

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

35 Brighton Place, Edinburgh EH15 1LL

Bingham Avenue, Edinburgh EH15 3HY

*Parish Priest:*

*Fr. Jock Dalrymple:*

*0131 669 5447*

*Deacon:*

*Revd. Eddie White:*

*07986 015772*

*Sacrament of Reconciliation: every Saturday evening after the Vigil Mass in St John's*

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

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

*Parish Administrator: Mr Enrico Fertini*

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

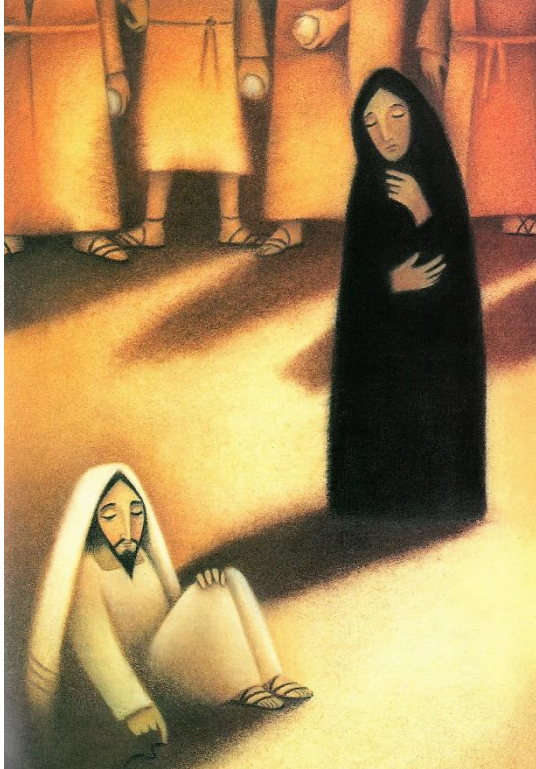
*Web address: [www.stjohnsportobello.co.uk](http://www.stjohnsportobello.co.uk)*

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

*Joint Facebook page: <http://www.facebook.com/StJohnsandStMaryMagdalenes>*

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

## *Fifth Sunday of Lent - 3 April 2022*



*The scribes and Pharisees said to Jesus, "Master, this woman was caught in the very act of committing adultery, and Moses has ordered us in the Law to condemn women like this to death by stoning. What have you to say?" They asked him this as a test, looking for something to use against him. But Jesus bent down and started writing on the ground with his finger. As they persisted with their question, he looked up and said, "If there is one of you who has not sinned, let him be the first to throw a stone at her."*

*(John 8:3-8)*

*(Illustration by Giuliano Ferri - 'IL PECCATO' (The Sin)  
from La Nuova Bibbia Illustrata, 1996)*

**We Continue to pray for Peace** – ‘Dear Lord, please grant the people of Ukraine, Russia and Belarus, Your Peace, Your Justice, Your Reconciliation, Your Forgiveness, Your Love. Amen.

**The 11.15am Mass this Sunday at St Mary Magdalene's is a Children's Mass** with a special focus on the P4 'Do This in Memory of Me' First Communion children. In addition, we will welcome – and pray for in the first '**Scrutiny**' – the 9 RCIA catechumens and candidates - our four catechumens (whom will be baptised at the Easter Vigil), **Shannon McCaughey, Simon Brown, James Sutherland and Scott Craig**; and our four candidates, **Agnes Aitken, Jenna Ciancia, Louise Holden and Michelle Dunleavey**, and also **Ethan Scott** of St Ninian's, who will all be received into the Catholic Church, and receive the other sacraments of initiation at the same Vigil service.

At the Vigil and 9.30am Sunday Masses, **Gary Zoltie, the St John's Treasurer**, will provide a **final update on the wonderfully successful completion of the Tower Project at St John's**, and also communicate our gratitude to all who have made this possible.


The **Offertory Collection** will be reinstated at all our Masses this weekend...and from next Sunday, 10 April, **Palm Sunday, St John's Church will be open daily to 6pm** – thanks to the generosity of our volunteer 'closers' (more volunteers very welcome...)

Meanwhile, a note from the **Bishops' Conference of Scotland** on *'From Monday 4 April the legal requirement to wear face coverings in churches in Scotland will be removed There is no need to wear a face covering in church from this date (though you can continue to wear one if you wish). Please continue to respect the space of fellow parishioners and remember to sanitise your hands upon entering and leaving church.'*

The monthly **Healing Mass**, with the Sacrament of the Sick, will take place at **2.30pm on Monday at St John's**. There will be tea and home baking in the Hall after it....There will also be **Stations of the Cross** on **Wednesday** after the 10am Mass – all welcome to join in.

**Fr Jock is available for the Sacrament of Reconciliation after every Mass and any time by appointment.**

**SERVICES DURING HOLY WEEK at ST JOHN'S and ST MARY MAGDALENE'S**

<b>Sunday 10 April (Palm Sunday)</b>	Masses as normal – but preceded by a Palm Sunday procession		 <b>Holy Week &amp; Easter</b>
Monday 11 April	7.30pm St John's	Ecumenical Stations of the Cross	
Tuesday 12 April	7.00pm St Mary's Cathedral	Chrism Mass	
<b>Thursday 14 April (Maundy Thursday)</b>	7.30pm St John's	<b>Mass of the Lord's Supper and Watching in Gethsemane until 11pm</b>	
<b>Friday 15 April (Good Friday)</b>	9.30am St John's	Stations of the Cross especially for children	
	10am PJPC	Service of all the churches starting at PJPC, Abercorn Terrace, concluding with a walk to St John's	
	10.45am St John's	Short Ecumenical Service	
	3.00pm St Mary Magdalene's	<b>Solemn Liturgy of the Lord's Passion</b>	
	7.30pm St John's	Stations of the Cross	
Saturday 16 April (Holy Saturday)	10.00am St John's	Morning Prayer and Office of Readings (tbc)	
	8.30pm St John's	<b>Easter Vigil with Baptisms and Confirmations</b>	
<b>Sunday 17 April (Easter Sunday)</b>	7.00 am Beach at Joppa	Ecumenical Service	
	9.30am St John's	<b>Easter Morning Children's Mass and Baptisms</b>	
	11.15am St Mary Magdalene's	<b>Easter Morning Children's Mass</b>	

**Lateral Flow Tests:** Please, if possible, consider continuing to use them before coming to church. Covid infection remains at a very high level in Scotland. Hospital admissions for Covid are also substantial although Intensive Care occupancy is much lower than during the height of the pandemic. Sanitising hands, social distancing and wearing face masks in doors in public places are still considered wise safeguards. Carrying out a lateral flow test before coming to church and obtaining a negative result is a very good way of protecting our elderly and vulnerable co-parishioners.

## Synodal Process – Update

**One of our Synodal Co-ordinators, Donald Scott, writes:** ‘Thank you to everyone who has contributed in various ways to our synodality process so far. Between St John’s and St Mary Magdalene’s we have had 268 questionnaires completed, and over 80 people have attended the 11 synodality conversations in the Parish House. As a result, we have a rich and diverse set of insights and perspectives.

**We submitted a summary report to the diocese by the 31 March deadline.** This will be combined with the information from all the other parishes into a diocesan report to Rome. We will also be able to send our own report directly to Rome before the end of May. Those inputs will contribute to the gathering called by Pope Francis for 2023. **(As you can see from the following paragraph, we will be sharing both reports – with all the contributions to the synodality process so far - at the May 15 meeting, but if anyone is particularly eager to see the 2 page summary, please approach Enrico, our administrator, and he will email or send you a copy).**

Perhaps most importantly, we need to make sense for ourselves of what this all means for us. It was agreed recently that we should use an Open Parishes’ Meeting – joint between the two sister parishes – to share all the material that has been recorded (as well as the two reports sent to the diocese and Rome). This will give all of us as parishioners an opportunity to reflect, share and play a part in discerning what is most important for our next steps together in the faith. **The date for that Open Parishes Meeting will be the evening of Sunday 15 May.** It is an important event – do mark it in your diary!’

### WHY NOT MAKE OUR 9.15PM ON-LINE NIGHT PRAYER PART OF YOUR LENTEN JOURNEY (LINK BELOW)?

The prayer, led very gently by parishioners Donald Scott and Lesley Reid, will start at 9.15pm each evening and last for 10 minutes. For ease, the Zoom link will be the same each evening:

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/9129622900?pwd=b1F1THhtY3NVeGptOWY0VGw2K2xBQT09>

Meeting ID: 912 962 2900 Passcode: Prayer

## THIS WEEK

### Saturday 2 April

9.30am-1.30pm – St John’s Hall – **Pamoja Fashion Sale – and Exhibition of Karl Stern’s artwork.**

10am-12pm – St Mark’s Episcopal Church, 287 Portobello High St – **Coffee on A Spring Morning (Coffee, Tea, Chat, Bacon Rolls, Books, Plants, Home baking, Gifts).**

6.30pm – St John’s – **Vigil Mass** - livestreamed

9.15pm – Zoom – **Prayer at Night**

### Sunday 3 April – FIFTH SUNDAY OF LENT

9.30am – St John’s – **Mass** – livestreamed

11.15am – St Mary Magdalene’s – **Children’s Mass with P4 Do This in Memory children – and ‘Scrutiny’ of RCIA candidates and catechumens.**

9.15pm – Zoom – **Prayer at Night**

### **Monday 4 April**

2.30pm – St John's – **Healing Mass** – livestreamed

8.00-9.00pm – Zoom – **Gospel Sharing**

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/88218350301?pwd=eEk1d0NCYm42NmdLZHdiUG5JMit0dz09>

9.15pm – Zoom – **Prayer at Night**

### **Tuesday 5 April**

9.30am [NB CHANGE OF TIME] – St John's – **Mass** - livestreamed

7.45pm – St John's Hall – **RCIA Meeting**

9.15pm – Zoom – **Prayer at Night**

### **Wednesday 6 April**

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

10.30am – St John's – **Stations of the Cross**

9.15pm – Zoom – **Prayer at Night**

### **Thursday 7 April**

10.00am – St Mary Magdalene's – **Mass** – livestreamed – **with P4 from St John's.**

9.15pm – Zoom – **Prayer at Night**

### **Friday 8 April**

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

9.15pm – Zoom – **Prayer at Night**

### **Saturday 9 April**

6.30pm – St John's – **Vigil Mass** - livestreamed

9.15pm – Zoom – **Prayer at Night**

### **Sunday 10 April – PALM SUNDAY OF THE PASSION OF THE LORD**

9.30am – St John's – **Mass** – livestreamed – **with Procession from Brighton Park.**

11.15am – St Mary Magdalene's – **Mass with Procession.**

9.15pm – Zoom – **Prayer at Night**

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

**Confession** - Please take the time in Lent to go to Confession to help you prepare for Easter. The Archdiocese has put together a helpful guide about returning to confession if you haven't been for a while, which addresses common fears and misconceptions about the beautiful sacrament of penance. Watch it on YouTube: [bit.ly/archconfessionvideo](http://bit.ly/archconfessionvideo)

**Event for Married Couples** - A testimony and reflection event for married and engaged couples takes place **this Sunday 3 April** at 4pm in the Gillis Centre, 100 Strathearn Road, Edinburgh. The testimony comes from Anton and Angela Colella, a Catholic couple from Glasgow, who will discuss the spirituality of marriage and the importance of faith in family life, based on their own experience of 34 years' marriage. To register and find out more visit [bit.ly/ArchEventbrite](http://bit.ly/ArchEventbrite)

**African & Caribbean Mass** - The monthly African & Caribbean Mass takes place at 1pm in St Patrick's, Cowgate, Edinburgh **this Sunday 3 April**. It will be concelebrated by several of our African clergy and all are welcome!

**Lent with St Paul** - The Archdiocese is hosting *Lent with St Paul – a Saint's guide to making the most of Lent*. It's a 30minute talk continuing **this Monday 4 April**. Fr Andrew Garden (St David's, Dalkeith) explores insights and advice from St Paul to help us prepare for Easter. No need to register, watch live on the YouTube channel of the Archdiocese: [bit.ly/ArchYouTube](http://bit.ly/ArchYouTube)

**Lent – Stations of the Cross** - The Archdiocesan Pro-Life Stations of the Cross takes place online throughout Lent, **each Tuesday** on Zoom at 7:45pm. It continues on 5 April. Pray with clergy and parishioners for mothers,



unborn children and all pro-life intentions. Register at [bit.ly/prolifeevents](http://bit.ly/prolifeevents)

**Mass for Vocations** - Pray that more young people respond to God's call to the priesthood and religious life at the monthly Archdiocesan Mass for Vocations. It takes place this **Tuesday 5 April** at 6:30pm in SS John Cantius and Nicholas, West Main Street, Broxburn.

**SCIAF Ukraine Appeal**- **As well as your prayers, please consider supporting SCIAF's emergency appeal for Ukraine, if you are able. Donations can be made at <https://www.sciaf.org.uk/> To find out how the Catholic Church is helping those in Ukraine see <https://www.caritas.org/>**

## NOTICEBOARD

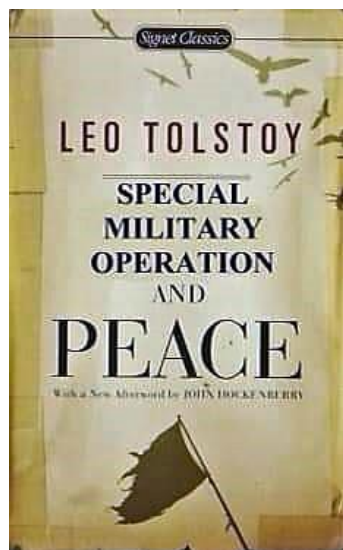
**A Message from Pamoja Fashion Team** - 'The next Pamoja Fashion sale is taking place this Saturday in St John's Church Hall from 9.30am to 1.30pm, on the same day as the Farmers' Market. We have an excellent selection of babies' and toddlers' hand knitted cardigans, jumpers and hats for sale. Please support us'.

**Jesus and the Apostles – An Art Exhibition:** In February we enjoyed an exhibition of **Karl Stern's** work around the Apostles theme. This Saturday, 2 April, together with the Pamoja Fashion Sale, Karl will be showing a different selection of his work. - created on visits to various countries such as Iceland, Canada, France and Portugal as well as work inspired locally. He will also have a wide selection of his gift cards which will sell for £2.50 each (any size) or £12 for 6 cards. Paintings and prints are variously priced **with 40% of all sales going to St John's**. Karl has shown in a variety of Scottish Galleries as well as being selected for the RSA, VAS, PAI and RGI open shows. He'll be holding an open studio in September during the Porty Artwalk. Do come and see a selection of his work.

The **April Charity Coffee Morning** will be held in St John's Parish Hall after Mass on **Monday 11 April**. All donations will be given to Aid to the Church in Need, which supports the Church in so many parts of the world where the Church is suffering. Please come along and support this.

### PREPARING FOR THE CHRISTIAN AID WALK ON SATURDAY 14 MAY

Elaine, Ella and Sheena write: 'We have started the ball rolling for the **Christian Aid Walk on Saturday 14<sup>th</sup> May**. **On Sunday 10 April at 1.30** we will go round and check the route we had last time but this time **invite potential 'route leaders'** from St. Martin's, Richmond, Bristo, Duddingston, St. John's, St Mary Magdalene's, Baptist Church, St. Mark's to come round and check the route with us. Could anyone interested in walking come along to familiarise themselves with the route. Then on the 14 May we'll hopefully have lots of walkers from the different churches with 'leaders' if required for the Christian Aid Walk.'



# A REFLECTION ON THE GOSPEL FOR THE FIFTH SUNDAY OF LENT - JOHN 8:1-11

*(The author of this reflection is a friend of Fr Jock living in Northumberland)*

This weekend's Gospel episode presents us with an air of cold calculation. We can only assume that someone had noticed that the 'unnamed woman' seemed to be regularly opening her door to a male suitor. Tongues had started to wag; some were watching her closely; someone even started keeping a diary. A definite air of calculated vindictiveness took hold until someone blurted out: *I am sure she's having an affair*. This opinion prevailed until the accepted wisdom 'assumed' that she was indeed an adulteress – nothing more. A convenient hook had been found and all manner of vindictiveness and cruelty could be attached to her character. She was now fair game. That's the thing about lynch-mobs. When the voice is sufficiently strident then the mob becomes proportionately malleable. Think for a moment of the harm that has been reeked on the (dis)-United Kingdom by the strident voices screaming; 'We're full! There are too many 'forinnners'! 'The EU is stealing our money!' When voices of division take hold, division ensues. When a woman is found guilty of adultery, then for the society of the time, only one outcome was possible. So, a plan was hatched because Moses had stipulated that evidence must be found. Spies were appointed by the local neighbourhood watch. Her home was monitored. It's interesting that no-one appears to have been watching the 'other party', the unnamed man. His role is lost forever to the mists of time, never to be called into question. No-one was interested in him; it was the woman who was in their sights. From nowhere, a whisper ran like wildfire: *He's there now. We can catch them in the act if we are quick.*

Uninvited, a crowd bursts through her front door. *Caught you!* Without ceremony, and perhaps with little attention to modesty, the unnamed woman is dragged through the streets. We can only assume that the man escapes through a back door, never to be mentioned again. Jesus had already been spotted in the Temple and John tells us the 'all the people came to him'. All that is, apart from the 'neighbourhood watch' brigade, the crowd more in love with vindictiveness than developing their understanding of God! The woman is dragged in before Jesus. They told him: she had been caught 'in the very act of committing adultery'. (Too much detail here!) What are they to do with her? Moses had taught that she should be stoned to death. They turn to Jesus, to show up his fraudulent claims, desperate to trick him – *You're the one with all the smart answers. What are we to do with her?*

In an act of delicious and calculated indifference, Jesus initially ignores them. He bends down and starts writing on the ground with his finger. Was he merely doodling, making patterns in the sand, was he writing specific words, or was he merely giving them time to reflect on their ridiculous self-righteous posturing? He looks up and they are still there. They crowd closer, their anger is growing, they want an answer – and they want it now! He can feel their breath on his face. With more than a hint of exasperation, Jesus gives his answer: *Right! This is what you do with her. If you think that Moses was giving specific direction, then I am going to give another. The one who throws the first stone must be the one among you who has never, ever sinned in any way, shape, or form.* He bends back down to carry on with his doodling in the sand. They start to drift away from the eldest to the youngest. Their blood lust will have to wait another day. He looks back up. Only the woman stands in front of him. *Where has everyone gone? I'm sure there was a crowd here. Where are they? Where are your accusers? Has no-one condemned you?* Her breathing is calmer, she is less panicky, less frightened. A moment ago, she was facing certain death, now she is in the company of this man – and he is so peaceful. He more than anyone there could have condemned her – but he chose not to. *Neither do I condemn you – go away and don't sin anymore.* She wonders if she would be able to live up to this admonition. Probably not, but her starting point is a clean slate. We can only imagine how that makes her feel. She walks back to her house – and how they all stare. She feels their eyes burning into her, but she isn't bothered. She is no longer frightened. They no longer have power over her. She has stood in front of Jesus – and he has made her so much better about herself.

Our difficulty this weekend – hand on heart, have there been occasions when we became part of the baying crowd, or have we always humbly embraced the healing and forgiving love of God. The latter is a much nicer place to be. The former not so.



*Please pray for those whose anniversaries occur around this time:*

*Vincent Wallace - Alison Stewart  
Barnie Quinn - Martin Lynch  
Br Roland Walls - Joan McLaughlin  
Adrian Aylward - Ellie Meagher -  
Pierino Crolla - Liz Davis*

**Anniversaries:**

**St John's**

**Apr.1:** Ellie Meagher (2016); Kathleen Craig (2014); Hedley Smibert (2008); Margaret Smith (2007); James McAlinden (1987); Mary Anne McWilliams (1972);

**Apr.2:** Mary Burke (1997); Mrs. Brennan (1993); James Magee (1962);

**Apr.3:** Margaret Skead (1999); James Bryce (1978);

**Apr.4:** Terence Anderson (1998); Mary Campbell (1995);

**Apr.5:** Grace Kelegher (2014); Maureen Pitter (2012); Denis Holligan (1962); Annie Bonnar; Norah Cavaye;

**Apr.6:** Betty Munro (1997); Elizabeth Rennie (1997);

**Apr.7:** Pierino Crolla (2014); Fr. Joseph Magee (1992); Patrick Taylor (1990);

**St Mary Magdalene's**

**Apr.1:** Liz Davis (2016);

**Apr.2:** Samuel Casement (2015); Hugh Boyle (1997);

**Apr.4:** Thomas Freeman (2004);

**Apr.5:** John Boyle (2001);

*Please pray for those Parishioners who are sick:*

**St. John's:** Baby Archie Williams, John Whyte, Maureen Lawrie, Maria Pacitti, Kim O'Neill, Sheila Service, Frances Connelly, Nessie Cairns, Fiona Connel, Inge Downey, John Freeman, May Thomson, Ann Dobie, Frank Logan, Sheelagh Dobson, Ernie Moran, Bob Kelly, Jean Bonar, Chloe Sutherland, Norah Bruce, Mike and Patricia Lawler, Ruth Viso, Mary Grady, Pauli Walker, Anna Butler, May Flynn, Vincent Knowles, John Cregan, young Saoirse Golden, Frances Cunningham, David Reid, Charlotte McGregor, Betty Dougal, Anne Thomson, Mike Noonan, Sarah McManus, Mike Burns, Sr Jennifer Lindsay, Maureen Low, Mary Slight, Rose Thornton, Kitty Dykes, Norman Telfer, Kathie Gallagher, Erin Corbett, Roz Byers, Marie Angela Crolla and Lorraine Syme.

**St Mary Magdalene's:**

Ray Donnelly, Alec Carruthers, Carolynne McCann, Maureen Forsyth, Tom Bauld, Sam Burns, Jacqueline Marinello, Sandra Watt, Mary Cole, Chris English, Andrew Farmer, Clive Davis, Isobel Phillips, Margaret Duffy, Maria Scott Jnr, Louise Gorman, Ann Dockrell, 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 and James Muir.

*Please pray for sick friends and relatives of our Parishioners:*

Anne Rose, Jennifer Kay, Margaret Troupe, Anne Lauder, Seval Kazimoglu, Veronica Telfer, Ann Watt (Mgr Rae's sister) Jan Meise, Margaret Thompson, Melanie Ford, Jaroslav Icina, Mary Taygarth,, young Niamh McDougall, Bridget Bonner, Roger Bromley, Bernard Traynor, Evelyn Tibbs, Helen Briton, Mary Thomson, Fr Raymond OCSO, Tony Rigg, Jozefine O'Connell, Robin Butler, Caroline Minto, Henrietta Fraser, Stuart Falconer, Nan Doig, Claire Johnston, Emma Bromet, Elizabeth, Baby Percy Keiran McShane, Colin Sandham, Lewis White, Baby Alfie McDevitt, Elizabeth and Gordon Marron, Dawn Clarke, William Kinsley, Katie McAnenny, John Kellagher, Joy Allan, Colin Raasch, Annie Ross, Christopher MacKinnon, Annabelle Cervantes, Emily Buchanan, Ann Thorp, baby Josh Simpson, Helen McCann, Dani Miniette, Peter Millar, Sr May Lewis, Joan Murray Hamilton, Sr Margaret Mary, Jean Nelson, Betty Blyth, Lauren Fitzpatrick, Michael Igoe, Robert Shaw, baby Kinsley McMillan, Margaret and Victoria Roddam, Clare Richardson, Karen MacKay, Laura Anderson, Richard Reid, James O'Rourke, Tommy Muir, James Shepherd, Peter Hanley, Andrew Franklin, Ellen Green, Jamie Mitchell, Eunice Macdonald, Peter Bromley, Edward Caulfield, Igor Rekowski, Diana Hibbert, Joan Brooks, Mary Turnbull and young Ray Donovan Syme.

**Offertory 27 March 2022**

<b>St Mary Magdalene</b>	<b>St John the Evangelist</b>
£160 total including Offertory of £105.00 and Gift Aid of 55.00	£1431.30 total including Offertory of £333.90, Gift Aid of £372.40 and online donations of £725.00
SCIAF – Ukraine: £10 SCIAF Sunday: £235.00	SCIAF – Ukraine: £185.00 SCIAF Sunday: £236.00

**New Easter cards** are now on sale at the Parish Stall in St John's. There is a limited supply of small packs, but there are large cards priced at £1 each or 3 for £2. Thank you.

**Gift Aid envelopes** for the financial year 2022-23 are ready to be collected at the back of both Churches. Please remember to collect yours.

**LIVING FAITH** – A series of reflections for each day, from April to June – available at the back of each Churches. “*This is my body, which will be given for you*” (Luke 22:19) (Free, but a donation of £1 or £2 would help us cover the costs)

# FINDING THE HIDDEN TREASURE by Benignus O'Rourke

*(The Way of Silent Prayer, Darton, Longman & Todd)*

## Chapter 62 – Standing in Solidarity



(Artist unknown)

Among the many ways our silent prayer prepares us for helping others is one which is rarely recognised: doing nothing. Doing nothing in our time with God enables us to be with others without wanting to do anything. We are content to be there with them in support. We are 'just there'.

In his **Way of the Heart**, addressed to fellow-ministers, Henri Nouwen (a Dutch Catholic priest, professor, writer and theologian) wrote that compassionate solidarity grows in solitude, in silence and stillness. Compassion is the fruit of solitude and the basis of all ministry, he writes. *'In solitude we realise that nothing human is alien to us, that the roots of all conflict, war, injustice, cruelty, hatred, jealousy, and envy are deeply anchored in our own heart.'*

*'In solitude our heart of stone can be turned into a heart of flesh, a rebellious heart into a contrite heart, and a closed heart into a heart that can open itself to all suffering people in a gesture of solidarity.'* And when we stop judging our neighbours, stop evaluating them, we become free to be compassionate.

He advises us not to underestimate how hard it is to be compassionate. *'Compassion is hard because it requires the inner disposition to go with others to the place where they are weak, vulnerable, lonely and broken. But this is not our spontaneous response to suffering. What we desire most is to do away with suffering by fleeing from it or finding a quick cure for it.'*

*'As busy, active, relevant ministers, we want to earn our bread by making a real contribution. This means first and foremost doing something to show that our presence makes a difference. And so we ignore our greatest gift which is our ability to enter into solidarity with those who suffer.'*

Henri Nouwen's message to ministers applies just as much to our own everyday lives, because it is natural for us, too, to want to feel useful, to make a difference. And in our eagerness to help we may be so taken up with our own solutions or plans that we mistake what people really need from us.

But when we truly love, we are content to stand beside others in their struggles and sorrows. When we sit with someone who is in pain or bereaved, broken or confused, without wanting or needing to do, or even say, then we are bringing God's unconditional love and compassion to others.

*(“When we honestly ask ourselves which persons in our lives mean the most to us, we often find that it is those who, instead of giving much advice, solutions, or cures, have chosen rather to share our pain and touch our wounds with a gentle and tender hand.” - Henri Nouwen)*