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Saint Mary's Roman Catholic Church  
Catlow Hall Street, Oswaldtwistle  
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Parish Priest: Rev Fr. S D O'Brien  
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Sunday 28<sup>th</sup> February 2021  
Second Sunday of Lent

Dear brothers and sisters,

I'm missing faces! I'm missing smiles! Face masks have become the new essential '*must have*' item. When your popping out to do the shopping or on an errand, it's not only your keys and phone that you have to remember before you leave the house, but also your face mask. The variety of designs, patterns and colours that are now available makes me smile, especially at Holy Communion when I'm able to get a closer look. Face masks are important, they keep us and others safe. They show our commitment at looking out for people, and though they can be awkward at times, the overall benefits outweigh the minor irritations.



Sadly, face masks have had an impact on all our social interactions. I find myself looking more at peoples eyes these days. Before the introduction of face masks you would normally gage a persons reaction by looking at their full face. Are they smiling or frowning? Are they pouting or blushing? Are they sulking or sighing? But now to see and interpret a person's response you have to look solely at their eyes for a clue. In the Gospel of Saint Matthew Jesus says:

***'The lamp of the body is the eye. It follows that if your eye is sound, your whole body will be filled with light. But if your eye is diseased, your whole body will be all darkness. If then, the light inside you is darkness, what darkness that will be!'*** (Mt 6:22-23)

The eyes are the windows to the soul and sometimes a look, a stare or even a gaze can speak volumes.

The Gospels record the looks, stares and gazes that Our Lord gave. These incidents not only reveal what he was thinking but also emphasise his message and teaching.

'And when **he saw the crowds** he felt sorry for them because they were harassed and dejected, like sheep without a shepherd.' (Mt 9:36)

'**Jesus gazed at them.** 'For men' he said 'it is impossible, but not for God: because everything is possible for God.' (Mk 10:27)

**'He could see** they were worn out with rowing, for the wind was against them; and about the fourth watch of the night he came towards them, walking on the lake.' (Mk 6:48)

**'...Jesus looked hard at him** and said, 'You are Simon son of John; you are to be called Cephas – meaning Rock.' (Jn 1:42)

When Jesus' eyes rest on the disciples and crowds, He sees beyond the surface and searches deep into their hearts. No trickery of body language or acting can disguise from the Lord the purity and truth within a persons heart. The Lord *sees* and *knows* all!

I've recently read a very beautiful explanation on the following Icon which is in Jerusalem and hopefully will help us in our Lenten prayer.



As you can see the two figures are Christ and Saint Peter. What is happening? Look at the pillar in the centre – the cock is crowing. This is the moment where Peter denies Jesus. Look at how they stare at each other intently. As disciples of the Lord we want to come to know him better, love him better and serve him better and this Icon of God and the future Pope, looking at each other, is very important in nurturing our relationship with Jesus.

Peter has done wrong, he is a sinner. He's denied Jesus three times, as the Lord foretold, and now after publicly distancing himself from Christ he finds himself face to face with him. The Icon depicts the Lord staring straight at Peter. There is no scowl or grimace but a look of disappointment. The Lord is not looking away from Peter, he is not casting his eyes in another direction or shrugging off his disciple's failing. No. He stares at Peter with an intent sadness, a stare that looks right into the fisherman's soul and lets him know that his sin is serious and his denial of Christ is heart rendering.

Jesus' piercing eyes have an impact on Peter. He knows the Lord is not angry or bitter. He knows the stare of Christ is not searing with rage and condemnation. Rather, the eyes of Jesus, the look of the master, the gaze of the God Man, are filled with love and mercy. Hence the reason for Peter's next action - '***And he [Peter] went outside and wept bitterly.***' (Lk 22:62). St. Peter weeps because he is truly contrite and sorry. He recognises that his denial of being a disciple, his distancing himself from Jesus has severely wounded his soul and inner most being. As one biblical scholar writes:

***'At this heart-rending moment, Peter comes face-to-face with the truth about himself and his tragic actions this night. There is no room for softening his denials, blaming others, making excuses or pretending it is not that big of a deal. He realizes the magnitude of his sin and the damage he has caused in his relationship with the one he loves. As a result, he wept bitterly.'***

**(Edward Sri, No Greater Love)**

Saint Peter, by recognising his sins, by acknowledging his own fault and not looking to proportion blame on another or making excuses, is now able to be transformed and grow. His fierce tears burn off those shackles and chains of sin that keep him from moving closer and closer towards the Lord. His love for Jesus, his courage, self awareness and faithful commitment allow him to confront his sins and failings head on and change.

We know our failings. We may not always want to admit them and accept them, but deep down we know them. How many of us try to avoid them, avoid the gaze of Christ looking at our weaknesses and foibles? How many of us will try to avert the Lord's eyes and distract Him with excuses and reasons for doing this and not doing that? How many of us are prepared, like St. Peter, to hold the stare of Jesus and 'weep bitterly' out of love for our wrong doing in the Sacrament of Confession? How many of us will courageously allow the look of Jesus to transform us through that Sacrament and continue growing in holiness, continue growing in faith, continue growing in Christ Himself?

***'The same transformation God worked in Peter, he wants to do in all of us if we learn to be vulnerable with him, to allow him to love us as we are with all our inadequacies, dysfunctions, wounds, and fears... Only if we dare to come before the Lord regularly, as we really are, in our "Peter moments," can we encounter what Peter encountered that day: God's love, mercy, and healing grace that meets us in our imperfections and transforms us little-by-little into saints.'***

**(Edward Sri, No Greater Love)**

The real look of love is the look of Christ. It's the look that forces us to confront ourselves and gives us the encouragement to move forward. When the Lord is looking at you who does He see?

### **The Sacrament of Confession & The Holy Rosary**

Those who took the opportunity to come to Confession in Advent will testify to the safe and prayerful way in which the Sacrament was celebrated. This Lent, because of parishioners volunteering as stewards, I am able to offer Confessions on the following dates:

**Saturday 27<sup>th</sup> February 2021, 9am -10am.**

**Saturday 6<sup>th</sup> March 2021, 9am -10am.**

**Saturday 13<sup>th</sup> March 2021, 9am -10am.**

The Rosary will be publicly prayed in church, by kind volunteers, during these periods. 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!

### **Stations of the Cross**

Though we are unable to publicly gather for the Stations of the Cross this year in church, it does not mean that we cannot pray them. Thanks to John Hughes, 'Our Internet Man', you will find St. Mary's Stations of the Cross on the parish website. Visit [www.saintmarysoswaldtwistle.co.uk](http://www.saintmarysoswaldtwistle.co.uk)

### **Drains and Windows!**

On Wednesday the man hole cover and drains by the rear external sacristy door began to over flow. It was not a pretty sight nor a pretty smell! Clear A Drain, based in Oswaldtwistle, came out to solve the problem and looked at the rest of the drains around the church and presbytery. They informed me that the blockages are predominately down to tree roots on the property blocking the underground drainage pipes. Them trees again!

Victoria Glass, based in Accrington, have now replaced the confessional windows. Each one has a secure opening to allow air flow, which as we know is a safety pre-requisite for the use of Confessionals during the current pandemic. They have also implemented the diocesan Health and Safety requirements in regards to doors in the presbytery and sacristy.

### **ABC (About Becoming Catholic)**

During the last year of lockdowns, social distancing, furloughs and daily life being interrupted many people have found themselves with time to think. To think about the direction of their own lives, to think about the fragility of this world, to think about what happens after death and even daring to contemplate the person of Jesus Christ! If you or somebody you know is contemplating

such things then tell them to email me at [sean.obrien@dioceseofsalford.org.uk](mailto:sean.obrien@dioceseofsalford.org.uk) or call the presbytery 01254 232 433 (leaving a voicemail if I don't answer straight away). We are made for the Lord and we will only find real happiness, true purpose and total completeness in adoring and loving Him.

**'You have made us for Yourself, O Lord,  
and our hearts are restless until they rest in You.'  
(St. Augustine of Hippo)**

## **Lent - Weekly Eco-Thought for Parishes**

The Second Sunday of Lent 28th February 2021

The Gospel of the Second Sunday of Lent is always one of the accounts of the Transfiguration. Jesus is revealed in glory as the Beloved Son of God, fulfilment of the Law and the Prophets, on the mountain top. Throughout the Scriptures the mountain top has been one of the chief places of encounter with God. Why do you think that may be so? Our own Diocese is placed under the protection of Our Lady of Mount Carmel. As we recognise the Lord in the Eucharist, let us recognise him too in the beauty of creation, of which he has made us guardians.

## **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

### **Hope in the Future**

Representatives Zoom Gathering - Tuesday 23rd March 2021, 7:00pm

Parish and Deanery Hope in the Future Representatives are invited to attend a Zoom Gathering on Tuesday 23rd March at 7:00pm. There will be chance to share the challenges and opportunities of this time in your locality as well as to hear about plans for Stage 4. Register by emailing [hope@dioceseofsalford.org.uk](mailto:hope@dioceseofsalford.org.uk) and you will receive the link the day before.

### **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.

### **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)

### **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.

### **Sunday Prayer Resource – “The Lord's Day at Home”**

For those still at home and not attending Mass the Liturgy Office has prepared a service called "The Lord's Day at Home", based on the Sunday Scriptures, that you can pray on your own or with your family. It is particularly aimed at those not able to follow a Mass on the internet. This week's Lord's Day at Home resource can be found: [www.dioceseofsalford.org.uk/news/covid19/lordsdayathome](http://www.dioceseofsalford.org.uk/news/covid19/lordsdayathome) or parish web site : - <http://www.saintmarysoswaldtwistle.co.uk/the-lord-s-day-at-home.html>

### **Salford Cathedral Sacristan - Vacancy**

We would be grateful if you could share the following in your parishes.

Appointment Type: Cathedral Sacristan, Full-time, permanent

Working hours: 30 hours per week, to be worked over 5 days per week including every Sunday and some Saturdays. Some evening working may also be required.

Location: Cathedral Church of St John the Evangelist, 250 Chapel Street, Salford, M3 5LE

Salary and benefits: £14,820 per annum (actual), 25 holidays plus bank holidays (subject to pro-rata) and 5 Diocesan closure days, employers pension scheme.

The Cathedral has a varied role as a parish church, sacred space, and a place open for the community to visit. We are looking for a reliable person who can work well independently as well as within a team to coordinate the work of the Cathedral Sacristy supporting the smooth running of the liturgical and sacramental life of the church. The successful candidate will have good communication skills and be able to work with sensitivity in a Catholic environment. They will maintain high standards of cleanliness, health and safety and safeguarding. The post-holder may have experience working with volunteers and good organisational skills are advantageous, however these are not essential as on-the-job training will be provided.

For more information please visit: <https://www.dioceseofsalford.org.uk/news/vacancies/>  
Closing date for applications is 12pm on Friday 5th March

### **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.

Fr. O'Brien

