

ST FILLAN'S PARISH NEWSLETTER

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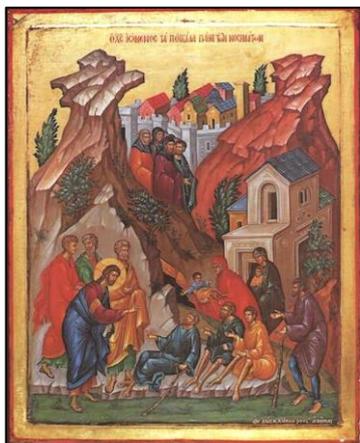
07th February 2021

FIFTH SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME - B

During this very difficult period, it was felt that some form of communication/support network could prove very useful to Parishioners, especially those who are housebound and vulnerable.

Please contact Fr. Les by phone 01877 330 702 or by email: parishpriest@stfdac.co.uk for further information.

SERVING THE LORD WELL



When Jesus comes to Peter's house, he finds that Peter's mother-in-law is sick, and he heals her. And then look what happens. The whole town hears of her healing and they rush all their sick to Peter's house. The house is surrounded, and so is Jesus. Now, suddenly, Jesus seems to have become a one-man hospital.

He is so besieged that he cannot even pray in the house. He has to head out secretly into the countryside in the dark of early morning. When his absence is detected, his disciples go looking for him. "Hey," they say when they find him, "Everybody is looking for you"! They seem to think that his urgent-care clinic should be open at all hours.

Now, of course, it is a good work to heal the sick. And, of course, those who love the sick are right to want them healed. And yet how absurd it is to suppose that prayer should take second place to work, no matter what the work is! And how sadly and understandably absurd it is to suppose that the mission of Jesus is to be a Doctor Without Borders.

So maybe it is not hard to figure out what Jesus was praying about in the early morning in the countryside. Each healing Jesus does is a good thing. But good things can get in the way of serving God well. To serve God well, a person must do not just any good things that others want him to do. He must do those good things that God has called him to do. It may take prayer to figure out which good things to turn down. Jesus' disciples feel that Jesus needs to hurry back to Peter's village to keep practicing medicine. What Jesus tells them, after his prayer, is that he is leaving Peter's village to continue his ministry—not of medicine but of preaching—in other towns. Preaching is the purpose for which he came.

What is needed to serve God well, then, is not endless good things that other people want from you. What is needed for the Lord's service is prayer first. And after that comes fidelity to just those few good things that fulfil that particular purpose to which the Lord has called you.

Eleonore Stump

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WORLD DAY FOR THE SICK - February 11th, 2021

Please pray for all those suffering from illness, especially those whose health has been impacted by the Coronavirus. We also recommend to pray for their caregivers and family members. Please remember about your Family Members and providing them continuity of sacramental life in the time of struggles of illness. Message of His Holiness Pope Francis for the 29th World Day of The Sick (*page 3*).

FEBRUARY 14th IS CELEBRATED AS ST. VALENTINE'S DAY in various Christian denominations; it has, for example, the rank of 'commemoration' in the calendar of saints in the Anglican Communion. In addition, the feast day of Saint Valentine is also given in the calendar of saints of the Lutheran Church. However, in the 1969 revision of the Roman Catholic Calendar of Saints, the feast day of Saint Valentine on February 14 was removed from the General Roman Calendar and relegated to particular (*local or even national*) calendars for the following reason: *"Though the memorial of Saint Valentine is ancient, it is left to particular calendars, since, apart from his name, nothing is known of Saint Valentine except that he was buried on the Via Flaminia on February 14."*

PRAYER OF A COUPLE ON THE ANNIVERSARY OF MARRIAGE

We praise you, o God, we bless you, Creator of all things, who in the beginning made man and woman that they might form a communion of life and love. We also give you thanks for graciously blessing our family life so that it might present an image of Christ's union with the Church. Therefore, look with kindness upon us today, and as you have sustained our communion amid joys and struggles, renew our Marriage covenant each day, increase our charity, and strengthen in us the bond of peace, so that we may forever enjoy your blessing. Through Christ our Lord. Amen.

TOOLS FOR BUILDING A DOMESTIC CHURCH

According to the Second Vatican Council's Dogmatic Constitution on the Church: "The family, is so to speak, the domestic church" (Lumen Gentium #11). This means that it is in the context of the family that we first learn who God is and to prayerfully seek His will for us. *In the following bullet points you will find some suggestions on how to build your "domestic church" through a life of prayer that can help all the members of your family.*

- Begin praying as a family and reading from Scripture daily, certainly before meals, but also first thing in the morning or before bed. Find a time that works for your family. Use the liturgy of the Church as a model for prayer and try to include heartfelt unstructured prayer as well.
- Pray a Family Rosary (*each member leads a decade, and everyone shares intentions*).
- Have a crucifix in a prominent place in the home, and in every bedroom.
- After opening of our churches make the Sacraments a regular celebration – take the whole family to Confession and Mass!

- Begin family traditions based on the seasons celebrated in the liturgical calendar.
- After releasing the epidemic rigors make your vacation a holy pilgrimage by visiting the shrines and saints of our land and the world. And now, why not to do it online?
- Make worshiping God a priority. Never miss Mass, even while traveling – go to: www.MassTimes.org to find a church near you!
- Teach stewardship and charity to your children, through word and example.
- Demonstrate love for your spouse, your children, your neighbours, and the world. Remind their children that they are loved by God and have been given gifts to serve others.
- Talk freely about the presence of God in the joys and sorrows of your life.
- Participate in the lay ministries and activities of your parish community.
- Allow your children to witness you in private prayer. Encourage your children to pray daily on their own, to listen for God's call, and if heard, to respond.

INTRODUCTION TO THE LITURGY OF THE DAY

In ten days, Lent will begin, and we will be reminded of Jesus' sufferings, from forty days in the desert to his passion and death, but today we hear Job lamenting the tragedies that have come to define his life. His sufferings are, to him, incomprehensible. None of us suffer as greatly as Job, but we have reason to hope. The psalmist reassures us that the Lord heals the wounded and broken-hearted. Paul willingly embraces his difficulties for the gospel. Jesus places the healing of the sick and troubled at the heart of his ministry. As we listen to today's readings, let us look for hope in the Lord.

FIRST READING

Job 7:1-4; 6-7

Job began to speak: Is not man's life on earth nothing more than pressed service, his time no better than hired drudgery?

Like the slave, sighing for the shade, or the workman with no thought but his wages, months of delusion I have assigned to me, nothing for my own but nights of grief.

Lying in bed I wonder, 'When will it be day?' Risen I think, 'How slowly evening comes!' Restlessly I fret till twilight falls. Swifter than a weaver's shuttle my days have passed, and vanished, leaving no hope behind.

Remember that my life is but a breath, and that my eyes will never again see joy.

RESPONSORIAL PSALM

Psalms 146: 1-6

R./: Praise the Lord who heals the broken-hearted.

Praise the Lord for he is good; sing to our God for he is loving, to him our praise is due.

R./: Praise the Lord who heals the broken-hearted.

The Lord builds up Jerusalem and brings back Israel's exiles, he heals the broken-hearted, he binds up all their wounds. he fixes the number of the stars; he calls each one by its name.

R./: Praise the Lord who heals the broken-hearted.

Our Lord is great and almighty; his wisdom can never be measured. The Lord raises the lowly; he humbles the wicked to the dust.

R./: Praise the Lord who heals the broken-hearted.

Psalms text from The Psalms: A New Translation © 1963 The Grail (England) published by HarperCollins. Version 1 – issued 13 Dec 2020.

SECOND READING

1 Corinthians 9:16-19; 22-23

I do not boast of preaching the gospel, since it is a duty which has been laid on me; I should be punished if I did not preach it!

If I had chosen this work myself, I might have been paid for it, but as I have not, it is a responsibility which has been put into my hands. Do you know what my reward is? It is this: in my preaching, to be able to offer the Good News free, and not insist on the rights which the gospel gives me.

So, though I am not a slave of any man I have made myself the slave of everyone so as to win as many as I could. For the weak I made myself weak: I made myself all things to all men in order to save some at any cost; and I still do this, for the sake of the gospel, to have a share in its blessings.

GOSPEL ACCLAMATION

Mt 8:17

Alleluia, alleluia!

He took our sicknesses away and carried our diseases for us.

Alleluia, alleluia!

GOSPEL

Mark 1:29-39

On leaving the synagogue, Jesus went with James and John straight to the house of Simon and Andrew. Now Simon's mother-in-law had gone to bed with fever, and they told him about her straightaway.

He went to her, took her by the hand and helped her up. And the fever left her, and she began to wait on them. That evening, after sunset, they brought to him all who were sick and those who were possessed by devils.

The whole town came crowding round the door, and he cured many who were suffering from diseases of one kind or another; he also cast out many devils, but he would not allow them to speak, because they knew who he was. In the morning, long before dawn, he got up and left the house, and went off to a lonely place and prayed there. Simon and his companions set out in search of him, and when they found him they said, 'Everybody is looking for you.' He answered, 'Let us go elsewhere, to the neighbouring country towns, so that I can preach there too, because that is

why I came.' And he went all through Galilee, preaching in their synagogues and casting out devils.

The Scripture readings are taken from The Jerusalem Bible © 1985 by Darton Longman and Todd Ltd. and Doubleday and Co. Ltd.

FAMILY CONNECTION

We know from last week's Gospel that Jesus gathered and prayed with the community in the synagogue.

Today we learn that Jesus also took the time to pray alone. Following the example of Jesus, we also pray together with our community, and we take the time to pray alone. **Our children observe our prayer with others.** We might want to take the opportunity to talk with them about our private prayer, however, so that through our example, they may learn to make private prayer an important part of their daily lives.

Gather as a family and talk about the ways in which your family prays together (*grace before meals, bedtime prayers*).

Invite each member of the family to talk about his or her private prayer: When do you pray? Where do you pray? How do you pray? What do you pray for?

Jesus modelled for us a life of prayer. Read together today's Gospel, Mark 1:29-39. Talk about this Gospel with your family.

Ask questions such as the following: What do you think Jesus was praying about in today's Gospel? What guidance have you received from God in prayer? Conclude by asking God to bless our times of prayer so that we can know and follow God's ways. Pray together the Lord's Prayer.

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DAILY PRAYER THIS WEEK

Every week we are trying to find intimacy with our Lord in the midst of our everyday life. We use the stories about Jesus in the readings of the week to help us. Because our days are so busy, those stories make connections among what we are experiencing, God's Word to us and the desires that are coming to the surface in us. This week we can let various parts of this week's rich scripture readings touch us, depending on what is going on in us. It all begins with our beginning the day, establishing a connection. With the briefest of rising prayers, we can talk with our Lord about what we anticipate needing that day.

One day I might know that, with what I have to face that day, I need to ask that the healing Jesus be with me. I might be able to name what needs healing. "Lord, you know the fear that is developing in me as I face this meeting today." "Lord, take this anger away from my heart." "Most loving Lord, have mercy on me and heal this pattern that plagues me and takes away my happiness, my freedom, my ability to love."

On another day, I may know that I'm right in the middle of the struggle over my disregarding what God really wants me to do, using legalistic excuses to avoid God's will. I might beg, "Lord, I've become such a hypocrite. Purify my heart so I can see as you see, judge as you judge and love as you love. Help me be truly religious, truly compassionate, truly your disciple today."

On other days, I might be in a "foreign" territory, or at least one that seems quite a distance from believing territory. I might ask, "Dear Lord, keep me safe here. Give me courage here. Help me find intimacy with you here. And let me see the faith of so many of your people here."

Some day this week, let us imagine how Jesus has pity on our hunger and feeds us. And every night this week, let's express our gratitude for receiving what we asked for in faith, from the One who is waiting to give us what we need.

(Taken from the "Weekly Guide for Daily Prayer" on the Creighton University's Online Ministries web site: <http://www.creighton.edu/CollaborativeMinistry/online.html> Used with permission.)



The people of Tigray in Ethiopia urgently need our help. Due to brutal fighting in the region, frightened families have been forced to flee their homes and millions are living in fear of starvation. The region's capital, Mekelle, is being overwhelmed by displaced and traumatised people arriving every day. Many are unaccompanied children who have lost their parents. **Mary's Meals has been working with a trusted partner in the region for many years and together we are reaching out to children and communities affected by this dire situation.** But we really need your help to continue this life-saving work. Please give if you can.

<https://www.marysmeals.org.uk/>

WORLD DAY OF THE SICK

February 11 is World Day of the Sick, an observation started by Pope John Paul II as a way for believers to offer prayers for those suffering from illnesses. The day coincides with the commemoration of Our Lady of Lourdes.

People around the world take the time to pray for the sick and for those who work very hard to alleviate the sufferings of the sick on this day. Faith organisations mark this day especially to provide the sick with medicines, food, and spiritual guidance.

Pope John Paul II initiated the day in 1992 to encourage people to pray for those who suffer from illness and for their caregivers. The Pope himself had been diagnosed with Parkinson's a year before, in 1991, and it is considered that his own illness was impetus for his designation of the day.

Pope Benedict XVI also declared his decision to resign from his post as the Pope on this day in 2013. He cited his failing health as the reason behind his decision.

Beginning with Saint Pope John Paul II, continuing with Pope Benedict and now with Pope Francis, February 11 has been a day of recognition and prayer for the sick and for the ministry of health care, both professional and familial caregivers. This year we cannot escape the ongoing effects of the worldwide coronavirus pandemic, and our prayer is offered for those most impacted by the virus.

This year's theme from the Gospel of Matthew calls us to remember, "You have, but one teacher, and you are all brothers" (Mt 23:8).

However, each of us understands God; we are created in the same light. Even as the pandemic separates us, remakes the world around us, our shared humanity continues to bind us in as one family. As the pandemic continues to surge, wane, and wear us down, we find steady support in Jesus, who both knows our illnesses and strengthens us to serve.

In choosing this theme, Pope Francis calls us to live our faith in word and deed. May our love be genuine, our service sincere and our faith in God's goodness firm.

MESSAGE OF HIS HOLINESS POPE FRANCIS FOR THE XXIX WORLD DAY OF THE SICK 2021

"You have but one teacher and you are all brothers" (Mt 23:8).

A trust-based relationship to guide care for the sick

Dear brothers and sisters,

The celebration of the XXIX World Day of the Sick on 11 February 2021, the liturgical memorial of the Blessed Virgin Mary of Lourdes, is an opportunity to devote special attention to the sick and to those who provide them with assistance and care both in healthcare institutions and within families and communities. We think in particular of those who have suffered, and continue to suffer, the effects of the worldwide coronavirus pandemic. To all, and especially to the poor and the marginalized, I express my spiritual closeness and assure them of the Church's loving concern.

1. The theme of this Day is drawn from the Gospel passage in which Jesus criticizes the hypocrisy of those who fail to practise what they preach (cf. *Mt 23:1-12*). When our faith is reduced to empty words, unconcerned with the lives and needs of others, the creed we profess proves inconsistent with the life we lead. The danger is real. That is why Jesus uses strong language about the peril of falling into self-idolatry. He tells us: "*You have but one teacher and you are all brothers*" (v. 8).

Jesus' criticism of those who "preach but do not practise" (v. 3) is helpful always and everywhere, since none of us is immune to the grave evil of hypocrisy, which prevents us from flourishing as children of the one Father, called to live universal fraternity.

Before the needs of our brothers and sisters, Jesus asks us to respond in a way completely contrary to such hypocrisy. He asks us to stop and listen, to establish a direct and personal relationship with others, to feel empathy and compassion, and to let their suffering become our own as we seek to serve them (cf. *Lk 10:30-35*).

2. The experience of sickness makes us realize our own vulnerability and our innate need of others. It makes us feel all the more clearly that we are creatures dependent on God. When we are ill, fear and even bewilderment can grip our minds and hearts; we find ourselves powerless, since our health does not depend on our abilities or life's incessant worries (cf. *Mt 6:27*).

Sickness raises the question of life's meaning, which we bring before God in faith. In seeking a new and deeper direction in our lives, we may not find an immediate answer. Nor are our relatives and friends always able to help us in this demanding quest.

The biblical figure of Job is emblematic in this regard. Job's wife and friends do not accompany him in his misfortune; instead, they blame him and only aggravate his solitude and distress. Job feels forlorn and misunderstood. Yet for all his extreme frailty, he rejects hypocrisy and chooses the path of honesty towards God and others. He cries out to God so insistently that God finally answers him and allows him to glimpse a new horizon. He confirms that Job's suffering is not a punishment or a state of separation from God, much less as sign of God's indifference. Job's heart wounded and healed, then makes this vibrant and touching confession to the Lord: "I had heard of you by word of mouth, but now my eye has seen you" (42:5).

3. Sickness always has more than one face: it has the face of all the sick, but also those who feel ignored, excluded and prey to social injustices that deny their fundamental rights (cf. *Fratelli Tutti*, 22). The current pandemic has exacerbated inequalities in our healthcare systems and exposed inefficiencies in the care of the sick. Elderly, weak, and vulnerable people are not always granted access to care, or in an equitable manner. This is the result of political decisions, resource management and greater or lesser commitment on the part of those holding positions of responsibility. Investing resources in the care and assistance of the sick is a priority linked to the fundamental principle that health is a primary common good. Yet the pandemic has also highlighted the dedication and generosity of healthcare personnel, volunteers, support staff, priests, men and women religious, all of whom have helped, treated, comforted and served so many of the sick and their families with professionalism, self-giving, responsibility and love of neighbour. A silent multitude of men and women, they chose not to look the other way but to share the suffering of patients, whom they saw as neighbours and members of our one human family.

Such closeness is a precious balm that provides support and consolation to the sick in their suffering. As Christians, we experience that closeness as a sign of the love of Jesus Christ, the *Good Samaritan*, who draws near with compassion to every man and woman wounded by sin. United to Christ by the working of the Holy Spirit, we are called to be merciful like the Father and to love in particular our frail, infirm and suffering brothers and sisters (cf. *Jn 13:34-35*). We experience this closeness not only as individuals but also as a community. Indeed, fraternal love in Christ generates a community of healing, a community that leaves no one behind, a community that is inclusive and welcoming, especially to those most in need.

Here I wish to mention the importance of fraternal solidarity, which is expressed concretely in service and can take a variety of forms, all directed at supporting our neighbours. "Serving means caring ... for the vulnerable of our families, our society, our people" (*Homily in Havana*, 20 September 2015). In this outreach, all are "called to set aside their own wishes and desires, their pursuit of power, before the concrete gaze of those who are most vulnerable... Service always looks to their faces, touches their flesh, senses their closeness and even, in some cases, 'suffers' that closeness and tries to help them. Service is never ideological, for we do not serve ideas, we serve people" (*ibid.*).

4. If a therapy is to be effective, it must have a relational aspect, for this enables a holistic approach to the patient. Emphasizing this aspect can help doctors, nurses, professionals and volunteers to feel responsible for accompanying patients on a path of healing grounded in a trusting interpersonal relationship (cf. *New Charter for Health Care Workers* [2016], 4). This creates a covenant between those in need of care and those who provide that care, a covenant based on mutual trust and respect, openness, and availability. This will help to overcome defensive attitudes, respect the dignity of the sick, safeguard the professionalism of healthcare workers and foster a good relationship with the families of patients.

Such a relationship with the sick can find an unending source of motivation and strength in the *charity of Christ*, as shown by the witness of those men and women who down the millennia have grown in holiness through service to the infirm. For the mystery of Christ's death and resurrection is the source of the love capable of giving full meaning to the experience of patients and caregivers alike. The Gospel frequently makes this clear by showing that Jesus heals not by magic but as the result of *an encounter, an interpersonal relationship*, in which God's gift finds a response in the faith of those who accept it. As Jesus often repeats: "Your faith has saved you".

5. Dear brothers and sisters, the commandment of love that Jesus left to his disciples is also kept in our relationship with the sick. A society is all the more human to the degree that it cares effectively for its most frail and suffering members, in a spirit of fraternal love. Let us strive to achieve this goal, so that no one will feel alone, excluded, or abandoned.

To Mary, Mother of Mercy and Health of the Infirm, I entrust the sick, healthcare workers and all those

who generously assist our suffering brothers and sisters. From the Grotto of Lourdes and her many other shrines throughout the world, may she sustain our faith and hope, and help us care for one another with fraternal love. To each and all, I cordially impart my blessing.

Rome, Saint John Lateran, 20 December 2020,
Fourth Sunday of Advent

Franciscus

LET US USE THE POPE'S WORDS TO REFLECT ON OUR EXPERIENCE AND LISTEN FOR GOD'S COMFORT AND CALL.

SCRIPTURE REFLECTION

"Rejoice with those who rejoice; mourn with those who mourn." *Romans 12:15*

The Holy Father says, "*Before the needs of our brothers and sisters, Jesus asks us to stop and listen, to establish a direct and personal relationship with others, to feel empathy and compassion, and to let their suffering become our own as we seek to serve them.*"

A burden shared is a burden halved. In this year, whose burdens and illnesses have you shared? What have you shared with others?

Silence

"Learn to do right; seek justice. Defend the oppressed." *Isaiah 1:17*

The Holy Father says, "*Sickness always has more than one face: it has the face of all the sick, but also those who feel ignored, excluded and prey to social injustices that deny their fundamental rights. The current pandemic has exacerbated inequalities in our healthcare systems and exposed inefficiencies in the care of the sick.*"

What injustices have broken your heart this year? What issues have you encountered in new ways? How is God calling you to be an ally for the oppressed?

Silence

"Blessed are the merciful, for they will be shown mercy." *Matthew 5:7*

The Holy Father says, "*The pandemic has also highlighted the dedication and generosity of healthcare personnel, volunteers, support staff, priests, men and women religious... A silent multitude of men and women, they chose not to look the other way but to share the suffering of patients, whom they saw as neighbors and members of our one human family.*"

What acts of love and service have moved you this year? Which of your patients, residents, coworkers, or community members has shared in the suffering of the sick?

Silence

CLOSING PRAYER

Illness lays bare our human vulnerabilities, which is the exact place God meets us. **Let us pray for God's healing presence in all the world's ailments.**

• For the sick and those impacted by coronavirus • For those bound by injustice • For our fragile environment • For our own hardheartedness • God of wholeness and hope heal your people.

Amen.