

Ardagh & Moydow Parish Newsletter

Fifth Sunday of Lent – 21st March 2021

‘We should like to see Jesus’

Those poor Greeks. Did you notice that they never actually get to meet Jesus? At the start of today’s gospel, some Greeks who are followers of Jesus come to Jerusalem. They are travellers, outsiders, and would like to meet Jesus in person. But when Philip and Andrew relay the request, Jesus begins to talk about how his ‘hour’ is coming. It is the last time we hear of the Greeks, who disappear from the story altogether.

But they are important nonetheless. Firstly, they indicate that word about Jesus is spreading. More importantly, they prompt Jesus to reveal that, when his hour comes, he will draw ‘all people’ to himself. In the space of a few short verses, we go from a brief mention of a group of foreigners seeking Jesus, to Jesus making it clear that his saving mission is for all people, of all nations, both Jews and Gentiles – including these Greeks! There is no suggestion from Jesus that some groups are ‘in’ and others ‘out’. All are included. All are invited. All are welcome.

I remember once hearing someone describe their home as a domestic church, a place of ‘indiscriminate welcome’. As we continue our journey through Lent and soon into Holy Week, we listen carefully to these words of Jesus. He came for everyone. He wishes to draw all people to himself.

Notwithstanding the current restrictions on gatherings and public worship, let us take this time to reflect on the world we would like to build when things open up again. Are we open to everyone including ‘outsiders’? Do our homes, parishes and communities radiate welcome, where all who enter experience God’s love?

‘For some, the good news is that there are insiders and outsiders and they are the insiders. For others, the good news is that there are no outsiders.’ (Rachel Held Evans)

Triona Doherty

GOSPEL REFLECTION: “Unless a wheat grain falls on the ground and dies it remains only a single grain; but if it dies, it yields a rich harvest”. What Jesus teaches us with the image of the ‘wheat grain’ is what we see lived out daily in the lives of those with loving and generous hearts who give of them unselfishly for others. There is a somewhat strange paradox or seeming contradiction right at

the heart of our lives. It is this: If I try to keep my life intact, focusing on my own needs and seeking to fulfil my own desires, that's the seed that does not fall to the earth and die. But if I put the interests of others before my own and give generously of myself, then I preserve the life I have and it blossoms and expands in delightful ways. Like 'grains of wheat' planted by God, we are called on to blossom wherever we are planted. It is by giving of ourselves generously that we open ourselves to receive in abundance. By learning to focus away from our own needs, we come to discover beauty and goodness in the most unlikely places. By learning to let go, we are freed within ourselves to be, what God wishes us to be, happy and at peace.

Holy Week Online Retreat from the Priory Institute.

This retreat is offered entirely online with fifteen-minute video reflections focusing on the verses of the psalm that is contained in the liturgical readings for each day of Holy Week. The first reflection will be available on Palm Sunday and all reflections will remain to watch until 11 April. There is no cost for this retreat, but you must register with your email address and have access to the internet to participate. Register now at prioryinstitute.com or telephone 00353 1 4048124.

Preparing for Marriage?

Catholic Engaged Encounter: A 'Zoom' online Marriage Preparation Course is planned for 27 – 28 March 2021. This two-day course is a positive way of preparing for Marriage where you will discover how to enrich your future relationship. For information and booking telephone 0287638512 or log on to marriageencounter.ie

Working in Partnership with St. Mary's University, Twickenham, the Derry Diocesan Catechetical Centre offers a Masters in Catholic School Leadership.

This is a post graduate degree dedicated to the professional development and spiritual formation of Catholic school leaders. It is a great opportunity for those currently in leadership roles and those who aspire to, or have an interest in, leadership roles within the Catholic School system. The next intake will be Autumn 2021. If you require any more information, please contact the Derry Diocesan Catechetical Centre on 71264087 or email: tferry@derrydiocese.org.

Aid for the Children of Yemen: Fr. Neal Carlin's new book, *'The Eagle, The Tiger and Covid'*, is now on sale at £10 and can be purchased by contacting goldenagecentre@hotmail.com. All proceeds are being sent via a direct contact to aid the Children of Yemen.

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The course is open to: Qualified primary school teachers; qualified post-primary school teachers who wish to transfer to primary school teaching. Parents, sacramental preparation teams and parish catechists who have a specific interest in the area of primary religious education may also apply. Closing date is Friday 14 May 2021. This date may be extended. For more information and application forms contact Mary Kearns, Senior Administrator, School of Education, St. Angela's College, Lough Gill, Sligo. Email: mkearns@stangelas.nuigalway.ie or visit www.stangelas.nuigalway.ie

Tarsus Scripture School will offer reflections on the readings for Holy Week and the Easter Triduum. The programme offers one webinar and one meditation. The meditation – after Easter – will be an opportunity to *'take in'* what we have celebrated over Holy Week and Easter.

TSS for Lent and Easter 2021

Easter: Weaving the Tapestry of Death and New Life

9 pre-recorded lectures; 1 webinar; 1 meditation (€30).

'Behold my servant': the Servant of the Lord in Isaiah.

'And when I am lifted up, I will draw all people to myself': Easter in John.

'Dying and raised to new life in Christ': Salvation in Romans.

For registration and further details please go to www.tarsusscriptureschool.ie.

‘Amor Laetitia Family Year’:

On the 19th March’21, the Church celebrated five years since the publication of Pope Francis’ Apostolic Exhortation Amor Laetitia (The Joy of Love) on the beauty and joy of love in the family. On that day, Pope Francis launched a year dedicated to the family which will conclude on 26th June 2022 on the occasion of the Tenth World Meeting of Families in Rome. As the Family Year has been launched on the Feast of St. Joseph, we reflect on him as a man of faith. We pray for all families in our parish: that they will be nurtured in the coming year, especially when it comes to passing on the faith from one generation to the next.

All the work of our hands is precious and to be valued. So much of the work that takes place in family life is under the radar: we think of our parents and grandparents working so hard to better the lives of their children; the work of family carers is 24/7. We pray also that families will know and come to appreciate the comfort and support their faith can give them in times of difficulty. We pray also for the many couples who have had to postpone their marriage as a result of Covid-19.

We pray especially for protection for all families from Covid-19 and that the current vaccine programme will give hope and confidence to all of us. During the pandemic, we have observed the dedication and generosity of health care professionals, and many other frontline workers as they treated, comforted and served many sick, elderly and vulnerable people in our communities. Many families have shared their appreciation for the gift of human life in all its stages and the lengths to which we go to protect and save life. As we begin the Family Year may we always be called and inspired to guard and protect all human life as sacred and sacrosanct.

We pray Pope Francis’ Prayer for the Year of St. Joseph:

Hail, Guardian of the Redeemer,
Spouse of the Blessed Virgin Mary.
To you God entrusted his only Son;
in you Mary placed her trust;
with you Christ became man.
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

More Information and Resources here...

<https://www.catholicbishops.ie/2021/03/18/resources-for-the-popes-year-of-reflection-on-the-family/>