Message from Global Healing**

The Global Catholic Movement invites you to “Global Healing.” In 2015, Pope Francis published his ground-breaking letter on the environment *Laudato Si’*. Since then, millions of people worldwide have joined the global movement to address the environmental crisis our world is facing. This Lent, we are inviting YOU to join us for a series of reflective evenings with inspiring speakers, prayer and discussion, using the film-based resource “Global Healing”. These engaging documentaries will inform and challenge people to respond to Pope Francis’ call to Care for Our Common Home. Suitable for all who are concerned about what is happening to our world and who want to take action. When? Six Thursdays from 18th February – 25th March 2021, 7.30pm – 8.30pm  
How to join? Email [jane@catholicclimatemovement.global](mailto:jane@catholicclimatemovement.global)  
Hosted by GCCM *Laudato Si’* Animators in the UK.

***“Living our vocation to be protectors of God’s handiwork is essential to a life of virtue; it is not an optional or secondary aspect of our Christian experience...Truly, much can be done!”***  
**(*Laudato Si’*, 217, 180)**

### **Christian Heritage Centre Online Formation**

Stefan Kaminski, Director of The Christian Heritage Centre at Stonyhurst, has emailed me the following events that are taking place to help people in their faith and formation.

We are pleased to be offering an online series of sessions for young adults (18-30 years old), on human sexuality and relationships. The “Set Free Summit” is being offered by ICPE Mission, in partnership with the CHC, and is led by a number of exciting speakers from around the world, building on St John Paul II’s beautiful writings. It takes place (online) on the six Sundays from 7th February to 14th March, from 4 – 5:30pm. Each session involves a talk, sharing in small groups and a general Q&A. For info and registration: <https://christianheritagecentre.com/events/set-free/>

The Drama Displayed series continues with the next talk, ‘The Naked Truth’ by Dr David Torevell, on Thursday 28th January at 7:30pm. The series offers theological reflections on the key moments of salvation, supported by a study of various great works of art. For info and registration: <https://christianheritagecentre.com/events/the-drama-displayed/>

Recordings of the previous talks are available here: <https://christianheritagecentre.com/media/video/>

### **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.

### **Mass Bookings**

To book a place at Mass via our telephone service then please ring (01254) 232 433 on Wednesdays between 5pm – 6pm. To book a place at Mass online please visit the parish website [www.saintmarysoswaldtwistle.co.uk](http://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).

God Bless and keep praying.  
Our Lady of Oswaldtwistle, pray for us.  
Saint Joseph, pray for us.  
St. John the Apostle, pray for us.  
St. Peter Julian Eymard, pray for us.  
Fr. O'Brien