

Sunday 14th February 2021

Weekly Newsletter

St. Anne's Catholic Church

Lynton Avenue Weeping Cross Stafford, ST17 0EA. Telephone: 01785 661012 - Website www.st-annes-st.org.uk

St. Patrick's Catholic Church

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Parish Administrator: Father Robert Devaney - Parish Secretary: Marie Badger

Deacon: Rev. Michael Horsnall

The parishes are part of the Archdiocese of Birmingham. Registered Charity No.234216



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TIMES OF HOLY MASS AND LITURGIES THIS WEEK

SIXTH SUNDAY OF THE YEAR

Day	Date	Mass Time	Church	Liturgical Day	Mass Intention
Sat	13 th	4:00pm	St Patrick's	Vigil	People of the Parish
		6:00pm	St Anne's	Vigil	John Mahoney RIP
Sun	14 th	9:00am	St Patrick's	Fifth Sunday of the Year	Thomas Flood RIP
		10:00am	St Anne's		John & Joseph Ard RIP
Mon	15 th	9:30am	St Anne's	Feria	John Meehan RIP
Tue	16 th	9:30am	St Patrick's	Shrove Tuesday	No congregation Feria Celebrant's Intention
Wed	17 th	9:30am	St Patrick's	ASH WEDNESDAY	Private Intention
		9:30am	St Anne's		In Thanksgiving
		7:00pm	St Patrick's		Private Intention
		7:00pm	St Anne's		The Two Parish Schools
Thu	18 th	6:30pm	St Patrick's	Thursday After Ash Wednesday	Private Intention
Fri	19 th	6:30pm	St Anne's	Friday After Ash Wednesday	Intentions of Liz Harrison
Sat	20 th	4:00pm	St Patrick's	Vigil	Annual Mass for Parish (Johnson Assn.)
		6:00pm	St Anne's		Chris Van Swayay RIP
Sun	21 st	9:00am	St Patrick's	First Sunday of Lent	People of the Parish
		10:00am	St Anne's		Bridget & Eddie McAweaney RIP

SACRAMENT OF BAPTISM By Appointment

Prayers for the sick: **St Patrick's:** Phylis Bowers, Susan Prince, Tim Tiernan, Gregory McKinlay, Linda Reavy, Martha Porter, Cecylia Kotara **St Anne's:** Michael Glover, Patricia Walters, Thomas McCormick, Mary Terry, Bernard Lundberg, Cath Miles, Walter Rogers, Richard McMahon, Patsy Connelly Smith, Colin Wise.

Prayers for the departed loved ones whose anniversaries occur at this time: *[St. Patrick's]* Cyril Birch, Thomas Flood, Elizabeth Moore, Jack Smith, Mary Thomas, Patrick Collins, Edgar Harper, Florence Hawkins, Jan Stopka, Patricia Strong, John Tyson, Irwin Whitlock, Thomas Willett, Philip Ilsley, Nina Jackson, William Lake, Philip Porter, Mary Managhan, Zofia Myskowski, Mary Rattigan, Jean Shearer and Dorothy Gittins. *[St Anne's]* Lena Wjitaker, Alice Burns, John Meehan, Mary Cheetham, Cyril Moore, Albert Blissett, Mary Blissett, Robert Hankinson, Philip Ilsley, Baby Brandon Harland, James Heneghan, Sheila Bartle, Robert Atkinson and Mary Rhodes.

Income 7/2/21	Source	Gift Aid	Non-Gift Aid	Standing Order	Total	Attendance
St Anne's	Offertory	£59.50	£73.00	£283.84	£416.34	Sat 27
						Sun 28
St. Patrick's	Offertory	£39.00	£29.13	£146.23	£214.36	Sat 18
						Sun 25

On the Archdiocese website there is a standing order and Gift Aid form for parishioners so they can continue to give at this time. Please direct any such enquiries to:

<https://www.birminghamdiocese.org.uk/pages/FAQS/category/finance-resources>

***This email is from the archdiocese:** Just to let you know, there is a donate **BUTTON (TOP RIGHT)** on the home page of the diocesan website – www.birminghamdiocese.org.uk

Parish Tote 150 Club

January 2021 Winners. £100 F Russell – 156, £50 A Heath – 138, £20 M Picking -105, £10 M Walker – 33, £10 G Thickett – 149, £10 C McHugh – 28.

Thank you for your support, numbers are available at £4 per month.

Thank you for your support during 2020. Hopefully we can count on your support again in 2021. Those who pay yearly please can you put your monies in a sealed envelope with your name on the outside marked for 150 Club and put into the collection bins. Cheques should be made payable to St Patrick's. Further details from Marie on 01785 661012.

Gift Aid

*At this critical time, if anyone wishes to make a commitment; whether weekly, fortnightly, monthly or annually, it would make such a difference. You remain in control for as long as you want. Those who use gift aid envelopes will find new ones for this financial year, labelled and numbered at the back of each church. Some parishioners might like to know that the parish office (St Anne's) can always be used as a 'drop-off' for envelopes. There are large collection bins placed on entry and exit**

Without such donations, our ability to meet the ever mounting expenses (of maintenance, consumables, utilities and fabric upkeep, not to mention health and safety) will diminish. Also, for St Anne's, the regular income from Hall Hire has understandably been reduced. A significant amount of unavoidable work is also planned shortly for both parishes, so the outgoings remain significant. We continue to pay Council Tax; Water; Electricity; Gas. We are all in uncharted territory, an uncertain future, but if you are able please help in any way. Very many thanks

St Anne's Roof Appeal Update

The remedial work to the lower roof has now been completed. My thanks and appreciation to those who have already given so generously; we are gradually on our way - looking at a sum approaching £10,000. (We are nearly half of the way there). This year we hope to remedy any ongoing problems to the upper roof. Please accept my sincere and grateful thanks for any donations that you may be able to make. F.Bob

** St Anne's parish is live-streaming Masses, so please go to the front web page and click on Mass Live at the top and you should be able to follow the Mass.

St Patricks: [Lent] In discussion with our team of stewards and helpers, it has been decided to return to the two public weekday Masses in St Patrick's (from Ash Wednesday) for this period of Lent. Please refer to the first newsletter page.

St Anne's: At present all Masses celebrated at St Anne's are web streamed. (Our grateful thanks to Peter) Fr. Bob

ASH Wednesday: This day is the start of the period of Lent this year and is a day of **Fasting and Abstinence**. May we all enjoy a Blessed period of spiritual enlightenment, deeper self-knowledge and the beautiful reality of salvation filled hope. Light through our darkness heralds the coming of Spring.

Places of Worship are still able to remain open, but we were reminded of the need and importance for us all to be extra careful and diligent with social distancing and hygiene. All our parishes have been grateful for the help and dedication of our stewards/ cleaners. They have ensured, and continue to ensure, that all guidelines are followed and that the church is thoroughly cleaned after each service.

Please remember that the obligation to attend Holy Mass is still suspended. All our Masses from St Anne's will continue to be live streamed through YouTube, details of which can be found on our website.

Our Deceased: Please remember in your prayers **Anne Wilks**, mother of Tony Whitehall, who died last Monday. We pray for Tony and Clare and their family at this time. Anne's Requiem will be held at St Anne's at 3:15pm on Monday 22nd February. May she rest in peace and rise in glory.



Back in October 2020 we introduced a new schedule of Mass times with the understanding that these would be reviewed at the end of that year. In the meantime, Stafford was placed into Tier 4 and Public Worship was once again suspended at the end of October. In early December we were able to reopen, but numbers attending Mass have been considerably lower than before. This is understandable owing to the uncertain times in which we are living and the need for people to continue isolating for various personal and medical reasons.

The new and current schedule of Masses was met with both positive and negative feedback, all of which has been taken into consideration. Owing to the ongoing implications of the pandemic and the uncertainty of these current times, it has been difficult to make a realistic assessment.

Recently all parishes of the Archdiocese were encouraged to consider, and if needs be to review their Mass time provision and seating capacity in all churches. It is certainly a time of change and challenge for us all. Pope Francis in his book *'Let us dream'* says 'to come out of this crisis better, we have to see clearly, choose well and act right.' Some parishes have decided to postpone their Sunday Masses and even weekday Masses, due to numbers attending being so low.

Taking into consideration the feedback given, the suggestion from the Diocese and having spoken to our stewards and cleaners, we now offer the following schedule of Masses. On Saturday's there will be 4.00pm at St Patrick's; 5.00pm at St Austin's and 6.00pm at St Anne's, then on Sunday's there will be 9.00am at St Patrick's; 10.00am at St Anne's and 11.00am at St Austin's. As things evolve and circumstances change, we will review the Mass times again, as and when is necessary.

In his book, *'Let us dream'* Pope Francis says that, 'our greatest power is not in the respect that others have for us, but the service we can offer others.' This revised schedule of Masses still enables Canon Michael, Fr Bob and Fr Simon to work together, and if and when the time arises, to be available to help further afield in the Deanery. More importantly perhaps, it continues to allow us to seek the opportunities for us all to work together within in three parishes of St Anne, St Austin and St Patrick, drawing on and pulling together the various skills, resources and talents which are available to us.

One thing which has been clear during this time is people's desire to come together as a community and the comfort the receiving of the Eucharist brings in challenging times. St John Henry Newman once wrote, 'to live is to change, and to be perfect is to have changed often.' We are all certainly living in unique times and are all finding that our lives are changing and having to adjust in so many ways. We thank you for all your understanding, co-operation and support at this time, and encourage you all to seek the intercession of our parish patrons as we look forward in hope. To strengthen that sense of hope, let us consider some final words of Pope Francis. When asked 'what is the greatest fruit of a personal crisis', he replied: 'I'd say patience, sprinkled with a healthy sense of humour, which allows us to endure and make space for change to happen.'

HOMILY FOR THE SIXTH SUNDAY OF THE YEAR

Life's full of contrasts, as they say, and we seem to find our fair share in the Bible, don't we? Just think about the two readings we've heard just now. Leviticus has always seemed to emphasise the law and regulation filled nature of the Mosaic Law, and there can be a tendency, can't there, for us to see the whole book as alien compared to the rich message of the Gospel. We listen to what the Lord said to Moses and Aaron and we find it difficult to

believe that our brothers and sisters are to be forced to depart from our company and live in isolation. They are 'unclean' and must be declared unclean, and 'live outside the camp'. What a way to treat other human beings! Back in December 2019 we would have found this emotionally and societally unacceptable. Now, roll on to 2021 and see where we stand. Back in 2019 we were all willing to be herded onto buses, planes or crowded theatres or restaurants together, sharing, sitting and speaking up close and personal. And today? Well, other people have become a dangerous enemy, potential disease carriers and silent killers. And we could create a vocabulary of new terms like social distancing, lockdowns, self-isolation and Covid-secure; to name just a few. All this in the space of a few months. And we live in a highly medicalised and clinical age, don't we? No such luxuries in Moses' day – It was a time when people had no defence against virulent diseases, so there were rules laid down which excluded anyone with a skin disease from the rest of society – obviously for the protection of the people.

And when we come to the time of Jesus, the same culture prevailed so that contact with a person who had a skin disease meant you were contaminated – either physically or ritually. We know that in an era with few reliable medical cures you either stayed clean or you died. So, for all those witnessing Jesus' action in Mark's Gospel His action must have seemed incredible wouldn't it? Jesus Himself was appearing to risk His own isolation from society by approaching the man to touch him. As so often in the Gospels, Jesus does completely the opposite of what makes sense; in fact the opposite of our own built-in survival instinct. Once again, our priorities are turned upside down, aren't they? We couldn't possibly do what Jesus did, nor could those with Him at the time, and that's because Jesus is willing to go into the darkest and most terrifying places that we can find ourselves in. "No go" areas do not exist for Jesus, not even death itself. Our salvation depends totally, in fact, on Jesus reaching to the heart and core of where we are in our awfulness. He finds us in dark, hopeless and despairing places; the abyss of our sinfulness. In a sense it's the 'leprous' part of our nature that we have always pushed to the fringes of consciousness – excluded in the wilderness. But Jesus reaches out to touch that leprous area of our soul, to heal it and integrate it back into who we are, so that we can be made whole. This is what our gift of the sacrament of reconciliation is for. [If only we believed it and recognised it for the chance of making us clean again]

We are very aware also, aren't we, that we don't only fear physical contamination, but we fear those considered to be the 'other', don't we; whether it's in terms of culture, morality, lifestyle, or whatever. But before we start going on a 'guilt trip' about our attitudes here, we need to also be wary of what we might call 'relativism' – where anyone's morality or lifestyle or culture is as good as ours or anyone else's. They're not. The drug culture for example has no redeeming features and ultimately leads to personal and social destruction, to take one example. We are not asked by Jesus to embrace alien lifestyles, cultures or morality, but rather to ask for the grace to acknowledge those who have alien beliefs as our sisters and brothers. Not easy though is it? It's not for us to stand in ultimate judgement on one another, but to mirror the welcome of Jesus. This isn't to say "anything goes" but emphasising the fact that for us Christians we need to believe that everyone can find a home in the family of Jesus. But we are only capable of keeping the door to this family home wide open in our hearts, to make space for others to enter, if we allow Christ into our hearts first. Once He brings us back from our cold isolating wilderness into a safer place we can then be able to call others back too. Yes, life's full of contrasts, as they say, but mercy and compassion at the heart of Jesus' teaching enables us to let the contrasts meet in our redeemed lives.