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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 11<sup>th</sup> April 2021  
Divine Mercy Sunday

Dear brothers and sisters,

Throughout the gospel readings over Easter Week, we have seen the Risen Lord appear to his disciples. Firstly to Mary Magdalene who mistakes him for the gardener until he calls her by her name. ***'Jesus said, 'Mary!' She knew him then and said to him in Hebrew, 'Rabbuni!' – which means Master.'*** (Jn 20:16). Then the two disciples on the road to Emmaus encounter a stranger who they recognise to be the Lord when he blesses and breaks bread with them. ***'And their eyes were opened and they recognised him...'*** (Lk 24:31). The Eleven, taking refuge from the world after the events of Holy Week, find the Lord standing in their very presence. ***'They were still talking about all this when he himself stood among them and said to them, 'Peace be with you!''*** (Lk 24:36). Over the next forty days Jesus appeared to numerous witnesses before ascending to Heaven. His purpose was to reveal to the early Church that His Resurrection was real. He did not rise symbolically from the dead. His descent to Hell was not a spiritual metaphor. His rising from the tomb was not as a ghost or ethereal spectre. His Resurrection was real and bodily.

***'Then he spoke to Thomas, 'Put your finger here; look, here are my hands. Give me your hand; put it into my side. Doubt no longer and believe.'*** (Jn 20:27)

***Jesus said, 'Look at my hands and feet; yes, it is I indeed. Touch me and see for yourselves; a ghost has no flesh and bones as you can see I have.'*** (Lk 24:39)



This Holy season of Easter reminds us that Jesus is Alive and Risen. The gift received by six of our young people this week, First Holy Communion, reminds us how close we still are to the Risen Lord. In every Tabernacle throughout the world, He is truly and substantially present. We are never more than a few miles from Him. He is here in Oswaldtwistle in our own church of St. Mary's. He is really present in Accrington at St. Anne's church and St. Joseph's. Passing through Clayton and Harwood we are physically close to Him as we pass St. Wulstan's, St. Mary's and Our Lady & St. Hubert's.

***'The presence of Christ in the Blessed Eucharist is real and permanent, because once Mass is over, Our Lord remains in each one of the consecrated hosts that has not been consumed.'***

**The Council of Trent**



Every time Our Lord appeared to the disciples after his Resurrection their hearts were filled with joy and hope. ***'Filled with awe and great joy the women came quickly away from the tomb and ran to tell the disciples.'*** (Mt 28:8). ***'He [Peter] then went back home, amazed at what had happened.'*** (Lk 24: 12b). ***'The disciples were filled with joy when they saw the Lord'***. (Jn 20:20b). These precious, inspiring and comforting moments were not just reserved for the disciples. We too have that privileged opportunity to stand in the very place of those early followers when we make the effort to pray before Our Lord in the Tabernacle. Just as with Peter, Mary Magdalene and the Eleven, Jesus wants to bring us joy and happiness. He wants us to know and feel genuine hope and love. How does He accomplish this? By being present in every Tabernacle throughout the world. How can we respond to this great mercy and generosity? By simply making the effort and grabbing every opportunity we can to adore and worship before the Real Presence at church.

When we love someone, when they are important to us, then we make the effort to spend as much time with them as possible. Phone calls, texting and even video messaging only go so far but can never replace physical one to one contact. If we really profess to be a believer in Jesus Christ then we have to show it in our actions. Genuine and sincere faith reveals itself in a desire to want to spend time with the Lord and to adore Him in the Blessed Sacrament. It's also during these precious moments of time spent in the Real Presence of Jesus that He intimately talks to us. Saint Josemaria Escriva once wrote:

***'I will tell you that for me the tabernacle has always been a Bethany, a quiet and pleasant place where Christ resides: a place where we can tell him about our worries, our sufferings, our desires, our joys, with the same sort of simplicity and naturalness as Martha, Mary and Lazarus. That is why I rejoice when I stumble upon a church in town or country; it's another tabernacle, another opportunity for the soul to escape and join in intention our Lord in the Sacrament.'***



When was the last time we all made a concerted effort to spend time with the Risen Lord? Do we try to come to Mass early so that we can have a period of Adoration before His presence in the Tabernacle? Have we made time out of love to attend a Holy Hour? Does our body language reflect our faith in the True Presence? Do we properly genuflect or give a half hearted bow? What prayer of thanksgiving do we make when receiving Holy Communion?

This Easter let us come before God giving thanks for the gift of Himself in the Holy Eucharist. Let us love Him as He is always loving us. Let us allow the grace that radiates from the Blessed Sacrament to warm our souls from the coldness of sin and rise up with Him to a new life.

**O Sacrament most Holy, O Sacrament Divine,  
All Praise and all Thanksgiving be every moment Thine.**

### **Bishops Conference of England and Wales statement on COVID-19 and vaccination**

The development of a vaccine against COVID-19 presents an important breakthrough in protecting others as well as oneself from the virus; a virus which has not only caused a global pandemic and led to a huge loss of life but has also placed a great burden on healthcare workers and systems. Each of us has a duty to protect others from infection with its danger of serious illness, and for some, death. A vaccine is the most effective way to achieve this unless one decides to self-isolate.

At present, debate concerns the use of the vaccines developed by Pfizer & BioNTech, Moderna, and AstraZeneca. Some have questioned the use of the Astra Zeneca vaccine since it has been developed from cell-lines originating from the cells of an aborted foetus in 1983. The Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith and the Pontifical Academy of Life have expressed the view that one may in good conscience and for a grave reason receive a vaccine sourced in this way, provided that there is a sufficient moral distance between the present administration of the vaccine and the original wrongful action. In the COVID-19 pandemic, we judge that this grave reason exists and that one does not sin by receiving the vaccine.

Both the Pfizer & BioNTech and Moderna vaccines have a different source since they are mRNA-based vaccines. On 2 December 2020, the Pfizer & BioNTech vaccine was approved for use in the UK. Each Catholic must educate his or her conscience on this matter and decide what to do, also bearing in mind that a vaccine must be safe, effective, and universally available, especially to the poor of the world. Catholics may in good conscience receive any of these vaccines for the good of others and themselves. In good conscience, one may refuse a particular vaccine but continues to have a duty to protect others from infection.

**Right Reverend Richard Moth**  
Chair, Department of Social Justice  
Catholic Bishops' Conference of England and Wales

### **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@stmaryoswaldtwistle.org.uk](mailto:giftaid@stmaryoswaldtwistle.org.uk)

## **First Holy Communions**

Franchesca, Poppy, Georgia, Luke, Faye and Tessa have all now been blessed by God through receiving the gift of the Holy Eucharist. Our prayer is that they treasure Our Lord's Body and Blood in the Blessed Sacrament throughout their lives, realising it is a privilege and not a right.

## **Alpha Online**

On 13th April, Youth 2000 will begin running the next instalment of Alpha online. We have been amazed at the fruit from our first three Alpha courses. We are inviting parishes across the country to join Youth 2000 by bringing their youth groups or parish groups to Alpha Online. The sessions are organised over Zoom. The evening begins with a welcome from the Youth 2000 team, followed by the watching of the video, and then we go into small group discussions using the Zoom 'Breakout Room' feature; as a parish youth group, you have the option of either having the discussion online in a breakout room.

The Online Alpha Course will run for 9 weeks on Tuesday evenings, starting on Tuesday 13th April, 7:30 - 8:30 pm. For more information or to discuss the course in more detail, please contact Liam at [liam.riley@youth2000.org](mailto:liam.riley@youth2000.org).

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

Second Sunday of Easter: The Acts of the Apostles today presents a wonderful vision of the early Church where 'no one claimed for their use anything that they had; as everything they owned was held in common.' None of us own the planet. It is given us by God on trust, to be held in common.

## **Pope Francis sends condolences for the death of Prince Philip**

The Vatican Secretary of State Cardinal Pietro Parolin has sent a telegram on the Pope's behalf to Queen Elizabeth II, recalling her husband's "*record of public service*".

*"Saddened to learn of the death of your husband Prince Philip, Duke of Edinburgh, His Holiness Pope Francis offers heartfelt condolences to Your Majesty and the members of the royal family,"*

Vatican Secretary of State, Cardinal Pietro Parolin wrote in a telegram addressed to Queen Elizabeth.

*"Recalling Prince Philip's devotion to his marriage and family, his distinguished record of public service and his commitment to the education and advancement of future generations, His Holiness commends him to the merciful love of Christ our redeemer,"* the Cardinal wrote. *"Upon you and upon all who grieve his loss in the sure hope of the resurrection, the Holy Father invokes the Lord's blessings of consolation and peace,"* he concluded.

## **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.



## **Caritas Job Vacancies**

### **Bank Counsellors**

We require a bank Counsellor to provide a counselling and family support service in schools across the Diocese of Salford according to each school's formal agreement. You will work with pupils referred to the Caritas Schools' Service on a variety of issues, providing a non-judgemental, caring and confidential environment for them to work through their problems and difficulties. For the position you will have experience of individual counselling and Therapeutic / group work with children. You will also be flexible and have competent IT skills. For more details please visit the Salford Diocesan website.

### **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