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Saint Mary's Roman Catholic Church
Catlow Hall Street, Oswaldtwistle
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Sunday 2nd May 2021
Fifth Sunday of Easter

Dear brothers and sisters,

I'm sure we have all heard of King Arthur, Camelot and the Round Table. All the myths and legends surrounding Arthur and his knights are rich in imagery and dramatic in saga. One of the more famous stories concerns Sir Galahad and his quest for the Holy Grail.



The Holy Grail was reported to be the very chalice Our Lord drank from at the Last Supper. All those who drank from this chalice would receive eternal life. From this belief came knights like Sir Galahad who made it their life's mission to seek out the elusive Holy Grail and drink from it the gift of immortality.

As Roman Catholics we are blessed that we do not have to fetch our swords and shields, saddle up on our trusty steed or even journey out into the unknown like Galahad because the gift of eternal life is not elusive. The gift of eternal life is found in the person of Jesus Christ Himself.

***'Anyone who does eat my flesh and drink my blood has eternal life,
and I shall raise him up on the last day.***

***'For my flesh is real food and my blood is real drink.'* (John 6:54-55)**

So if Jesus is Himself the gift of eternal life whom we receive in the Blessed Sacrament then it is only logical to recognise Our Blessed Mother, Mary, as the Holy Grail. She is that precious object who contained Our Lord. The Word was made flesh within her womb when God the Holy Spirit overshadowed her. It was Mary, who after nine months, brought into the world the Christ who was to redeem and save fallen humanity. It was Mary, the Holy Grail, who shared the gift of immortality with all those she came in contact with, she shared with them her Son, Our Lord,.

Mary's cousin Elizabeth was of mature years when she was expecting her baby, the future prophet John the Baptist. Elizabeth I'm sure would have been anxious about her pregnancy and felt isolated. However, the Holy Grail, Our Lady herself visits her cousin and in doing so shares the joyous and life giving God within her own body. Elizabeth's reaction is priceless – this is the real reaction on discovering the Holy Grail:

'Why should I be honoured with a visit from the mother of my Lord? For the moment your greeting reached my ears, the child in my womb leapt for joy.' (Luke 1:43-44).

As Galahad went in search far and wide for the Holy Grail so did the wise men. The star led them to Our Lady and behold she showed and shared with them the concrete reality of God's love in the Christ child:

'The sight of the star filled them with delight, and going into the house they saw the child with his mother Mary, and falling to their knees they did him homage.' (Matthew 2:10-11).

In John's Gospel during the wedding feast at Cana Mary, the Holy Grail, again shares with those around her the gift of eternal life when she intercedes on the bride and groom's behalf. The wedding is about to run out of wine and Mary asks her Son to help. This is the first miracle Our Lord performs in John's Gospels and reveals who He is and prepares us for the great things He will do in the future.

'His mother said to the servants, 'Do whatever he tells you.' (John 2:5).

The Holy Grail can only exist and be true if it holds the draught of eternal life. We know Mary is the Holy Grail because when we come to her we automatically find ourselves before Jesus her Son, the one who offers us the gift of real and eternal life.

'...I have come so that they may have life and have it to the full.' (John 10:10)

Now we have established that Our Lady is the true Holy Grail then who is her Sir Galahad, her noble and chivalrous knight? Who else but Saint Joseph!



'From heaven, St. Joseph continues his quest to lead all souls to Jesus through Mary. From heaven, he looks for souls who are willing to be knights of the Holy Queen. He desires to raise up loving defenders and heroic champions of Jesus, Mary, and the Catholic faith.'

(Fr. D.H Calloway)

St. Joseph trumps Sir Galahad as a true and noble knight for many reasons. The first is that Joseph is real, lived and existed while Galahad is fictitious. King Arthur's companion may have had many good and wholesome qualities but they were only ever performed on paper and not in the flesh. St. Joseph was blessed to see and know that the Holy Grail was before him, in the mother and child entrusted into his care. He did not venture out aimlessly wandering and searching for something that was right under his nose. Knowing that he had been entrusted with Our Lady and Jesus, St. Joseph did not take them for granted. He worked tirelessly as a carpenter to provide for the Holy Family. Making ends meet and keeping the wolf from the door while poverty and hunger continued to encircle the Holy Family.

Knights who fight fantastical dragons are never really that impressive – they're all show. A real knight, a real man like St. Joseph is one who is committed for better and for worse, for richer and for poorer, in sickness and in health, to love and to cherish, in the exciting times and the ordinary and mundane times. A real man like Joseph provides and is faithful and committed for ever and ever to his family – till death do we part.

As we begin this new month of May, this month dedicated to Our Blessed Lady, let's ask her and St. Joseph her spouse to pray and intercede for us all. Let our prayer be that both this noble knight and his Blessed Lady draw us ever closer to knowing who Jesus is. Like Mary and Joseph let's adore, worship and contemplate Our Lord each and everyday so that like them we too can share in the gift of eternal life.

'Mary, my mother, Joseph, my father, give me your eyes to contemplate Jesus; give me your hearts and spirits to understand him, and to be impassioned for him.'

(Venerable Francis Xavier Nguyen Van Thuan)

Day of Prayer for the Victims and Survivors of Abuse – 4th May 2021

On *Thursday 6th May* at Salford Cathedral Bishop John Arnold will celebrate Mass for Survivors of Abuse. The Mass will begin at 7pm and is open to all. It will also be live streamed. You can find the link for this via our parish webpage or go to the Cathedral's website directly.

The Bishops of England and Wales have moved the date of this annual Day of Prayer from Lent to Eastertide, in response to a request from survivors, to express that this is a day in the season of hope and new life on which to pray for those who have been abused.

Given that Tuesday 4th May is the Feast of the English Martyrs, we have been guided by the diocese to use the following resources at the Parish Mass on Wednesday 5th May:

Penitential Act:

Lord Jesus, you stand alongside all who are suffering, Lord have mercy. ***Lord have mercy.***

Lord, Jesus, you listen to those who cry out to you, Christ have mercy. ***Christ have mercy.***

Lord, Jesus, you heal the wounds of betrayal and trust, Lord have mercy. ***Lord have mercy.***

The following short Litany will also be prayed at the end of Mass:

Response: *Stay with us, Lord, on our journey*

When trust is fragile.

When voices for unheard.

When we are unable to pray.

Stay with us, Lord, on our journey

When suffering is endured

When memories are reawakened.

When we fell betrayed.

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Response

Stay with us, Lord, on our journey

When darkness weighs upon us.

When we cannot see you.

When burdens feel too heavy.

Stay with us, Lord, on our journey

When hope seems faint.

When we are weak.

When faith seems difficult.

Stay with us, Lord, on our journey

The Sacrament of Confession & The Holy Rosary

On Saturday 8th May the Sacrament of Confession will be available from 9am – 10am. Those who took the opportunity to come to Confession in Lent will testify to the safe and prayerful way in which the Sacrament was celebrated. The Rosary will be publicly prayed in church, by kind volunteers, during Confessions. 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! Will you come?

Congratulations to Mr & Mrs Stokes!

On Friday (30th April) we celebrated the wedding of Gemma Urquhart and Daniel Stokes. Due to the current Covid-19 pandemic, numbers were restricted and the liturgy was a lot more simpler, yet it did not take away the prayerfulness and loving faith filled commitment the couple made before God. May the Lord bless them, may Our Lady and St. Joseph always pray for them, and may the angels watch over them and their family. Amen.

Lately Dead and Anniversaries

At some point in the next coming week, thanks to the technical know-how of John and Czes, the lately dead section of the website will be developed. People will be able to submit the names of their own deceased loved ones who they would like being prayed for. The list of names and anniversaries will be changed each month.

***Eternal rest grant unto them, O Lord,
and let perpetual light shine upon them.***

May they rest in peace. Amen.

Song for St Joseph

Fr Kevin Murphy, a Salford diocesan priest, has written a Song for St Joseph as part of the year of St Joseph and the Feast of St Joseph the Worker on 1st May. Alex Patterson, Cathedral Director of Music, has recorded Fr Kevin's song - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xYEn06thM-o>
Sheet music will be available online in due course.

SOS! HELP! SOS!

The wooden fencing surrounding the church property is in need of a good lick of paint. As always parishioners of St. Mary's have stepped up with a kind donation of paint being given, however, people are needed to put that paint on the fencing – can you help? All social distancing requirements will be maintained so that people continue to feel safe volunteering at St. Mary's. It's a chance to be outside with others and help the church. Days and times are flexible according to when people are free. For more information email Navada Keenan at keenannavada@gmail.com

Young Adults: An Evening with Austen Ivereigh

We are privileged to invite all young adults (18 – 35 years) to an evening of reflection with Dr Austen Ivereigh. Thursday 13th May 2021 7pm – 9pm. Austen is the co-author of Pope Francis' latest book: "*Let Us Dream: The Path to a Better Future*" In it the Pope sets out his vision on how to create a better world as we emerge from the crisis that we have been living through. He sees this crisis as having meaning for us and inviting us to new ways of thinking and doing things.

To listen to the invitation on YouTube, please click on the following link:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HZT4nZcd1yE> The first 20 young adults to register will receive a free copy of the book! To register or for more information, please email: formation@dioceseofsalford.org.uk

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

Easter - Weekly Eco-Thought for Parishes

Fifth Sunday of Easter: Today we have another powerful image from the world of nature; Jesus as the True Vine, with the invitation to remain connected to him in order to bear much fruit. As we reflect on our call to care for the world around us, the world of nature, what in our attitudes needs to be pruned away?

Pray the Rosary with Pope Francis

FROM THE DEPARTMENT FOR FORMATION

In response to the Holy Father's heartfelt wish, the month of May will be dedicated to a "marathon" of prayer, to ask for the end of the pandemic, which has afflicted the world for more than a year now, and to ask for the resumption of social and work activities. Pope Francis wishes to involve all the Shrines around the world in this initiative, so that they may become vehicles of the prayer of the entire Church. The initiative is being conducted in the light of the biblical expression: "Prayer by the Church was fervently being made to God" (Acts 12:5).

Together with the prayer of the Holy Rosary, each day of the month is characterized by a prayer intention for the various categories of people most affected by the plight of the pandemic: for those who have not been able to say goodbye to their loved ones, for all health care personnel, for the poor, the homeless and those in economic difficulty and for all the deceased. These are some of the intentions that will punctuate our prayer to Our Lady.

Every Shrine around the world is invited to pray for the resumption of social life, work and the many human activities that were suspended during the pandemic. This common appeal seeks to create an unceasing intercession, dispersed over the meridians of the world, which rises continuously from the entire Church to the Father through the intercession of the Blessed Virgin Mary. For this reason, the Shrines are called to promote and solicit as much as possible the participation of the faithful, so that everyone can devote a moment to daily prayer, in the car, on the street, and thanks to communication technologies, with the smartphone, requesting the end of the pandemic and the resumption of social and work activities.

These thirty representative Shrines, scattered throughout the world, have been chosen to lead the Marian prayer each during one day of the month. These shrines are: Our Lady of Walsingham in England; Jesus the Saviour and Mother Mary in Nigeria; Our Lady of Czestochowa in Poland; Basilica of the Annunciation in Nazareth; Blessed Virgin of the Rosary in South Korea; Our Lady Aparecida in Brazil; Our Lady of Peace and Good Voyage in the Philippines; Our Lady of Lujan in Argentina; Holy House of Loreto in Italy; Our Lady of Knock in Ireland; Virgin of the Poor at Banneux in Belgium; Notre Dame d'Afrique in Algeria; Our Lady of the Rosary of Fatima in Portugal; Our Lady of Health in India; Our Lady Queen of Peace at Medjugorje in Bosnia; St. Mary's Cathedral in Australia; Basilica of the Immaculate Conception in the United States; Our Lady of Lourdes in France; Meryem Ana in Turkey; Nuestra Señora de la Caridad del Cobre in Cuba; Our Lady of Nagasaki in Japan; Nuestra Señora de Montserrat in Spain; Notre Dame du Cap in Canada; National Shrine Our Lady Ta' Pinu in Malta; Nuestra Señora de Guadalupe in Mexico; Mother of God in Zarvantsia in Ukraine; Black Madonna of Altötting in Germany; Our Lady of Lebanon – in Lebanon; Blessed Virgin of the Holy Rosary of Pompeii in Italy.

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.

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.

Fr. O'Brien

