

# THE PARISHES OF ST JOHN THE EVANGELIST AND ST MARY MAGDALENE

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*Pastoral Team: Alice Codling, Jennifer Morris and Chris Vinestock*

*Shared Parish House: 3 Sandford Gardens, EH15 1LP*

*Administrator: Enrico Fertini*

*(Office Hours: Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday: 10am to 3pm & Friday 11am-4pm)*

*Web address: [www.stjohnsportobello.co.uk](http://www.stjohnsportobello.co.uk)*

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*Joint e-mail for our sister parishes: [stjohnsandstmarymagdalenes@gmail.com](mailto:stjohnsandstmarymagdalenes@gmail.com)*

## *Third Sunday of the Year – Sunday 24 January 2021 Sunday of the Word of God*



*And Jesus said to them, “Follow me and I will make you into fishers of men.” And at once they left their nets and followed him (Mark, 1:16)*

This **Sunday of the Word of God** was instituted by Pope Francis in the Apostolic Letter, 'Aperuit illis' in 2019. It takes place on the 3rd Sunday in Ordinary Time: 'a Sunday given over entirely to the word of God, so as to appreciate the inexhaustible riches contained in that constant dialogue between the Lord and his people' *Misericordia et Misera*

### **A New Initiative for Lockdown - Night Prayer/Compline over Zoom**

Join us for 10 minutes at the end of the day

....at 9.15pm on Wednesday, Thursday and Friday this week for Compline, the Night Prayer of the Church.

The prayers for all seven nights are available on this link:

<http://stjohnsandstmarymagdalenes.com/news/night-prayer/>

Night Prayer is a beautiful and peaceful way to end the day. The words will be available on the screen in the Zoom call, or you can print them off from the link above. Donald Scott and Tracy Burgess will lead us. You are invited to say the prayers with us, or just experience Night Prayer without saying a word.

If you are able to join us for these ten minutes on Wednesday, Thursday and/or Friday then please follow the zoom link below or email Deacon Eddie on [ewhite@outlook.com](mailto:ewhite@outlook.com) for the link.

Compline St John's & St Mary Magdelene's

Passcode: compline

Link to Join Zoom Meeting

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/83916544352?pwd=VGIVSnZ5dDhwMG1CMU0eUJscTd1Zz09>

**Meeting ID: 839 1654 4352**

**Passcode: compline**

**A Rosary Group** 'has been meeting on Fridays at 11am since the first 'Lockdown'. Anyone can join, especially if you have Facebook Messenger, but also on WhatsApp or just on the phone. We try to accommodate everyone. Sometimes it takes time for us all to join in, but we always manage. The only week we cancelled was at Christmas, as Christmas Day was a Friday. Please join us. - message Maria Igoe on 07981333219 or [mariaigoe@yahoo.co.uk](mailto:mariaigoe@yahoo.co.uk)'

## **THIS WEEK**

**(NB It is only possible to attend Mass online)**

**Saturday 23 January** - 6.30pm – St John's – **Vigil Mass** (livestreamed)

**Sunday 24 January**

11.00am – **Mass** (livestreamed from the Prayer Room)

**Monday 25 January**

10.00am – Prayer Room – **Mass** (livestreamed)

7-8.15pm – Zoom/Google Meeting – **Gospel Sharing and Reflection – Open to All**

To join in over Zoom, go to

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/87995176582?pwd=RERmekJrM2MyS0tGUWl1a0s1L3JUUT09>

Meeting ID: 879 9517 6582      Passcode: 119023

**Tuesday 26 January** – 7.00m – Prayer Room – **Mass** (livestreamed)

**Wednesday 27 January**

9.20 – St John's – **Exposition of the Blessed Sacrament** (livestreamed)

10.00am – St John's – **Mass** (livestreamed)

9.15pm – Zoom – **Night Prayer**

**Thursday 28 January**

10.00am – St John's – **Mass** (livestreamed)

6.00pm – Zoom – **St John's Tower Fundraising Group meeting**

9.15pm – Zoom – **Night Prayer**

**Friday 22 January**

10.00am - St John's – **Mass** (livestreamed)

9.15pm – Zoom – **Night Prayer**

**And a week on Tuesday ...**

7.30pm – Zoom – **an Edinburgh Jesuit initiative** – John Bell of the Iona Community – 'Light in the darkness: exploring ways of coping with the Covid Crisis' - To join in over Zoom, go to

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/2365092814>

## **From Archbishop Leo's Weekly Ad Clerum**

**Faith in the Time of Covid** - Archbishop Cushley invites you to join a series of Sunday talks from distinguished speakers who will offer their thoughts and approach to the pandemic. Each event is free and lasts 30 mins. **Bishop Philip Egan**, 5pm, 31 Jan. Register [bit.ly/FaithCovid-Egan](https://bit.ly/FaithCovid-Egan) | **Dr Mary Rice Hasson**, 5pm, 07 Feb. Register [bit.ly/FaithCovid-Hasson](https://bit.ly/FaithCovid-Hasson) | **Professor John Haldane**, 5pm 14 Feb. Register: [bit.ly/FaithCovid-Haldane](https://bit.ly/FaithCovid-Haldane) | **Rt Hon Gordon Brown**, 5pm, 21 Feb. Register [bit.ly/FaithCovid-Brown](https://bit.ly/FaithCovid-Brown)

**Couples' Retreat** - Married and engaged couples are invited to a Valentine's retreat! It features specially prepared video reflections from Canon John Udriș, Spiritual Director at St Mary's College, Oscott

(Birmingham), to help you grow together in Faith. It takes place on Zoom and lasts 90 mins. 3:00pm, Saturday 13 February. Free event organised by the Archdiocesan Marriage Commission. Register now at [bit.ly/CouplesRetreat2021](http://bit.ly/CouplesRetreat2021)

**Stations of the Cross** - The Archdiocesan Pro-Life commission is organising an online Stations of the Cross that will take place each Monday evening throughout Lent on Zoom. Details to follow soon.

**Human Fraternity for Peace and Living Together** - The Bishops' Conference of Scotland and the Ahl Al-Bait Scotland Society host this online conference to mark the signing of the document on Human Fraternity by Pope Francis and Sheikh Al Azhar. Keynote speakers are Dr Mohammad Ali Shomali and Cardinal Michael Fitzgerald. Monday 01 February 2021, 5-7pm. To register, search 'Human Fraternity for Peace and Living Together' on Eventbrite.

Sincerely in the Lord, +Leo Cushley - Archbishop of St Andrews & Edinburgh

## NOTICEBOARD

### SHARE A PHOTOGRAPH OF SOMETHING BEAUTIFUL

For the last 9 months, Fr Jock, Deacon Eddie and Maureen Brogan have been sharing photographs of nature in and around our local areas – ever since Maureen's first photograph of the tiny freshly hatched cygnets in Figgate Park back in May 2020.

You are invited to help us expand the selection of photographs we share on Facebook, or in the newsletter. There have been some spectacular Sunrises, frost scenes, nature snaps and winter colours – and soon, hopefully, there will be some spring colour too.

The photographs we shared this year were from smartphones and cameras (about half and half) so it doesn't matter what you are using to take the photographs. Please email Deacon Eddie [ewhite@outlook.com](mailto:ewhite@outlook.com) with any photographs you are happy to share, with a little description of to what and where the photo relates.

### Mary's Meals

'At Mary's Meals we are inspired by the courageous 'yes' of Mary. Her total Trust in God in the face of numerous challenges gave the World the most precious gift of all – Jesus. Throughout this year of many challenges, we have continued to say yes, with the help of our generous supporters, to feeding children their daily meal in a place of education even when obstacles arose. Now we are delighted to share with you a new opportunity to say yes and provide hope to 43,000 children in Bong County, Liberia. **From 2nd November until 31st January 2021, any donations made to the Double the Love campaign will be matched by UK government, up to £2 million.** Each little act of love will be doubled to support families in Liberia and the hope of a better future for their children. You can get involved by setting a place at our Big Family Christmas dinner table (<https://bigfamilychristmas.marysmeals.org.uk/big-family-christmas-table>.) You can also buy our Christmas gift cards on our website. More information on how to support us can be found at [www.marysmeals.org.uk/doublethelove](http://www.marysmeals.org.uk/doublethelove). Thank you.'

### Scottish Laity Network: Lenten Journey 2021

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Whilst the attention of the world is focussed on the COVID-19 pandemic we must not lose sight of the urgency required in addressing the global Climate Emergency. Responding to both Pope Francis invites us to imagine new ways of living together on this planet, ways that are in harmony with creation and ways that address the growing division between rich and poor, nationally and internationally. To contribute to not only imagining these new ways but making them a reality Pope Francis created the COVID-19 Commission and he summed up its aim in just three words 'Prepare the Future'. This is radically different from prepare for the future, which implies our future is already set and all we can do is react to it. *Prepare the Future* focusses on our ability to become, as Paul VI invited us to be, 'artisans of our own destiny'.

To help us prepare the future we warmly invite you to join us on Lenten Journey

***Discipleship for Artisans of our own Destiny ~ Preparing the Future***

Each week we will have a presentation by one of our companions who will address a particular area within the context of Hope. We begin of Thursday 18<sup>th</sup> February with Jim Skea - Co-chair of Working Group III of the United Nations Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change – sharing his thoughts on *What is the Hope of COP 26?*

For further information please contact [slaitynetwork@gmail.com](mailto:slaitynetwork@gmail.com)

Scottish Domestic Abuse Helpline (24 hours)

☎0800 027 1234

## PARISH REGISTER

**Please pray for those who have died recently: Sr Cathy McVitie, Giulio Crolla, Peter von Schenk, Martha MckTernan, and Linda Trott**

**Please pray for those whose anniversaries occur around this time: Patsy McAnenny, Liz Saddler and Paul Bainbridge,**

**St John's Jan.23:-** Liz Saddler (2016); Irene C C Wheatley (1999); Catherine Gilroy (1997); **Jan.24:-** Mary Conner (1997); Adolf Haller (1974); Thomas & Mary Kyle; **Jan.25:-** Elizabeth Hooper (2007); Patrick Murray (2000); Margaret Kelly (1991); Winifred Roper (1985); Annie Brown (1972); Helen Dykes (1959); Teresa Gaffney; **Jan.26:-** Elizabeth Gillies (2004); Veronica Wallace (2002); Teresa Fusco (1998); James Halpenny (1982); Mollie Walsh (1979); **Jan.27:-** Alexander Notman (2018); Paul Bainbridge (2015); Andrew Gilhooly (2000); Graham Scott; **Jan.28:-** Edward Grady (2011); Catherine M Gray (2007); **Jan.29:-** Patrick J Bannon (1992); Peter Kelly (1948);

**St Mary Magdalene's Jan.27:-** William Skey (2009); **Jan.28:-** William McCartney (2004); Charlotte Foggo (2002);

**Sick Parishioners - St. John's:** Alex Telford, Molly Lugton, Mary Grady, Pauli Walker, Dolores Jones, Bill Laidlaw, Ian Thompson, Nora Bruce, Evelyn Oldershaw, Anna Butler, May Flynn, Vincent Knowles, John Cregan, young Saoirse Golden, John Whyte, Chloe Sutherland, Frances Cunningham, David Reid, Sheila Tansey, Frank Logan, Charlotte McGregor, Betty Dougal, Anne Thomson, Eileen Brown, Mike Noonan, Sarah McManus, Patricia Lawler, Mike Burns, Sr Jennifer Lindsay, Ernie Moran, Maureen Low, Pat Hunter, Alan Blyth, Mary Slight, Mary Phair, Rose Thornton, Kitty Dykes, Norman Telfer, Philip Jamieson, Alf MacNamara, Stan McKay, Maureen Lawrie, Kathie Gallagher, Erin Corbett, Roz Byers, Marie Angela Crolla and Lorraine Syme

**Sick Parishioners - St. Mary Magdalene's:** Jim Gallagher, Chris and Louise English, Jacqueline Marinello, Sheila and George Service, Ray Donnelly, Sam Burns, Clive Davis, Ella Ayers, Isobel Phillips, Denis Davidson, Margaret Duffy, Maria Scott Jnr, Louise Gorman, Ann Dockrell, John Prior, John Newell, Michael McPhillips, Bridget Malone, Charles Malcolm, Margaret Ryan, Jacqueline Hannan, Julie Keegan, Rose McKay, Laurie Wallace, Annie Watson, David O'Donnell, Andrew Banks, Jude Ferguson, and Mary & James Muir.

**Please pray for sick friends and relatives of parishioners, including:** Belinda Wingfield Digby, Peter Bickmore, Baby Baxter Sweeney. Sr May Lewis, Joan Murray Hamilton, Sr Margaret Mary, Billy McPhillips, Anthony Finnerty, Angela McGuigan, Jean Nelson, Margaret Anne Marton, Anne Harty, Betty Blyth, Lauren Fitzpatrick, Fr Christy Fox, Joe Greenan, Martin Carr, Michael Igoe, baby Josh Simpson, Katie McAnenny, Robert Shaw, baby Kinsley McMillan, baby Francesca Horwood, John Walsh, Linda McKean, Moira McConville, Kathleen Kay, Margaret and Victoria Roddam, Hazel Yeoman, John Williams, Clare Richardson, Karen MacKay, Laura Anderson, Gloria Crolla, Richard Reid, James O'Rourke, Tommy Muir, Janice Todd, Lauli Ridge, Jan Meise, Seval Kazimoglu, Anne Young, James Shepherd, Carla Zanetti, Peter Hanley, Jennifer Kay, Janie Low, Ranier Carpo, William Young, Marie Baird, Andrew Franklin, Frank Palmer, Paul Henderson, Ellen Green, Andrew Preston, Jamie Mitchell, Eunice Macdonald, Peter Bromley, Audrey Burgess, Kathleen Cawley, Margo Law, Misia Jack, Hannah Muldoon, Emma Bromet, Edward Caulfield, Mike Enfield, Sharon Anderson, Igor Rekowski, Diana Hibbert, Rokhsana Moczulstra, Joan Brooks, Mary Turnbull, Stuart Falconer, Jake Jorden and young Ray Donovan Syme

Offertory Collections	St Mary Magdalene	St John the Evangelist
17 January 2021	£25.00 Gift Aid - <b>£255.00 total</b>	Gift Aid of £430.00 and £794.00 Online Donations – <b>£1224.00 total</b>





**CONAN MURIE (2002-20)** Adapted from what Joan Daly, Head Teacher at Holy Rood HS sent out recently to staff and pupils.

‘We recently received sad news about the tragic death of former pupil, Conan Murie, who was in S6 last year. This news has left our school community shocked and deeply saddened. We remember Conan’s family and friends in our thoughts and prayers....When we return to school, there will be an opportunity for those who wish, to sign and write a message in a condolences book in the Oratory and we will ensure that we find a fitting way to remember Conan in school....I can share with you that two former pupils, Ciaran Vaughan and Jamie Burns, who also left S6 in the summer, are running a marathon together on 14 February 2021 in order to raise money to pay for a memorial bench for Conan and also to raise money for the Joshua Nolan Foundation which is a mental health awareness charity based in Edinburgh, the link is below. The boys set out to raise

£2,000 and they have now exceeded £25,000! [https://www.gofundme.com/f/remembrance-bench-mental-health-fundraiser?utm\\_source=customer&utm\\_medium=copy\\_link&utm\\_campaign=p\\_cf+share-flow-1](https://www.gofundme.com/f/remembrance-bench-mental-health-fundraiser?utm_source=customer&utm_medium=copy_link&utm_campaign=p_cf+share-flow-1)

**Conan, son of Angie and Craig Murie, brother of Carla and Eva, and grandson of Gena and Tom Gallagher, was buried on Friday in Portobello Cemetery after a Requiem Mass in St John’s. May he rest in peace.**

### **St Mary Magdalene 200 Club Draw – Six Prizes to be won (2x£200, 4x£50)**



**We are proud to announce the lucky winners for the delayed 2020 draw:** Number 95, Joseph Ramage, £200.00; Number 63, Jane Marin, £200.00; Number 151, Eileen Igoe, £50.00; Number 169, Laura Tweedie, £50.00; Number 16, John Pettigrew, £50.00; Number 165, Ann Dockrell, £50.00.

Congratulations to all of them!

#### **....AND PLEASE SIGN UP FOR 2021**

Jean McNally writes: ‘As they say, “you’ve got to be in it to win it”! If you would like to continue your subscription for another year or if you would like to join for the first time, we would be very glad of your support. Every participant has a unique number allocated to them at the very reasonable cost of £1 per month (£12 for the year). This payment entitles you to be included in each draw for prize money. You can own as many numbers as you wish as long as you pay for each - this obviously raises your chance of winning as all your allocated numbers will be included for each draw.

We recognise that due to COVID restrictions, even when our church is open, not everybody is able to attend church on a Sunday and therefore may find it difficult to pay their subscription up front. We are happy to consider various options on how we collect the funds so don’t be put off from participating. Please contact Madge Moyes on 0131 657 2744 to confirm your continuation for 2021 or to become a new member and agree how payments will be made. You can still commit even if you cannot pay on the day - we trust you to get the funds to us at some point in 2021. To alleviate the pressure of time constraints in launching the 2021 Draw we propose to extend the sign-up period to late February and draw the January and February prizes both at the end of February, so nobody need miss out on being included in the January draw.’

Thanking you all for the support you have shown in the past and look forward in anticipation of your continued support for the future.’

## **MARIA IGOE – (THE SECOND FIVE OF) ‘TEN OF THE BEST’**

*During this time of ‘Lockdown’, many of us find ourselves watching more TV. Often it is not easy to find a programme we like. It made me think of the ‘gems’ I have seen on ‘You Tube’ over the last few years. So I thought I would share these treasures and hope that others will enjoy them. I have chosen ten of my favourites - videos I watch over and over because they lift my spirits. I give my second five this week after offering the first five next week. Happy viewing!*

### **(6) Sister Emmanuel Maillard - ‘I had an appointment with death at 5pm.’**

This is the Personal Testimony of Sr Emmanuel. Joyce Martin and I have enjoyed the talks she gives in her garden in Medjugorje for many years. I did not realise she had had such a crisis in her early life. It is good to hear her emotional and honest account of how she got her life back on track. There are many other talks of hers on You Tube, and she has written many books.

### **(7) David Parkes - Guest on EWTN’s ‘Journey Home’ - May 1999.**

David Parkes was a professional footballer, who played against some of the greats of his time. At the age of 28 he was diagnosed with Crohns Disease and had to give up playing football. He then, with his band, became the resident singer at the Burlington Hotel in Dublin. However, his health deteriorated, and he was near to death.....There are many episodes of ‘The Journey Home’ on You Tube. I remember how a late parishioner, Jimmy Pyper, used to say to us at Tuesday morning Mass, “I watched ‘The Journey Home’ last night and what a great story!” He loved it. At that time I did not have time to watch it, but now I see what he meant.

**(8) Jim Caviezel’s Tribute to the Virgin Mary.** Jim Caviezel played Jesus in ‘The Passion of the Christ.’ What a great testimony he gives! He tracks his way through the main films in his career and how his faith has helped him make decisions.

**(9) Fruit of Medjugorje - no 122 - Collette Willard.** This is a story of healing, but also of suffering. Collette had multiple health problems and her health deteriorated over many years. As we know it is not easy to suffer. No one likes pain. Collette found a way to join her suffering to Jesus and pray her way through it. It was not easy, but she came to terms with it. In this way she is an example to others.

**(10) Carlo Acutis - Web Missionary.** Carlo was born in Milan in 1991. He loved the Faith and was instrumental in his mother returning to Mass. He was kind and caring and prayerful. After being diagnosed with an aggressive form of leukemia, he died in 2006 at the age of 15. In 2011 a priest in Brazil asked his congregation to pray for the intercession of Carlo. A child with congenital pancreatic disease was cured. His cause for beatification was opened in Rome; in 2019 the miracle was accepted. Carlo, an only child, in hospital expressed to his mother that he would not be getting better. He told her that she would receive signs that he was in Heaven. To find out what happened watch: **‘Carlo Acutis - The Eucharist - My Highway to Heaven.’** What a way to end these treats, which I hope you have enjoyed!

# A REFLECTION ON THE READINGS FOR THE THIRD SUNDAY OF THE YEAR

1 Cor 7: 29-31

Mark 1: 14-20

Even billionaires die. This comes as no surprise to anyone – or at least shouldn't - but for those whose wealth permits untold and unimaginable freedoms, this fact is, perhaps, the most humbling. Power and wealth count for naught when God and nature calls. When God calls, who can resist the beckoning – and the reckoning? Last week, the billionaire Sir David Barclay was called. As far as I know, he was never elected to any office in public life, but his wealth and his media empire allowed him to wield unfettered power. And then God called him from this life to himself. He had no option but to go. We will never be privy to his conversation with God, and perhaps that is as well, for we will surely follow him and will want our own conversation to be an equally confidential affair. Today's Gospel, following on the theme set last weekend, continues to deal with the notion of calling. In Mark's Gospel, a large part of the action takes place in Galilee with only the latter stages taking place in Jerusalem. For those of you familiar with Northumberland its similar to the contrast between Craster and London but you will each have your own awareness of a small rural setting that is as far removed from the trappings of London as it is possible to be. In Galilee there is none of the bustle and chaos of Jerusalem, none of the power struggles, none of the political machinations.

Life is simpler in Galilee: not easier, just simpler. It's still a struggle and for Andrew, Peter, James and John, working in harmony with the sea and hauling nets on a daily basis takes its toll on their hands and bodies. Never totally dry, hands worn and callous, fingernails torn and dirty, muscles aching, the daily grind, the endless bartering for a fair price. Maybe they leapt at the opportunity of leaving their nets behind, but it was, nevertheless, a huge act of faith on their part. It was hardly a get rich scheme that was on offer – but instead a vague promise of becoming fishers of men. Their wives and family must have considered them stark raving mad. Jesus asks and invites. They respond with a generosity that ensures that we are the fruits of that response. Perhaps they were desperate for 'hope' and it was this yearning that prompted their response. We live in a world growing increasingly desperate for a similar hope. There is an emptiness and ache that emanates deep within. Only Jesus Christ can answer that yearning – Him and the many angels he sends us on a daily basis.

On Wednesday this week, I believe we witnessed one of those angels as we watched and listened to a young black girl read – or rather, live – a poem that she had composed for the inauguration of the 46<sup>th</sup> President of the United States of America. Her name was Amanda Gordon and, if you missed it, you should seek it out. Her poem ended with a memorable phrase: *For there is always light, if only we're brave enough to see it, if only we're brave enough to be it.* Events that had torn apart the United States two weeks earlier were offered an opportunity for redemption – just as Jesus in his public ministry offered redemption, healing and hope to all who would hear and listen to his Word. But first he needs those who would respond to his calling and today it is our turn. This is the calling that evoked the generous response by those early disciples and the calling that is extended to us. Mark puts a very definite set of words into the mouth of Jesus: *The time has come, and the Kingdom of God is close at hand.* There is no room for ambiguity. **The time has come...** There is purpose and destiny. Things are unfolding as His Father intended. Samuel was called last week, and he responded with complete generosity. Today we witness the calling of Andrew and Simon Peter, James and John. We witness their generosity and open-ness. If there an absence of ambiguity about the calling then equally, there is no room for vagueness in their response.

COVID-19 compels us to re-evaluate so much of our life. It makes us confront our own mortality and hand in hand with this awareness walks the measure of our response to Christ's invitation. The words of Paul in the second reading are tailor-made for us. *Brothers, our time is growing short...those who are enjoying life should live as though there was nothing to laugh about.* In fairness to ourselves, there is neither fun nor laughter about lockdown. There is little excitement to be had and we are almost embarrassed by laughter. There may be little by way of light relief but there is always hope and there is always light. So, we stand ready. We are prepared, ready for our calling, open to the invitation. Of one thing we can be absolutely certain – we **will** be called, we **will** be invited, billionaire or pauper, powerful businessman or humble janitor. It's not the quality of our garb that is important, the flashiness of our car, the number of gadgets in our possession, but it's the size of our heart and the generosity of our response that is the true measure of our worth.

# OUR NEW SERIES – FINDING YOUR HIDDEN TREASURE

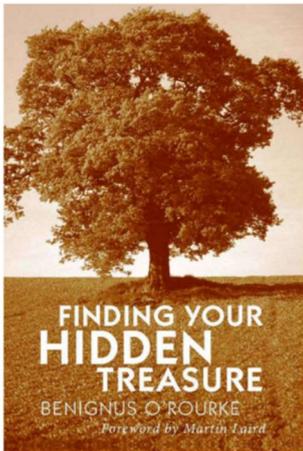
by Benignus O'Rourke

*BENIGNUS O'ROURKE (1929-2019) was an Augustinian friar and a member of the Community at Clare Priory in Suffolk, who led hundreds of men and women, people of all faiths and none, on the way of silent prayer for more than forty years.*

Augustine of Hippo - 'God speaks to us in the great silence of the heart.'

## Introduction - A Boyhood Dream

At the age of 16, I made a chance visit to a Cistercian monastery. On the way home from boarding school for the Christmas holidays my friend Joe was breaking the long train journey to visit his brother, who was then a novice at Mount Melleray Abbey in County Waterford and I decided to go with him.



The modern abbey, white stone against the brown grey Knockmealdown mountains, was startling in its new beauty. And in the 24 hours we spent there I caught a glimpse of a life of prayer, silence and stillness. White-cowled monks moving soundlessly over the shining floors, the quiet, gentle chant that seemed to reflect the holiness of God, the bells sounding in the high tower, everything enclosed in a deep stillness.

All of this cast its powerful spell on my young imagination. Looking back, now I realise that in my earlier days I had already met what I would later come to know as stillness. I had sensed it in my grandmother, Mary Roche. Her home and her life reflected a deep stillness which seemed to flow into my life. As John Banville writes: 'So much of life was stillness then, when we were young, or so it seems now; a biding stillness, a vigilance.'

A few months after my visit to Mount Melleray I asked the priest who was guiding me in discerning my vocation if the life of a contemplative would be right for me. Quietly, he dismissed my dream as fanciful. Without hesitation he said, 'You can take it from me that you have no vocation to the contemplative life.'

I took it from him and, two years later, joined the Augustinian Order for a life based on prayer and active ministry in the world. The longing for the life of Melleray faded, but never completely. That longing was to be fulfilled many years afterwards in a way I could never have predicted. I discovered the prayer of stillness and silence, and its place in Augustine's spirituality. It changed my life and my work. And it is a gift of God that links me with that boyhood dream.

For many years I have tried to share with others the gift of silence and stillness. This book is an attempt to share that gift more widely, and to thank God for it.

Martin Nolan, a fellow Augustinian who has spent about 40 years giving retreats all over the world, says that what people need most to help them on their spiritual journeys is simple. 'First, there is a great hunger for prayer everywhere, which is not being met. Second, people of all ages are asking how best to pray.'

Alan Watts, an Anglican priest who became a Buddhist, was aware of this need when he wrote in *Behold the Spirit of the 'thousands of souls, in church and out of church, who realize that what they want from religion is not a collection of doctrinal and ritual symbols, nor a series of moral precepts. They want God himself, by whatever name he may be called; they want to be filled with his creative power and life; they want some conscious experience of being at one with Reality itself.'*

There is of course no one way of praying, although many of us may have been taught only one way to pray. And there is no 'best' way to pray. Different people pray in different ways, and each of us will pray in different ways at different times.

But there are two golden rules about prayer. One is that we have to pray as we can in the way best suited to us, not in the way we think we ought. So, there is no need to change the way we pray if we are happy with it. And the other rule is: the less we pray, the harder it gets. So, my book is written for the very many people, young and old, in or out of church, who may be struggling in their own attempts to come closer to God and are finding that familiar ways of prayer are not helping, not working.