



Sunday 24th January—Third Sunday in Ordinary Time (B)

Sunday Mass Streamed from St Mary's at 10am

Bishop Vincent Logan, Bishop Emeritus 1941-2021, Bishop of Dunkeld 1981-2012

The funeral for Bishop Vincent will take place in St Andrew's Cathedral on Tuesday 26th January. The Mass will be limited to 20. My understanding is that the Mass will not be live-streamed but recorded and available to view later that day or the following day. If this is so, I will celebrate and stream Mass at 12noon on Tuesday so that we can join in prayer as a community for the repose of the soul of Bishop Vincent. Details will be confirmed on Facebook.

Fr John Harty 1950-2021

We learned of the death this week of Fr John, former parish priest of St Leonard & St Fergus' and St Columba's. As some of you will remember, I was Fr John's assistant in the parishes for the first two and a half years of his time there. I had a great affection for him, and knew him to be a conscientious, quiet, yet insightful man and priest. He will be greatly missed by many of us. Fr John's funeral will be celebrated in St Mungo's, Alloa: Reception of Remains will be on Wednesday, 27th January at 6pm and the Funeral Mass will be celebrated on Thursday 28th January at 10am. I have been invited to be one of the concelebrants at the Funeral Mass and I will be there, representing all those from our parishes who would wish to have been there in person. There is the intention that both these liturgies will be live-steamed through the Diocesan Website.

We pray for those who have died recently: Bishop Vincent Logan, Fr John Harty, Kathleen Irvine, Glenda Moir, Victor Cavin, Margaret Hutchison and James Devine **and for those whose anniversaries occur at this time:** Kenneth Brannan, Joselito Sanluis, Mgr Christian Haag, Deacon Tom Clark, Deacon Hugh Mulholland, Rosemary Cavin, Mary Reilly Kelly, Grace Keenan, Lisa Mestiri, Rodger Flavahan and Alice Cassidy. We also remember all those mentioned in our books of remembrance. **Prayers for the sick:** Please continue to remember in your prayers the sick, especially those mentioned on our sick lists.

Congratulations: To Anne and Mike McGregor who celebrate their Golden Wedding this weekend. May the Lord continue to bless them and their family in His love.

Newsletters: Thank you to all who have been in touch having received the newsletter through the post, especially those who have passed on their email address to receive the newsletters electronically, and those who have offered to deliver newsletters in their neighbourhoods. This will help us keep in touch with a greater number of the parishioners than during the previous period of Lockdown. Please remember that we are happy to print off the newsletter here at the chapel house and get them out to people who could deliver them.

Resources during Lockdown: We have another two online moments of prayer and reflection on Facebook during the week. On Tuesday at 7pm we will continue our reflections on prayer. These talks will last for about 20-30 minutes. Thanks for the feedback after last Tuesday's reflection—it is helpful when we hear your experience, your questions, difficulties and even anxieties around the subject of prayer. The second moment of prayer will be the rosary prayed together on Thursday evening at 7pm. The rosary is recoded, but we are praying it 'live' together in our homes.

On Prayer: To accompany the talks on prayer and for those who cannot access the internet, I thought that we would share here some teaching on prayer from the Church. It should compliment what we are doing on Facebook and some of it will certainly overlap.

What is prayer?

Prayer is turning the heart toward God. When we pray, we enter into a living relationship with God. Prayer is the great gate leading into faith. Someone who prays no longer lives on their own, for themselves, and by their own strength. A person of prayer knows there is a God to whom we can talk. People who pray entrust themselves more and more to God. Even now they seek union with the one whom they will encounter one day face to face. Therefore, the effort to pray daily is part of Christian life. Of course, one cannot learn to pray in the same way one learns a technique. As strange as it sounds, prayer is a gift one obtains through prayer.

What prompts a person to pray?

We pray because God has created us for himself and we are therefore full of an infinite longing for Him: "Our hearts are restless until they rest in you" (St. Augustine). But we pray also because we need to: Mother Teresa says, "Because I cannot rely on myself, I rely on him, twenty-four hours a day." Often we forget God, run away from him and hide. Whether we avoid thinking about God or deny him, he is always there for us. He seeks us before we seek him; he yearns for us, he calls us. You speak with your conscience and suddenly notice that you are speaking with God. You feel lonely, have no one to talk with, and then sense that God is always available to talk with. You are in danger and experience that a cry for help is answered by God. Praying is as human as breathing, eating, and loving. Praying purifies. Praying makes it possible to resist temptations. Praying strengthens us in our weakness. Praying removes fear, increases energy, and gives a second wind. Praying makes one happy. (*And, as someone commented after last week's talk, the more we pray, the more we want to pray*).

How did Jesus pray?

Jesus' life was one single prayer. He always lived consciously in the presence of his Father. At decisive moments (his temptation in the desert, his selection of the apostles, his death on the Cross) his prayer was especially intense. Often he withdrew into solitude to pray, especially at night. Being one with the Father in the Holy Spirit was the guiding principle of his earthly life.

What does it mean to learn from Jesus how to pray?

Learning how to pray from Jesus means entering into his boundless trust, joining in his prayer, and being led by him, step by step, to the Father. The disciples, who lived in community with Jesus, learned to pray by listening to and imitating Jesus, whose whole life was prayer. Like him, they had to be watchful and strive for purity of heart, to give up everything for the coming of God's kingdom, to forgive their enemies, to trust boldly in God, and to love him above all things. By this example of devotion, Jesus invited his disciples to say to God Almighty, "Abba, dear Father". If we pray in the Spirit of Jesus, especially the Lord's Prayer, we walk in Jesus' shoes and can be sure that we will arrive unfailingly in the heart of the Father.

Why can we be confident that our prayer is heard by God?

Many people called on Jesus during his earthly life for healing, and their prayers were answered. Jesus, who rose from the dead, listens to our petitions and brings them to the Father. Even today we know the name of the synagogue official, Jairus, who begged Jesus for help, and his prayer was answered. His little daughter was deathly ill. No one could help her. Jesus not only healed his little girl, he raised her from the dead (Mk 5:21-43). Jesus worked a whole series of well-attested cures. He performed signs and miracles. The lame, the lepers, and the blind did not ask Jesus in vain. Our prayers too are never in vain. There are testimonies also of prayers answered by God through the intercession of the saints of the Church. Many Christians can tell stories of how they called to God and God heard their prayer. God, however, is not some kind of machine that simply produces what we ask for. We must leave it up to him how he will answer our petitions.