



OUR LADY OF GRACE PRESTWICH

'Stay with us, Lord, on our journey'

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5th SUNDAY IN LENT 21 March 2021

HOLY MASS THIS WEEK

SUNDAY	First Mass of Sunday is 7pm Saturday. Sunday morning 9.00 & 11.00 am
MONDAY	12 noon Lent Weekday
TUESDAY	12 noon Lent Weekday. Exposition of the Blessed Sacrament until 2.00.
WEDNESDAY	12 noon Lent Weekday
THURSDAY	12 noon The Annunciation of the Lord
FRIDAY	12 noon Lent Weekday
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,

Today begins what was formerly called 'Passiontide', two Sundays before Easter. Today's Scripture reading reminds us that God has said to us, 'You are my people'. But are we, really?

Well, Lent gives us the chance to prove 'Yes, we are'. Meanwhile, this week our Prime Minister has reminded us that it is a whole year since we began the first lockdown. He has asked that we should keep 23 March as a day of reflection. What is a **day of reflection**? Our bishops think it isn't enough. They have asked us therefore to keep next Tuesday, 23 March, as a **day of reflection and a day of prayer**. This is part of what they have to say:

We ask you all to make this not only a Day of Reflection but also a Day of Prayer. In reflection we ponder on all that has taken place; in prayer we bring this to our Heavenly Father. For all who live by faith in God, reflection and prayer always go hand in hand. Prayer completes reflection.

Reflection informs prayer. Prayer opens our life to its true horizon. Without prayer we live in a foreshortened world and are more easily swamped by its clamour and tragedy ...

March 2020 was the first time our churches had to be closed. It is our hope that on this day, every one of our churches will be open. We invite everyone to enter a church on this day, to reflect and pray in the presence of the Blessed Sacrament.

After the Mass at 12 noon next Tuesday, here in Our Lady of Grace church, there will be **Exposition of the Blessed Sacrament until two o'clock**, to allow for time for private prayer, and ending with Benediction of the Blessed Sacrament.



Thank you for sending in your applications for tickets for Holy Week and Easter. What strange times these are, requiring us to ask for tickets to come to Mass and the other services! Let's hope and pray that these days will soon be behind us. Meanwhile, please continue to send in your forms. Copies are at the back of church. There is still room at all Masses and services **except** for the Solemn Liturgy of the Passion on Good Friday afternoon. That is now full to capacity.



Last week's newsletter had news of our children in Years 3 and 4 who are getting ready for their first Holy Communion. **We must also be concerned for our children in Year 8 who are preparing for their Confirmation.**

I hope these children will be ready for the Sacrament in this year's autumn term. We must remember that the Sacrament of Confirmation is not to be thought of as our making a commitment to God, choosing to be confirmed. That would be a complete misunderstanding of the Sacrament. Confirmation is God's gift to us, the gift of God's Holy Spirit to help and guide us. It is the other half of our baptism and is surely a gift we cannot refuse. I trust that **all** our children in this parish who are eligible to receive the Sacrament of Confirmation will do so.



In the last few days **Bishop John Arnold** has written, urging us all in the Salford diocese to keep close in prayer with St Joseph during the coming year.

Here is part of his letter:
St Joseph is a Principal Patron of our Diocese ... Pope Francis has dedicated this year to St Joseph and the Family... We have the year to remind ourselves of the important role of St Joseph in the history of our Faith and his example to us in his role as a protector and guardian of Mary and the child Jesus.

In the secular age in which we live, we have a special need to "protect" the sense of Faith and all that it can provide for our world when we put gospel values into

action to establish peace, the dignity of every human being, the sanctity of life from conception to its natural end and to eradicate poverty and suffering ...

The influence [of St Joseph] is strong, as a model of the best qualities of manhood, in providing security and well-being for his family and for his trust in all that God was asking of him ...

In this Diocese we will mark The Year of St Joseph and the Family together from 19 March 2021 – 19 March 2022. St Joseph, pray for us.



Thank you for your donations for the CAFOD **Family Fast Day**. To date, you have given £1209.68. Your generous gifts will help people like Hagos in Ethiopia, struggling to cope in an increasingly hotter and drier climate. There is still time to make a donation by putting your gift in an envelope and placing it in the bucket at Mass – or you can donate on-line at cafod.org.uk/lent

We are now getting ready the offertory envelopes for the new tax year starting 6 April. Due to the pandemic, our parish income is down 25% on last year. Many people's income has fallen as a result of the pandemic. But if you feel that you could commit to regular donations to support the parish, either using the gift envelope scheme or by standing order, please let me know.



Thursday next is Lady Day, the feast of the Annunciation. May Our Lady of Grace smile on us all on that day.

Fr Allen

Fr Dearman's Reflections on Psalm 21

2 There is no one else who can help me

The physical agonies of Jesus on the Cross, following the brutal scourging and the crown of thorns, must have been intense, but his psychological pain was also acute. Most of his friends had deserted him and the people to whom he had preached words of peace were now mocking him and asking why his God was not coming to rescue him.

Our Psalmist now goes back to the beginning of his life: "From my mother's womb you have been my God." He realises that God is now his only possible helper. When all is darkness we must cling to God.

He describes his torments in detail. His bones are wrenched out of joint, his heart is like wax. His enemies are like raging bulls or roaring lions. They tear holes in his hands and feet, another vivid description of the future Saviour nailed to a cross.

"They cast lots for my robe." The soldiers charged with the hateful task of administering the crucifixion could not wait for Jesus to die before playing dice for the possession of his seamless garment.

Things are now just about as bad as they can be. They can surely only get better. Sure enough, the Psalm will end on a triumphant note. Jesus will say "It is accomplished!" and will rise triumphant.