



**OUR LADY OF GRACE
PARISH, PRESTWICH**

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PRAYER INTENTIONS FOR THE SICK

Trudy Eastwood, Caroline Williams, Silvana Mantio, Christine Rogers, Craig Millward, David Noble, Roxine Callow, Patrick Hullinson, Barbara Murphy, Florence Ward, Peggy Sugrue, Dale Broom, Jackie Berry, Bernard Holt, Patricia Greene, Bernadette Greene, Brenda Neiles, Joseph Arnfield, Nonie Brehony, Henry Marron and Johnny Falloon.

PRAYER INTENTIONS FOR THE DEAD

Recently Deceased: David Millward, Joe Evans, George Hewison, Sandra Matchoss, Frank Gillespie, Ann Morris.

Anniversaries: Fr Vincent Cavey, Kathleen Hunt and Gretta Lloyd.


WISDOM FROM THE SAINTS



“Why should we sing Allelulia? Because this day we are fed, freed and assured of the clarity, brightness and agility that the resurrection reveals.”
St. Vincent Ferrer

“Christianity is not oppressive. It is peace, it is joy, it is love. It is life renewed like the secret pulse of nature at the beginning of spring.”
St John XXIII



“O come and mourn with me a while. See, Mary calls us to her side.” At the side of each of you there will always be Mary. As she was present among the disciples, she is present now. As she was frightened and confused in the time of trial, she is present now. And with her faith, she will show you, beyond the night of the world, the glorious dawn of the Resurrection. Call her to your side, stay with her and see. She never disappoints.”
St John Paul II

	Last Week’s collection was: £1293.83. Thank you	£££	The monthly figure for Standing Orders: £1366.00
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	This week, the Sacred Heart Lamp burns for peace in the Holy Land.		This week, Our Lady’s Lamp burns for every member of our parish.
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EASTER SUNDAY

Easter Sunday 31st March	Holy Masses 9am & 11am
Easter Monday 1st April	Holy Mass 12 noon
Easter Tuesday 2nd April	Holy Mass 12 noon
Easter Wednesday 3rd April	Holy Mass 12 noon
Easter Thursday 4th April	Holy Mass 12 noon
Easter Friday 5th April	Holy Mass 12 noon
Easter Saturday 6th April	Exposition 11.30am-1pm Confessions 11.40am-12.50pm, 4-4.40pm Holy Mass 11am Vigil 5pm

Holy Thursday

We've come together tonight to make a family, the family of God. From its origin, Passover was celebrated as a family, in the home. Still today, the children of Israel gather in their homes to keep Pesach. It's as heirs of this tradition that we come. There was always provision for those who were journeying together and not blood related, to form a family and celebrate this night. So, Jesus gathered his disciples and made a family in the Upper Room – and his disciples have done this in his memory ever since. Like our Jewish forebears, we have need to make a family: a safe, strong, unit of love, forgiveness and peace. Because this night has always spoken of all that threatens us too: The night when the angel of death also passed over the houses – for Egypt this night spelt death, destruction and chaos.

That night in Egypt is no different to this night, then, is it? – Chaos and death are still at our door, just outside. The city and the world are still menaced by destruction – perhaps more than ever. For this reason, Israel looks to her origins in a new-year feast, a spring feast, when a wandering people came together as a family; and when God made of them a rampart and a people desiring unity and peace, found life in a new land.

So we come on this night too – to make a family that can stand against the terrors of the night. But we realise, even as we gather, that it isn't in our power; it's not in the grasp of us human beings: I imagine your blood family is similar to mine – in some ways divided, broken by death – threatened by many things. We cannot make the centre hold – unity and peace are not of our making and remain out of our reach.

On this night, Jesus, who has gathered a group for Passover; a few, divided, fragile people –takes things into his creative hands. And what he does, effects the peace and unity that we long for: the unity and peace of the People of God. In the taking and breaking of the bread, the stooping down and sharing, when he washes the feet and gives of the cup of outpoured wine, is the sign and sacrament that is our peace; that holds us together in a new life.

So certain is he of the power of the sign he gives against the enemies of the night – that Jesus contravenes the prescriptions of Passover law and goes out – out from the table and the home, out from the city and across the dark Kedron, to wait on our chaos to come to him: to wait on the full force of the enemy. And he remains certain even unto death – sure, that the example of loving self-sacrifice that he'd given in the signs of the supper, has the power of new life – the power to make a family: That from his faith, from that night to this, God can make a family from his scattered, wandering children against which the gates of the underworld can never prevail.

Cometh the Hour, cometh the Man

At the Wedding Feast of Cana, Jesus says to his Mother, “Woman, my hour has not yet come.” It seems strange he should speak to Mary, his mother like this— “Woman” sounds almost rude. But he is speaking to her as the new Eve: the woman, the mother of all who live. He's speaking of the hour of the new creation, when all will be made new and the mess of our first parents is unravelled. He speaks to her in the same way from the cross doesn't he? The wedding feast of Cana was the first sign of what life in that hour will be like and today we have the last sign: Our Lord's Resurrection.

I presume you remembered to put your clocks forward? So you'll know what a difference an hour can make. It can be a bit of a muddle at first—we don't quite know where we are but soon the joy of longer days and lighter evenings convinces us of a change. The light makes all the difference once the hour has gone on—we feel different, a spring in our step and the prospect of summer before us. The light starts to teach us of life in the hour

Over the weeks of Lent we've considered the instruments of the Passion but now those weapons, when battle is over, give way to the spoils of war. And what are those spoils? How do the Scriptures communicate what the *arma Christi* have won for us? Well they teach us through the quality of life in this hour—an hour that it takes forty days to fathom!

What is life like in this hour? Well, Peter tells Cornelius that it's a time of anointing— that we should think of the Resurrection symbolised by the women, like Mary of Magdala, who go with perfume and spices to anoint the body. This life will spread gradually like the light of the hour and soon perfume the whole house with a sweet aroma.

And in the hour of this morning they run ,those disciples, don't they? They have a new agility—like Miriam at the Exodus who danced on the threshold of the promised land. So light and scent and dance capture something of the life of this hour—and what else? Well laughter actually. Was he smiling John—when in that first hour he saw and he believed? There's a long tradition in Judaism that Isaac laughed when he glimpsed this hour—when the knife was lifted from his neck by the angel. Then he glimpsed life in the promised land and laughed out loud. And all the disciples were filled with joy when they saw the Lord.

And then, of course there's the feasting—they ate and drank with him after his resurrection. What are you going to do this Easter? How will you celebrate this hour? Paul tells us: “since we have been brought back to life, we should look for the things of heaven”. What are these things? They are hidden in light, scent, song, dance, laughter and the celebration of a meal: and that's the Gospel truth. Happy Easter!