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Saint Mary's Roman Catholic Church
Catlow Hall Street, Oswaldtwistle
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Sunday 14th February 2021
Sixth Sunday in Ordinary Time

Dear brothers and sisters,

Happy Saint Valentines Day! I'm sure today there will be plenty of St. Valentine cards being exchanged, flowers left on front doorsteps, emails bursting with heart felt sentiments and text messages peppered with hugs and kisses. Love truly is a splendid thing but sadly it can be distorted, taken for granted and selfishly misused. Real love is more than just a collection of token gestures. Real love, the love that our Lord Jesus Christ shows us, involves sacrifice and unwavering faithfulness.

I read a beautiful quote from Saint Catherine of Sienna this week, which read:

'It wasn't the nails that kept Our Lord on the Cross, but love!'

I've played this sentence over and over again in my head because it simply fascinates me. Jesus God the Son, the Word made Flesh, through whom all things were made and by whom all things exist could have ended His suffering on the Cross at any point. At any point He could have called on God the Father to send legions of Angels and Archangels to rescue Him. At any point He could have freed Himself from the brutality and maliciousness of His torturers. Instead, God the Son, showing how much He really loved us, remained on that Cross. Not because of the nails but because of His passion for us, His passion for you and me.



Passion is that thing which consumes every fibre of your being, the world around no longer exists, daily routines and future plans are interrupted, each waking thought is filled with the heart's desire and life seems incomplete and lacking. If this is how we experience passion in our humanity imagine how Jesus experienced it being both fully human and fully divine. Thank goodness we don't have to imagine, just look at the Cross. Only true and real love could fuel the passion which drove Our Lord to die for us.

When we receive love it is only natural to want to share and give back. The lover who falls on one knee and asks the question of his beloved, 'Will you marry me?', is hoping for the answer 'Yes'. A yes that comes from her heart and lets him know his love is reciprocated and wanted. The season of Lent begins this week. It is a season that allows us the opportunity to respond to Christ's love. To let Him know that His love for us is wanted, needed and deeply appreciated. Perfect love involves sacrifice as Christ sacrificed Himself for us on the Cross. Our Lenten practices are ways in which we can imitate that sacrificial love in thanks and gratitude to the Lord.



Prayer, fasting and almsgiving all involve some form of sacrifice. In prayer we sacrifice time to create space in our daily lives which allows us the chance to have quality conversations with God rather than the rushed thought, the brief mumbled lukewarm prayer.

In fasting we have to sacrifice those things that we think we need and distract us from speaking and listening to God. That sacrifice may involve food, the use of social media, television, gossip, alcohol etc. Fasting is always uncomfortable as we freely choose to deprive ourselves of something. However, it is through embracing sensible fasting that we are drawn closer to Jesus because any discomfort we feel is only a shadow of the passionate suffering that the Lord had for us. When the tummy rumbles, the agitation of not being online disturbs and the thirst for a glass, a chocolate or a sweet irks then there comes a greater appreciation for what Jesus went through for us sinners.

Finally almsgiving involves sacrifice. That can be financial but also personal. The sacrifice of letting past hurts go, making the effort to reach out and contact another, actively breaking bad habits and personal foibles that diminish our humanity and eat away at the soul. God has called everyone of us to be saints. What do we need to give Him back so that we can fulfil His plans to be the saints he has called us to be?

Whatever you do this Lent make sure it counts and comes from the heart. It is not six weeks of doom and gloom. It is six weeks of falling in love again and showing it with a passionate embrace of prayer, fasting and almsgiving. In these times we all need a little love and tenderness and who else can really supply that but the good Lord Himself. Amen!

Ash Wednesday

This week we enter the season of Lent beginning with Ash Wednesday (17th February). You will have noticed from the parish website and via the phone booking service that I have put on two Masses, 10am & 6pm. The Bishop has now instructed all priests of the diocese regarding the Blessing and Imposition of Ashes on Ash Wednesday, in conformity with the Instructions from the Congregation for Divine Worship issued by the Vatican on 12th January 2021.

On Wednesday the Ashes will not be signed on the forehead with the priest saying to each individual “Remember that you are dust, and to dust you shall return”, as is the usual practice. Instead, the ashes will be sprinkled on the head of each person in silence. Those who attend the Ash Wednesday Masses will be instructed how the ‘mechanics’ of this will be achieved safely and prayerfully.

‘Please remind people that they should put safety of themselves and others first and not attend if they are shielding or are particularly vulnerable with underlying medical concerns.’

Bishop John Arnold

Lenten Reading

Lent is that time when we push ourselves to come closer to Our Lord through prayer, fasting and almsgiving. It can be so easy to excuse ourselves from these practices but if we truly embrace them, then the fruits and blessings they produce will always draw us closer to Jesus in ways we never imagined before. Lent is a time for love. Love that is not just intellectual but real and shows itself in action. The following book titles are just suggestions that you may want to use for spiritual reading during the Lenten period.

The Faith

Jesus of Nazareth. Holy Week: From the entrance into Jerusalem to the Resurrection by Pope Benedict XVI

Reasons to Believe, How to Understand, Explain and Defend the Catholic Faith by Scott Hahn

Spirituality

Toward God, The Ancient Wisdom of Western Prayer by Michael Casey

Praying the Rosary like never before by Edward Sri

The Power of Silence, Against the dictatorship of noise by Cardinal Robert Sarah

The Rule of Saint Benedict in English, edited by Dom. Timothy Fry OSB

Befriending Silence, Discovering the Gifts of Cistercian Spirituality by Carl McColman

Into His Likeness. Be Transformed as a Disciple of Christ by Edward Sri

An Exorcist tells his Story by Fr. Gabriele Amorth

The Blessed Sacrament

Eucharistic Miracles by Joan Carroll Cruz

7 Secrets of the Eucharist by Vinny Flynn

Our Lady and the Saints

Hail Holy Queen, The Mother of God in the Word of God by Scott Hahn

Lives of the Saints by Alban Butler

The Life and Prayers of Saint Michael the Archangel by Wyatt North

Saint Mary Magdalene, Prophetess and Eucharistic Love by Fr. Seán Davidson

The Confession of Saint Patrick, translated by John Skinner

The Life and Miracles of Saint Benedict by Pope Gregory the Great

Saint John Bosco by F.A Forbes

The Story of a Soul, The autobiography of the Little Flower by St. Therese of Lisieux

Saint Maria Goretti, In Garments All Red by Fr. Godfrey Poage

Bishops Pastoral Letter

The Bishop has written a pastoral letter for the start of Lent which you can read via the diocesan website at www.dioceseofsalford.org.uk. We will be uploading the Bishop's letter on our own parish website on Monday afternoon at www.saintmarysoswaldtwistle.co.uk. Thanks to John Hughes for his continued technical web skills.

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.

Diocese of Salford Lent Course

LET US DREAM -- Our Lenten Journey with Pope Francis, guided by Austen Ivereigh.

Over the Wednesdays of Lent we will explore Pope Francis' book, Let us Dream, with the assistance of Austen Ivereigh, who worked closely with Pope Francis on the book. Let Us Dream is the first book by a pope in response to a specific crisis, and offers us Pope Francis's spiritual guidance for humanity in the throes of the Covid crisis, helping us to seize the opportunity for conversion and change — as individuals and as a society. The course will begin with an Introductory presentation by Austen on Wednesday 24th February at 7pm.

Every Wednesday from 2nd March until 31st March we will meet 7pm-8.30pm, again with an opening reflection from Austen, to explore the book in five sections, share our thoughts, ask questions and deepen our understanding of the Lord's call to us, to our Church and world through the teaching of Pope Francis. This is a wonderful opportunity and the Bishop and Diocese are very grateful to Austen Ivereigh for making this possible.

To sign up, please email formation@dioceseofsalford.org.uk

<https://www.dioceseofsalford.org.uk/lentcourse/>

Building Work

On Tuesday (9th Feb) members of the diocesan property team visited St. Mary's to begin an assessment in regards the condition of the church and presbytery roofs. Using a cherry picker they inspected the two entrance porches at the front of the church, the right hand corner of the choir loft as you face the sanctuary, the Lady Chapel and the Sacred Heart Chapel as well as the main body of the church and the presbytery chimney stack. The next stage I'm told is that a list of works will be compiled beginning with the most urgent. The diocesan property department will then decide, based on a number of factors, what work will begin first and when. Gratefully I am a priest and I have no idea about the intricacies and details concerning building and architectural matters. If you would like a baptism, wedding or funeral then please speak to me. If you would like to know more about the building work on church then contact the Salford diocesan property department. Let's pray that one day we can remove those buckets from church. St. Joseph the craftsman, pray for our church.

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

St. Joseph Petition Box

In front of our parish statue of St. Joseph there is 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 is write it at home and then place it in the box before St. Joseph who will always bring your needs to God.

Prayer to Saint Joseph

To you, O blessed Joseph, do we come in our afflictions, and having implored the help of your most holy Spouse, we confidently invoke your patronage also.

Through that charity which bound you to the Immaculate Virgin Mother of God and through the paternal love with which you embraced the Child Jesus, we humbly beg you graciously to regard the inheritance which Jesus Christ has purchased by his Blood, and with your power and strength to aid us in our necessities.

*O most watchful guardian of the Holy Family, defend the chosen children of Jesus Christ;
O most loving father, ward off from us every contagion of error and corrupting influence;
O our most mighty protector, be kind to us and from heaven assist us in our struggle with the power of darkness.*

As once you rescued the Child Jesus from deadly peril, so now protect God's Holy Church from the snares of the enemy and from all adversity; shield, too, each one of us by your constant protection, so that, supported by your example and your aid, we may be able to live piously, to die in holiness, and to obtain eternal happiness in heaven. Amen.

Prayer of Pope Leo XIII

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

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)***

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 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. Valentine, pray for us.

St. Catherine of Sienna, pray for us.

Fr. O'Brien