



OUR LADY OF GRACE PRESTWICH

‘Stay with us, Lord, on our journey’

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4th SUNDAY IN LENT 14 March 2021

Laetare ‘Rejoicing’ Sunday: Mothering Sunday

HOLY MASS THIS WEEK

SUNDAY	First Mass of Sunday is 7pm Saturday. Sunday morning 9.00 & 11.00 am
MONDAY	12 noon Lenten Weekday
TUESDAY	12 noon Lent Weekday
WEDNESDAY	12 noon St Patrick, Patron of Ireland
THURSDAY	12 noon Lent Weekday/St Cyril of Jerusalem [10.00 am Funeral Mass for John Joseph Corcoran: family list only]
FRIDAY	12 noon St Joseph, Spouse of the Blessed Virgin Mary
SATURDAY	12 noon Lent Weekday

The church is open every day

Monday to Saturday from 11.45 am to 1.00 pm
Sundays from 8.45 am to 10.00 am, 10.45 am to 12 noon

My dear Parishioners and Friends,

The first greeting today must be to Mothers. In spite of all the present restrictions, may all our mothers enjoy a happy day! You certainly deserve it.

Mothering Sunday is also a time to honour one’s local parish church, or church of baptism, or the cathedral of the diocese. That’s how Mothering Sunday began, long ago in the Middle Ages, by visits to these places, and apprentices and domestic servants were allowed home to visit their families.



We celebrate this week two well-loved saints. Next Wednesday is the feast of **St Patrick**, Friday the solemnity of **St Joseph**.

Whichever side of the Irish Sea we come from, St Patrick is the ‘dear saint of our isle’. He was born on this side of the Irish Sea, so the English, Welsh and Scots can claim him. He evangelised the isle on the other side of the Irish Sea, and so is patron of Ireland.

With his renowned humility, St Patrick would be the first to yield place to St Joseph, especially this year. Because we are now in **the Year of St Joseph**, a Year proclaimed by Pope Francis.

150 years ago, Blessed Pope Pius IX saluted St Joseph as the **Patron of the Universal Church**. The Holy Father explained how St Joseph still protects the Church, just as he protected the Holy Family of Jesus and Mary.

At about the same time, **Fr Herbert Vaughan** was founding the Mill Hill Missionary Society. Fr Vaughan’s devotion to St Joseph was second to none. ‘What will I do now?’ he used to say. ‘I will go to Joseph and ask for his help.’ Later, as the second bishop of Salford, Herbert Vaughan named **St Joseph patron of the Salford diocese**, along with Our Lady of Mount Carmel.



Pope Francis has written a beautiful letter about St Joseph. I can’t do better than quote a few extracts from it. You can find the full text on the Vatican website and elsewhere:

With a father’s heart: that is how Joseph loved Jesus ...

Each of us can discover in Joseph ... an intercessor, a support and a guide in times of trouble. St Joseph reminds us that those who appear hidden or in the shadows can play an incomparable role in the history of salvation ...

Pope Francis describes the dangers through which Joseph guided the Holy Family, and comments: *Joseph, then, teaches us that faith in God includes believing that he can work even through our fears, our frailties and our weaknesses. He also teaches us that amidst the tempests of life, we must never be afraid to let the Lord steer our course. At times, we want to be in complete control, Yet God always sees the bigger picture ...*

The logic of love is always the logic of freedom, and Joseph knew how to love with extraordinary freedom. He never made himself the centre of things. He did not think of himself, but focussed instead on the lives of Mary and Jesus. Joseph found happiness not in mere self-sacrifice but in self-gift. In him, we never see frustration but only trust ... Our world today needs fathers ...

Pope Francis' purpose in writing his letter was 'to increase our love for this great saint, to encourage us to implore his intercession and to imitate his virtues and his zeal'. He ends his letter with a prayer, part of which reads:

Blessed Joseph, to us too, show yourself a father and guide us in the path of life. Obtain for us grace, mercy and courage, and defend us from every evil. Amen.



Following the Mass of St Joseph next Friday, there will be **exposition of the Blessed Sacrament until two o'clock, ending with Benediction.**



Only two weeks now to **Palm Sunday** and the start of Holy Week. Last year, churches were closed at Easter. This year they will be open, though numbers will be limited.

If you would like to be present at the Easter ceremonies, please **pick up a green booking form** today from the back of church and return it asap. Tickets will then be distributed in good time.



Families are also looking forward to when children can make their **first Holy Communion**. If all goes well, the dates for Year 4 will be 1 and 8 May, and for Year 3, 26 June and 3 July – all Saturdays.



Positive reports continue to arrive about the **live streaming of Masses**. It's now a month since we began. **In the first four weeks, Mass was followed over 2,500 times**, an average of over 600 each week.

Access is easy. Simply log on to the parish website and click on 'upcoming or recently held services'.



I hope today, Rejoicing Sunday and Mothering Sunday, will be a joyful one for us all as we remember with gratitude our mothers, whether still alive or who have gone to God.

Fr Allen

Fr Dearman's Reflections on Psalm 21

1 My God, My God, Why Have You Forsaken Me?

The Gospels tell us that Jesus cried out these words from the Cross as he was very close to his death. They are the opening words of Psalm 21 (22 in the Hebrew Bible).

The Psalm is a truly remarkable prayer, expressing the feelings of a person in terrible distress. People often find themselves thinking that God no longer cares for them, and Jesus had a similar experience as his life ebbed away. We see how wholeheartedly he had taken on our human nature with all its sufferings.

The suffering person may well be tempted to despair, but still turns to God, even though his words seem to be questioning God's providence. "You give no reply", he complains. The Psalms often speak to God in this way, showing that we do not have to be ashamed of our human emotions and it is better to address God in such a way than not to speak to him at all.

"Our fathers trusted in you and you set them free." The Psalmist recalls God's goodness in the past, but "I am a worm and no man", jeered at by all who see him. "He trusted in God; let him release him if this is his friend." It is almost uncanny how close this prayer, composed so long before, portrays the jeering crowd on Calvary.

