



OUR LADY OF GRACE PRESTWICH

'Stay with us, Lord, on our journey'

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3rd SUNDAY OF EASTER 26 APRIL 2020

My dear Parishioners and Friends,

Fr Francis Conway, assistant priest at St John's Cathedral and Mount Carmel, Salford, died on 12th April. He was 27 years of age. Born in Manchester, he studied for the priesthood at Ushaw College, Durham, and the Venerable English College, Rome. He was ordained priest in St John Lateran's Basilica in Rome. A priest for only seventeen months, he caught the fever while ministering to the sick in the Cathedral parish. The year? 1869.

Canon Peter Benoit preached at the requiem Mass in the Cathedral. He described how, among the many duties assigned to Fr Conway, *'was that of attending to the spiritual wants of the Catholic inmates of the Salford Workhouse. He was most assiduous in catechizing the children and in administering the Sacraments to the dying. Often did he sacrifice a part of his night's rest in order to attend at the death bed of some one of his infirm flock.'*

'During the last few years, a malignant fever seems to have taken possession of the

dwelling of the poor of this borough. Several medical men have died of it of late in the discharge of their profession. The danger of imbibing the contagious poison is tenfold greater to the priest than to a medical man when called to the fever-stricken, especially when a number of such patients are congregated in one ward, as is the case in our workhouses ...

'It was this duty which Father Conway has fulfilled day after day for more than a year, with the courage of the bravest soldier, with the generosity of a martyr. It appears that he had a presentiment, that sooner or later he would fall a victim to his dangerous duties. Yet he never uttered a word of faint-heartedness.'

Fr Conway's friends recalled how he used to ask them to say a Hail Mary that he might come to die a happy death. How he used to say playfully, 'I shall catch fever and then I shall die, and all will be well with me'. A friend wrote: *'It was on Thursday in Easter week, that the lurking evil openly declared itself. At breakfast that morning, Father Conway felt ill, feverish, prostrate. Nevertheless, he went on his*

sick calls round Mount Carmel district and the Workhouse, and before noon met by appointment one of his colleagues at the Pendleton Station. It was urged that a little rest and a friendly visit would cheer him up.' They caught the express train to Bolton and called on Canon Edmund Carter at St Peter and St Paul's church in Pilkington Street. The Canon had himself caught 'the fever' whilst ministering to the sick in Liverpool some time before but had recovered.

Seeing that the young priest was ill, Canon Carter asked him to stay but Fr Conway replied, *'If it be God's will I should die now, I had rather die in Salford, among my people'*. He returned to the Cathedral house and died there after eleven days, nursed during that time by two Sisters of Mercy from Oldham.

The story of Fr Conway could be told of many priests who died from catching cholera or typhoid throughout the nineteenth century. Manchester and Salford were particularly hit, but so were many of the Lancashire towns. Priests died from 'the fever' in Rochdale, Rawtenstall, Haslingden,

Bolton, Blackburn, Darwen and Oldham as well as in cities like Leeds and Liverpool.

We might remember those priests now, as we suffer from the effects of the coronavirus. Pope Francis said on Holy Thursday that 'In these days, more than 60 have died here in Italy, attending to the sick in the hospitals', calling them 'the saints next door, priests who gave their lives in service'.

We honour too the doctors, nurses and other hospital staff who unselfishly continue to minister to the sick.

Because of age limits, I am under episcopal orders not to do sick visits. I am therefore very grateful to **Canon Stephen Parkinson** of St Michael's and St Bernadette's. He will answer sick calls in Our Lady of Grace parish and will also conduct funerals. His telephone number is 0161 766 2356.

Fr Dearman and I continue to be well, thank God. Although we miss seeing you, your photographs grace the benches in Our Lady of Grace church and now the virtual congregation has jumped up to 566.

We both send warmest greetings to you all, and we are praying that you will continue to keep safe and well. Some parishioners join in from home as I pray in church for the parish and community each day between 7.00 and 8.00 pm.

Fr Allen

PS If you haven't yet emailed your photo to me, please do so. It really is uplifting to see so many of you virtually in church for Mass every day.

Pray before clapping

*The Catholic Bishops of England and Wales recognise this time of COVID-19 is affecting every person. The sick, and their families, suffer hardships of isolation from those they love. Our front-line in hospitals and in care homes give service to the vulnerable. **To show spiritual solidarity Catholic Bishops will celebrate Mass live-streamed from their Cathedral.***

Cardinal Vincent Nichols has said: 'We can see on a Thursday evening how much the caring work, especially in the NHS and in care homes, is appreciated. Now, we want to add the practice of public prayer to that applause.'

'So every Thursday at 7 o'clock, a bishop will celebrate Mass in one of the cathedrals for the care workers. Please do join in, if you can, on the live streaming. Follow where the Mass takes place on each different Thursday.'

'And even more importantly, use that time before 8 o'clock on a Thursday to offer your prayers of thanksgiving for these generous, courageous people, for their support – their encouragement – that God will sustain them in this great work that they're doing. We applaud, but we pray and we pray fervently for them. May God bless them all.'

Cardinal Nichols offered the first of these Masses in Westminster on 23 April.

30 April, Bishop Richard Moth, Arundel & Brighton

7 May, Bishop Marcus Stock, Leeds

14 May, Bishop Robert Byrne, Hexham & Newcastle

21 May, Bishop Mark Davies, Shrewsbury

28 May, Bishop Terence Draine, Middlesbrough

To access, go to each Cathedral website.

An Invitation?

Is isolation God's timely invitation to go on a journey with Him? If so, where? Daniella Stephens, Catholic speaker, reflects on these questions:

<https://youtu.be/vNZ02veSd9U>

Magnificat

During this time, when we can't attend Mass, the producers of the Magnificat have kindly provided complimentary access to its online version to help people follow the Mass and pray from home. Go to <https://us.magnificat.net/free>

Where can I find Mass?

<https://www.churchservices.tv/whats-on-now>

www.walsingham.org.uk

EWTN from the internet and by satellite TV. On Sky, 588.

vatican.va then 'Vatican News', then the YouTube symbol on the right, then 'Mass at Santa Marta'.

www.lourdes-france.org

Locally, Salford Cathedral, St Clare's, Blackley Facebook page, and others.

Parish Collection

For those wishing to set up a monthly standing order for the parish:

Barclays Bank. Sort code 20-55-34. A/C no 60192309. A/C name, TSDT Our Lady of Grace Prestwich

Please put an identifier on your payments, so that we know for reclaim purposes.