

PARISH OF ARDSTRAW WEST AND CASTLEDERG

St Mary's, Dregish · St Patrick's, Castlederg · St Francis of Assisi, Drumnabey

REV PAUL FRASER PP, 16 CASTLEFIN ROAD, CASTLEDERG, CO TYRONE, BT81 7BT

Tel: 028 816 71393 Email: castledergparish@derrydiocese.org

Website: www.castledergparish.com. Facebook: Parish of Ardstraw West & Castlederg

SUNDAY 21 FEBRUARY 2021 – FIRST SUNDAY OF LENT

GOSPEL: MARK 1:12-15– JESUS IS TEMPTED BY SATAN AS HE PRAYS IN THE DESERT

By creating us in His own image and likeness, amongst the gifts God gives us are *knowledge / reason* and *free will*. With these God-given gifts come *responsibilities* when making choices. Temptation comes our way every day, in many forms. We don't always get it right: sometimes, in our human weakness, we make selfish, self-centred choices. Today's Gospel calls us to adopt the same trust and confidence in God that Jesus showed when faced with temptation.

Prayer, Fasting and Almsgiving: The three traditional pillars of Lenten observance

Prayer: As part of your prayer life this Lent, you are invited to join me each Friday evening, at 7.30, for our Lenten journey with Jesus - **Walking the Via Dolorosa (The Way of the Cross)**. This week's liturgy (26th) will be live-streamed from St Patrick's, Aghyaran. The theme this Friday will be "*Jesus' arrest and trial before the Sanhedrin and the denial of Peter.*"

There is also a Diocesan Prayer for Lent - printed on the reverse of this page of our newsletter and posted on our parish Facebook page - which we are all encouraged to pray each day of Lent.

Fasting: Fasting includes abstaining from a favourite food or drink (or both!) during Lent. Traditionally, as well, not just in Lent but throughout the year, we are called to do Friday Penance, which includes abstaining from meat each Friday. For many people today, fasting from meat may not be a penance; however, we are called to some form of penance as a sharing in Christ's suffering and as a reminder that we are called to inner conversion.

Almsgiving: The main focus of our almsgiving is the Trócaire Lenten Campaign. South Sudan is the focus of this year's campaign. We are told of the stories of two families whose lives have been impacted by conflict. On the Trócaire box we are introduced to family members, Awut and Ajak, who lost their homes and loved ones to the conflict in South Sudan. Awut and Ajak are shining examples of resilience, friendship and solidarity. We hear not only about the enormous challenges they have faced, but also about how they support each other through these challenges. Trócaire Boxes are available for collection in the porch. Thank you!

MASS SCHEDULE

Weekend Masses in St Patrick's, Castlederg:

Vigil 6.00pm (every Saturday)

Sunday 11.00am (2nd & 4th Sundays of the month - 28 February & 14 March)

Weekday Masses:

Monday: 7.30pm, Friday: 10.00am, Saturday (Lent only): 10.00am

You are invited to participate in our Masses on the parish webcam:

www.castledergparish.com

Masses in Aghyaran are also livestreamed on www.parihofaghyaran.com:

Sunday Masses: Vigil 7.30pm, Sunday morning 11.00am (1st & 3rd Sundays of the month - 21 Feb & 7 March).

Weekday Masses in Aghyaran:

Tuesday: 10.00am, Wednesday (Lent only): 10.00am, Thursday: 10.00am

Our churches continue to remain open for private prayer. In Scripture we learn of the simplicity of Jesus' prayer life: two things we know of it are that, He sometimes went off to pray alone and that He prayed regularly. In this Sacred Season of Lent, with our churches closed for public worship, you are invited to come along to the church, regularly if you can, at a time that suits you, for private prayer. You are welcome to light a candle for your prayer intentions.

WALKING THE VIA DOLOROSA (WAY OF THE CROSS) WITH JESUS: Friday evening, at 7.30pm, live-streamed this week from St Patrick's, Aghyaran. The theme of this Friday evening's liturgy will be "*Jesus' arrest and trial before the Sanhedrin and the denial of Peter.*" Please join me on the Aghyaran webcam for this time of prayer.

THE SUNDAY MASS MISSALETES (normally left in the church) and a **PARTICIPANT'S PRAYER RESOURCE FOR THE VIA DOLOROSA LITURGIES** are now published on our parish website, each week, for your convenience. They will be published early each week, to enable you to access them at a time that might suit you during the week.

THANK YOU for your generosity in last week's collection which amounted to £1,038. Standing Orders and online payments for January amounted to £1,419. Your ongoing financial support of the parish is very much appreciated. Envelopes can continue to be left through the door of the Parochial House. Sincere thanks also for a £200 donation.

ST VINCENT DE PAUL: Do not suffer in despair: if you are in need, call the helpline now in the strictest confidence, 02871384488.

SACRED SPACE IN THE HOME: To help you in meditating this penitential season, you are encouraged to create a Lenten Sacred Space in your home, if you have not already done so. In particular, if there are children in your house, you should encourage them to participate in creating the sacred space. Purple is the penitential colour, so you may wish to use purple material / cloth as your backdrop, if you have some. You could place a crucifix or, perhaps, a cross made from wood/twigs that children gather; you might place your Trocaire box or a little basket for coins (representing almsgiving), a prayer book/bible (representing prayer). Sacrifice In Lent, in the form of fasting or 'going off' some food or pleasure is another Lenten tradition: children could be encouraged to place a written note on the sacred space of their particular promise / sacrifice.

KNOCK SHRINE – ONLINE LENTEN PROGRAMME: a series of online discussions on the Thursday nights of Lent, at 8.30pm. Under the title 'Living Christian Faith – Lenten Conversations', there will be a different theme each week. *Where do we find hope and joy in our lives? How can our faith build mental strength, wellbeing and resilience? How has the Covid pandemic impacted upon our faith?* These are just some of the questions that will be explored over the six weeks. Join in on ' or on Facebook @knockshine

SUNDAY SCRIPTURES: Next Sunday, 28 February, is the Second Sunday of Lent. The Gospel we will listen to is St Mark 9:2-10: '*The Transfiguration of Jesus*'. Familiarising ourselves with the Word of God before we hear it at Sunday Mass is a good way of giving ourselves an opportunity to better understand what God is saying to us in the Sunday Scriptures. It might be something you choose to do for Lent! You can access the Readings on our parish website, www.castledergparish.com – or in your bible!

PARISH FINANCE COUNCIL MEETING: This week I met with the Parish Financial Council (by Zoom). The main purpose of this meeting was, **a)** to present and discuss the Parish Financial Statement for the year ending 31 December 2020 and, **b)** to seek the opinions and advice of the members in relation to upcoming 'essential maintenance' projects at St Patrick's, Castlederg.

a) The Parish Accounts show that, despite the long periods of church closure and disruption in so many ways, you remained incredibly generous and faithful to the weekly collection (envelopes, Standing Order and online payments), for which we are most grateful. In its routine activities, the parish was able to run within its budget, without eating in to resources, which is a fantastic achievement, given the circumstances. The new heating system in St Patrick's, Castlederg, was the major capital project for the year. Parish reserves were used for this project, although a number of generous donations were, of course, made towards it, for which we are very grateful. The new heating system should prove, in the long term, to be a very worthwhile and cost-effective project.

Please note: A Summary Income & Expenditure Account for 2020 is now displayed on the noticeboards of our three churches. You are invited to take the time to view it at your convenience, when you visit the church. If anybody has any queries on it or anything they would like clarified, please do contact me.

b) We engaged in preliminary discussions about projects that will require to be carried out at St Patrick's, Castlederg, starting with essential maintenance works. Emergency replacement tiling to the roof of the church has already been carried out. The essential maintenance projects, of a substantial nature, will include a major job of work on the bell tower to stop the current ingress of water (which is currently causing internal damage to the church), repair work to stone-cladding at the sacristy to make it safe, and storm-glazing of windows to conserve the stain-glass. We will look into the possibility of grant availability and we are looking into the different kinds of expertise that we might need to engage to ensure a professional job. I will keep you informed. I am grateful to the Parish Finance Council for their support and counsel.

Each day of Lent everyone is encouraged to pray the Diocesan Lenten Prayer.

Loving Father,

**To prepare for His mission of proclaiming Your kingdom to the world
Your Son Jesus was guided by Your Holy Spirit to the quiet of the desert.**

**In these Lenten days, I pray that I will be guided by that same Spirit,
to a place of renewal in my heart and mind,
so that I will seek opportunities for daily personal prayer,
personal sacrifices and acts of kindness.**

**With Your help, may I too be truly prepared to share in the story of the
passion, death and resurrection of Jesus Your Son, our Lord.**

Amen.