

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

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SUNDAY 21 MARCH 2021 – FIFTH SUNDAY OF LENT

GOSPEL: ST JOHN 12:20-30

JESUS, OUR VISION, OUR WAY TO GOD'S GLORY

Most of us are familiar with the saying, 'Seeing is believing'. Cardinal Joseph Ratzinger (later Pope Benedict XVI) told us that it is, "Only with the 'heart' can we see Jesus. Only love purifies us and gives us the ability to see. Only love enables us to recognise the God who is love itself." As our Lenten journey now draws us closer to the holiest of weeks in the Church calendar, when we celebrate the timeless and central mystery of our faith – Christ's passion, death and resurrection – these words of Cardinal Ratzinger help to draw our focus and our vision to the One who gave up everything out of love for us.

In the opening lines of St John's Gospel today, we hear the Greeks telling the Apostles they "would like to see Jesus". Acknowledging the challenging response of Jesus, we ask God for the grace to see Jesus with our hearts and to see our lives through the lens of the Gospel. We know that Jesus wants to be at the centre of everything we do and say. It is only when we allow Him to be our vision that we will see His loving presence in our daily lives and come to a greater understanding of the words of Cardinal Ratzinger.

RE-OPENING OF OUR CHURCHES FOR PUBLIC WORSHIP

As you are probably aware, an announcement was made by the Northern Bishops this week that our churches can re-open for public worship on Friday next, 26 March. In emphasising the cautious nature of the announcement, the Bishops remind the faithful that:

"the obligation to attend Mass on Sundays and Holy Days remains suspended and every person should consider carefully if returning to collective worship is the safe and appropriate step for them, at this time. We continue to strongly encourage participation, where possible, including in the ceremonies of Holy Week, by way of live-streaming."

I very much look forward to having a congregation present for our Masses again and, also, for our upcoming Holy Week liturgies. However, we do have to take very seriously the recommended cautious approach to re-opening and I endorse the Bishops' remarks on the faithful continuing to participate by webcam, particularly those who are elderly, those who have any health problems or those who feel vulnerable in any way.

I will be very much relying on our faithful stewards, in all three churches, to take up duty again and I will be in contact with you in this regard in the next couple of days.

Palm Sunday: There will be Mass in all three churches again, starting next weekend. In Dregish and Drumnabey, we will revert to the rota system (taking up where we left off – see Mass schedule below). In Castlederg, bookings will be taken, as before, by phoning the Parochial House or emailing the parish office between 11.00am and 2.00pm on Thursday or Friday. Please note, booking for attendance at Sunday Masses is open to all areas.

Full details of the Holy Week ceremonies will be announced next week. The Holy Thursday Mass of the Lord's Supper and Good Friday Celebration of the Passion of Our Lord will be held in St Patrick's, Castlederg. Easter Sunday Masses (4 April) will be held in all three churches.

MASS SCHEDULE

Sunday Masses in St Patrick's, Castleberg:

Vigil of Palm Sunday, 27 March: 6.00pm

Palm Sunday, 28 March: 11.00am

A congregation can attend these Masses by booking (see above).

Weekday Masses (not open to the public this week):

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

ST MARY'S, DREGISH:

Palm Sunday – 9.00am: Open to the Dunteague, Glassmullagh & Lisnacreight areas

ST FRANCIS OF ASSISI, DRUMNABEY:

Palm Sunday – 12.30pm:

Open to the Listymore Park, Oakland, Crewe, Garvetagh & Lisleen & Coolcreaghy areas

**Please note: You can continue to participate in our Masses in Castleberg
via the parish webcam: www.castlebergparish.com**

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

WALKING THE VIA DOLOROSA (WAY OF THE CROSS) WITH JESUS: Friday evening, at 7.30pm, live-streamed this week from St Patrick's, Castleberg. Please join me on the webcam for this time of prayer. The theme for this final week of the Friday evening liturgies is *"The last words of Jesus spoken from the Cross"*.

LENTEN PENITENTIAL SERVICES: There will be a Penitential Service, in preparation for Easter, on Monday 29 March (Monday of Holy Week), at 7.00pm, in advance of the 7.30pm Mass, live-streamed from St Patrick's Castleberg. There will also be a Penitential Service live-streamed from St Patrick's, Aghyaran, on Tuesday 30 March, at 7.30pm.

THANK YOU for your generosity in last week's collection which amounted to £858. Sincere thanks also to those who contribute by Standing Order or make online payments. Envelopes can continue to be left through the door of the Parochial House. Standing Order Mandates are available to download on the parish website, as are Gift Aid Mandates. You can also pick them up at the Parochial House.

'DEFENDING THE FAITH WITHOUT RAISING YOUR VOICE': Michael Kelly, Editor of The Irish Catholic newspaper will be speaking at this online event organised by the student Knights of Columbanus at Queen's University, Belfast, to take place this Tuesday, 23 March, at 6.30pm. For details, please email council19.qub@gmail.com or message on social media (@KSCQueens). 'Defending the Faith Without Raising Your Voice' was the subject of a book which was co-authored by Michael in 2012 and is aimed at giving us an insight into how we can respond to Catholic hot-button issues when they arise in our lives.

MINI-LENTEN RETREAT IN PREPARATION FOR HOLY WEEK: In preparation for the Easter Triduum, 'The Hook of Faith' is happy to offer a 'Mini-Lenten Retreat', by Zoom, on Tue 23, Wed 24 and Thurs 25 March, at 8pm. The Retreat will be led by Fr Billy Swan. The three evenings will anticipate the Triduum, focusing on the Eucharist (Tue 23); the Cross and the Mystery of Suffering (Wed 24); the Resurrection, Joy and Hope (Thurs 25). To take part, email: thehookoffaith@gmail.com. All are welcome.

FEAST OF THE ANNUNCIATION

'I am the handmaid of the Lord, let what you have said be done to me'

On Thursday of this week, 25 March, we celebrate the Feast of the Annunciation. On this day, we celebrate the Annunciation or Announcement to Mary by the Angel Gabriel that she will be the mother of a son, who must be named Jesus. The announcement by the angel was the start of many mysteries with which Mary would be asked to deal in her life. Although there is not a lot of focus on our Blessed Mother in Scripture, the one thing we do know that Mary's reaction was to *'ponder these mysteries within her heart'* and to *'praise God'*.

We ask God, through the intercession of Mary, our role model in faith, for the grace to accept the will of God in our lives and trust in His plan for us.

We pray: Hail Mary, full of grace, the Lord is with thee.....