

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)

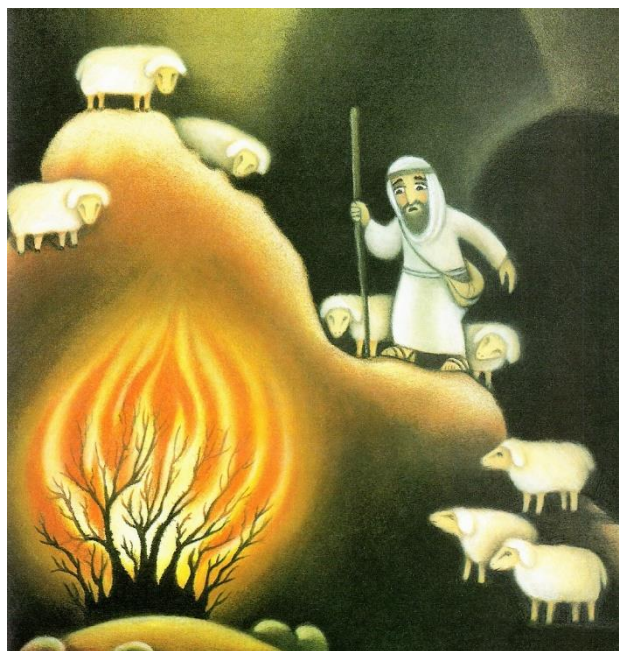
Web address: www.stjohnsportobello.co.uk

Web address: www.stmarymagdalenes.co.uk

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

Joint e-mail address for our sister parishes: stjohnsandstmarymagdalenes@gmail.com

Third Sunday of Lent - 20 March 2022



“Moses was looking after the flock of Jethro, his father-in-law, priest of Midian. He led his flock to the far side of the wilderness and came to Horeb, the mountain of God. There the angel of the Lord appeared to him in the shape of a fire, coming from the middle of the bush....”
(from Sunday's First Reading - Exodus 3:6.13-15)

Friday is the Feast of the Annunciation

...and on that day Pope Francis will consecrate Russia and Ukraine to the Immaculate Heart of Mary – following the request of Our Lady to the Children of Fatima, in Portugal. In the apparition of 13 July 1917, Our Lady had asked for the

consecration of Russia to Her Immaculate Heart, stating that, if this request were not granted, Russia would spread "its errors throughout the world, promoting wars and persecution of the Church." "The good," she added, "will be martyred; the Holy Father will have much to suffer, various nations will be destroyed." Can we join ourselves with the whole Church that evening, praying for world peace, and especially for peace in Ukraine?

There is a handout with this newsletter about our response to the war in the Ukraine – including ways in which we might support Ukrainian refugees.

The Rosary is said at Our Lady's Altar in St John's after 10.00am Mass on Fridays.

Next Sunday is the Fourth Sunday of Lent, sometimes known as SCIAF Sunday. There will be a second collection for Papal and Episcopal Charities (75% of which goes to SCIAF). It is also our **Reconciliation Sunday** – when several priests will be available at the start of each Mass to celebrate the Sacrament of Reconciliation – **with this newsletter there is an Examination of Conscience – to help in the preparation....**

The Sacrament of Reconciliation is also available every Saturday evening after the Vigil Mass – and on Saturday 19 March, the feast of St Joseph, after the 10am Mass – and at any time by appointment with Fr Jock.

JUST ONE OR TWO MORE VOLUNTEERS NEEDED TO CLOSE ST JOHN'S IN THE EVENING AND WE CAN START OPENING THE CURCH ON A DAILY BASIS AGAIN....

Many Thanks to the four parishioners who have offered their help in closing St John's at 6pm in the eveningPlease if anybody else is willing to help, please make contact with Chris Vinestock or Fr Jock (0131 6695447)

Good Friday Children's Stations of The Cross – if a child is willing to read one of the Stations, please make contact with Julie O'Hanlon (juliecprior@hotmail.com - 0787063105).

Our next Baptismal Preparation Course will be on the two Thursdays of 28 April and 5 May at 7.30pm in the Parish House – if you would like to have a child baptised, please make contact with Fr Jock.

The Candidates and Catechumens in our RCIA Group

Please continue to pray for our four catechumens (whom we hope will be baptised at the Easter Vigil), **Shannon McCaughey, Simon Brown, James Sutherland and Scott Craig**, and for our four candidates, **Agnes Aitken, Jenna Ciancia, Louise Holden and Michelle Dunleavy**, and for **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.

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

Synodal Conversations in Groups - The second stage in the Synodal Process initiated by Pope Francis

There is still a chance to participate in a group – choose from one of the three below

- *Saturday 20 March at 5pm – Meeting Room, Parish House (no steep stairs to climb!)*
- *Monday 22 March – 7pm – Prayer Room Parish House*
- *Tuesday 23 March – 10am – Prayer Room, Parish House*

Either sign the list at the back of both churches, ring Bernadette Campbell on 077916 14231, or just turn up!

Your contributions - both as a listener, and as someone with their own thoughts and feelings – are very important. The themes that emerge will contribute both to what we send to the Diocese and directly to Rome as our contribution to the worldwide synod.

How powerful these groups can be is revealed by the reflections of 3 parishioners:

‘Along with the Church throughout the world, we too have begun to take part in the synodal process. As this is “unmapped” territory for everyone, I was not sure what to expect but felt I was standing on the threshold of something important for the future. I found the meeting itself gentle, profound and prayerful – an experience of the presence of the Holy Spirit in our midst. As we listened attentively and quietly to each other, with the ear of our heart, an awareness seemed to emerge, more felt than spoken, that despite the variety of our experience we

indeed are one Body in Christ. The model for the synod in the New Testament is the visit of St Peter to the home of the Roman centurion Cornelius: while listening to each other, they discovered that despite their different cultural and religious background, they had both received the grace of the Holy Spirit. I feel the process will surely enrich the life of each community and renew the whole Church.’ (MC)

For all who are led by the spirit of God are children of God (Romans 8;14)

Reading the parish newsletter and hearing Father Jock at Vigil Mass encourage folk to come to the synodal conversations, I thought I’m not sure that is for me. However, through Sunday on my walk, I reflected a little more. My relationship with the church has not been a straight or smooth path. I have often felt frustrated, hurt, and marginalised in the last forty years or so. But still I return., and in returning I reconciled that staying apart, and not having my voice heard only magnified my feelings of alienation and separateness from community and from the church. So as Sunday moved into evening and with a little trepidation and probably some judgement, , I decided to attend. What was heartening that I met a welcoming woman as I approached and knew that I had made the right decision to take part in the process. I found the space and pace created in the upper room to be companionable, gentle and open to deep listening and sharing, There was a deep connection in my small group and laughter as well, in my view, shared wisdom. I know that all the conversations will reach who I believe to be a wonderful leader in Pope Francis, and I feel blessed to have been a tiny part of the process. If you are feeling as if your voice and story will not make a difference, go along and experience the conversation and then decide.’ (DD)

I found Sunday’s synodal parish consultation meeting to be a very worthwhile experience. I wasn’t sure what to expect and was somewhat apprehensive about the invitation to share my views on the church, and if I would be able to articulate these, in a group setting. My fears were soon allayed by how the consultation was carefully, thoughtfully and gently structured and led, allowing us the opportunity to listen to others and speak for a very manageable amount of time in a smaller group. Following this, it was up to us to what we chose to briefly record from these discussions to feedback into the consultation. There turned out to be much more common ground than differences in our discussions, and it was a wonderful opportunity to make our own personal suggestions for a vision of how the church could change and develop in the future. Along with the assurance that the collated responses would be sent directly to Rome, it was also the opportunity to get to know a few of my fellow parishioner’s a little better, and overall, I felt it to be a very valuable experience.’(RD)

In addition, we hope next week to give more details of our group for 14–17-year-olds....

THIS WEEK

Saturday 19 March – FEAST OF ST JOSEPH, SPOUSE OF THE VIRGIN MARY

10.00am – St John’s – **Mass for the Feast of St Joseph** - livestreamed
5.00pm – Parish House Meeting Room – **Synodal Group (open to all)**
6.30pm – St John’s – **Vigil Mass** – livestreamed
9.15pm – Zoom – **Prayer at Night**

Sunday 20 March – THIRD SUNDAY OF LENT

9.30am – St John’s – **Mass** – livestreamed
11.15am – St Mary Magdalene’s – **Mass**
9.15pm – Zoom – **Prayer at Night**

Monday 21 March

10.00am – St John’s – **Mass** – livestreamed
11.15 – Mt Vernon Cemetery – **Burial of Nan Rostant’s ashes**
5.05pm – Zoom – **Synodal Co-ordinating Group Meeting**
7.00pm – Parish House Prayer Room – **Synodal Group (open to all)**
7.00pm – St John’s Hall – **Meeting of Cluster Parish Priests and Pastoral Council Chairs**
8.00-9.00pm – Zoom – **Gospel Sharing**
9.15pm – Zoom – **Prayer at Night**

Tuesday 22 March

10.00am – Parish House Prayer Room – **Synodal Group (open to all)**

7.00pm – Prayer Room – **Mass** - livestreamed

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

9.15pm – Zoom – **Prayer at Night**

Wednesday 23 March

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

9.15pm – Zoom – **Prayer at Night**

Thursday 24 March

10.00am – St Mary Magdalene's – **Mass** – livestreamed

4.30pm – Skype – The 90th and Final PEP (**Parish Emergency Planning Group Meeting**)

7.00pm – Parish House – **St John's Pastoral Council Meeting**

9.15pm – Zoom – **Prayer at Night**

Friday 25 March – FEAST OF THE ANNUNCIATION OF OUR LORD

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

9.15pm – Zoom – **Prayer at Night**

Saturday 26 March

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

9.15pm – Zoom – **Prayer at Night**

Sunday 27 March – FOURTH SUNDAY OF LENT (RECONCILIATION SUNDAY)

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

11.15am – St Mary Magdalene's – **Mass**

9.15pm – Zoom – **Prayer at Night**

Wednesday 23 March – 7pm – Sacred Heart, Lauriston – Holy Hour for Ukraine

Fr David Stewart SJ writes: 'We will pray for peace and for the Ukraine people with Scripture and silence. ...we'll be honoured by the presence of Fr.Vasyl, from the Ukrainian Catholic church here in the city, and perhaps some of the parishioners from there too.'

From Archbishop Leo's Weekly 'Ad Clerum'

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 22 March and will feature a reflection from **Deacon Tom McEvoy**. Pray with clergy and parishioners from across the Archdiocese for mothers, unborn children and all pro-life intentions. Register at bit.ly/prolifeevents

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 30-minute talk at **7:30pm on 21, 28 March and 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 at bit.ly/ArchYouTube

Apostleship of the Sea webinar - Catholic charity Stella Maris (Apostleship of the Sea) is hosting a webinar about modernisation in the shipping industry. Register at www.stellamaris.org.uk/modernisation to join online on **23 March at 7.30pm** to hear how shipping has changed, the impact this is having on seafarers today and the important role Stella Maris has in supporting them.

The Margaret Sinclair Story - The online Premiere of The Margaret Sinclair Story will be broadcast live on **Tuesday 29 March at 7.00pm** The Story of Venerable Margaret Sinclair, from Edinburgh, is vividly brought to life in this docu-drama. Watch live at <https://youtu.be/7LYFhRoRPz8> After the premiere, Rachel (who plays Margaret in the film) and director Stephen Callaghan will host a public Zoom chat from 8:00pm at <https://zoom.us/j/96814393754>

Event for Married Couples - A testimony and reflection event for married and engaged couples takes place on **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

NOTICEBOARD

A Message from the Bishops' Conference of Scotland

As more Covid restrictions are lifted in Scotland on 21 March, parishes are asked to continue to observe the legal requirement to wear face coverings (except where existing exemptions apply).

In addition, parishes are asked to observe the following principles:

- Please respect the space of fellow parishioners where possible
- Hands should be sanitised on entering and exiting the Church
- Continue to ensure good ventilation
- The Bishops thank all parishes, priests and volunteers for all their efforts during the past 2 years and encourage all Catholics to return with confidence to our celebration of Holy Mass and the Sacraments, the source and summit of our faith.

Frequently Asked Questions

What about cleaning? Should parishes maintain the rigorous cleaning regimes adopted during the pandemic to date? *Cleaning regimes may revert to pre-pandemic levels of cleaning.*

What about the sign of peace? ***The sign of peace may be reintroduced**, but it should be made clear that some people may not be willing to have physical contact at this time. In which case a bow would be appropriate.*

Can we use confessionals again? *This is not advised given the lack of ventilation.*

Can feet be washed during the Mass of the Lord's Supper? *Yes.*

Pilgrimage to Iona

Maria Igoe writes: 'The group of 9, who spent 4 days on Iona, had a wonderful time. The journey there in the sunshine was blessed by beautiful scenery. The accommodation in the Catholic House of Prayer was very comfortable and we were warmly welcomed by the housekeepers. The weather was windy, but we enjoyed refreshing walks, arm-in-arm to stop us blowing away. The Oratory and the Sitting Room had amazing views down to the water. We gathered for Mass every day, thanks to Fr Jim Smith, and prayed together. Our time on this small island was a blessing and we all had a great time.'

Pilgrimage to Medjugorje

Maria Igoe writes: 'There will be a group travelling to Medjugorje, Bosnia/Herzegovina, on Tuesday 3 May 2022 from Edinburgh Airport. It is possible to stay for 7, 11 or 14 nights. This little village is famous for the conversions and miracles, which have happened there since 1981. What is important is the opportunity to grow in faith and strengthen our relationship with the mother of God, who leads us to her Son.

The Pansions, in which we stay, are very comfortable and the restaurants provide delicious food and wine. The flights, accommodation and eating out are all very reasonable, much cheaper than almost anywhere else in Europe. So, this pilgrimage is affordable for everyone.

If you are interested in this trip, or know anyone who is, please contact me on 07981333219 or email mariaigoe@yahoo.co.uk'

Updates from Legion of Mary

The Acies Ceremony of Consecration to Our Lady will be held on Sunday 20th March at 3pm in St Catharine's Convent, 4 Lauriston Place. This event is for Active members, Auxiliary members and friends of the Legion of Mary. The prayers of the Legion will be said, followed by a talk from the Priest and then the consecration to Our Lady. There will be refreshments after the ceremony. Please feel very welcome to come along.

Safeguarding Induction Training Part 2 (Duration approx. 90 mins) Online

Thursday 24 March at 6pm - with Julie Brechin

To register email julie.brechin@staned.org.uk, providing details of your name, parish and role.

Saturday 26 March at 7pm with Margaret Andow

To register email margaret_andow@outlook.com, providing details of your name, parish and role.

Saturday 7 May at 10am with Scott MacKenzie

To register - email Scott.Mackenzie@staned.org.uk, providing details of your name, parish and role.

Parish Register

Please pray for those who have died recently:

Fr Christy Fox - Allan Sutherland

Please pray for those whose anniversaries occur around this time:

**Canon Donlevy – Bridie McGlinchey
Stanley Mackay – Mary Anne McGovern
Lilian Tracey – Carol Laidlaw
Tom Gray – Margaret Reid
Kelvin Herbert - Stefan Gronkowski
Bernard Vinestock**

Anniversaries:

St John's

Mar.19: Margaret Reid (2015); Bernard Vinestock (2011); Gertrude Forsyth (1986); David Philp (1984); Peter Kelly (1952);

Mar.20: Mary Kelly (2007); Sabatino Andreucci (2006); Joseph Ufnowski (2006); Daniel Ferguson (2000); Neil Reid (1992); Josephine Lawler (1966); Canon Joseph Donlevy (1924);

Mar.21: Kathleen Main (1991); Jean Ward (1986); Patrick Coll (1985); **Mar.22:** Hilary Bell (1998); Dennis Sweeney (1955); Rose Daly; **Mar.23:** Bridie McGlinchey (2021); Nigel Tosney (2014); James White (2013); Patricia Durkin (2008); Cecilia McLaughlin (2000); Thomas Thomson (1997); John Berry (1977); Helen McCann (1974); William Clarke (1964);

Mar.24: Stanley Mackay (2021); Sarah Waugh (2010); Barbara Conlon (2009); Margaret Phair (2007); Alexander Sharp (1997); Bernard Coll (1965); **Mar.25:** Margaret McCartney (2012); Frank Connelly (1992); John Allen (1964); Maurice Brosnan; Natalie Valente;

St Mary Magdalene's

Mar.23: James Owens (1968); **Mar.24:** Mary Ann McGovern (2019); **Mar.25:** Stephen Archibald (1998); James Donoghue (1983); Kathleen Edwards (1981);

Please pray for those Parishioners who are sick:

St. John's: Baby Archie Williams, John Whyte, Maria Pacitti, Kim O'Neill, Sheila Service, Frances Connelly, Nessie Cairns, Alf McNamara, 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, John Whyte, 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, Maureen Lawrie, Kathie Gallagher, Erin Corbett, Roz Byers, Marie Angela Crolla and Lorraine Syme.

St Mary Magdalene's:

Ray Donnelly, 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:

Ann Watt (Mgr Rae's sister) Jan Meise, Margaret Thompson, Michael Durkin, 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 13 March 2022

St Mary Magdalene

£244.10 total including Offertory of £174.10 and Gift Aid of 70.00

St John the Evangelist

£1200.55 total including Offertory of £273.15, Gift Aid of £202.40 and online donations of £725.00

The Tower Tombola March Draw will take place after the 9.30am Mass at St John's on Sunday. The prize will be £275.

Your **Gift Aid envelopes** for financial year 2022-23 are ready to be collected at the back of St John's church, individually wrapped in alphabetical order (only if you donate this way). Please contact Enrico, the Parish Administrator, if you are not a Gift Aider and you're willing to know more and perhaps join the scheme.

A REFLECTION ON THE GOSPEL FOR THE THIRD SUNDAY OF LENT - LUKE 13:1-9

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

I answered the door last week to John the roofer. “*Yaaareet Boernuud. Wyzit aal’ays blaawing a reet gayle up ‘ere?*”. A helpful translation might be in order. “Good morning, Bernard. How are you? Why is it always very windy up here?” He had left the calm of Hexham as it quietly dozed by the banks of the Tyne and made his way here at the behest of the landlord, to replace some broken tiles - the final legacy of Storm Arwen. He was correct in his meteorological observation – it is always windy up here. We sit at 830 feet or so – less than 200 feet below Alston, the highest market town in England. A local farmer told me that the elevation and location were always likely to favour windy conditions. It was too windy for John, and he decided against spending time up on the roof. So, back to the calm and benign safety of Hexham he rolled, his face etched with disappointment and his heart as heavy as lead (He was actually in a van, but you will allow me a bit of licence, for he definitely possesses the sort of rotund physique much given to rolling!) Last September, a particular windy spell had hammered a healthy and vigorous climbing rose bush growing against the east wall of the house, tearing it away from the wall and doing serious damage to the roots. Decision time loomed. Should I dig out everything and consign the bush to the compost heap or should I prune the bush right back and apply first aid to the roots? Doing nothing was not an option, so I opted to prune the bush right back to just a few inches and then applied some tender loving care to the root. I had some bonemeal and there is ample supply of organic waste from the farm next door. The formerly resplendent rose spent the winter looking very sorry for herself, but this week as the heat of the Spring sunshine continued to warm the soil, the bush is showing evidence of healthy growth, and her future is looking much more positive. Like Antoine de Saint Exupery’s “Little Prince” I had done what I could to protect the helpless rose. I declined to do nothing; I did all that I could for her.

It seems to me that much of my approach to gardening revolves around giving things a second chance. Pruning can always give space to a plant; space, and time to recover. In today’s Gospel we see the caretaker of a vineyard pleading with the vineyard owner on behalf of a barren fig tree. *Give me a year, let me dig round it and manure it – it may bear fruit next year. If not, then you can cut it down.* We do not know how the story ends. Were his efforts successful? Was there fruit aplenty? The point of the parable is that God will always give us chance and opportunity to turn things around – and that, perhaps, is just as well. Few of us are blemish and fault free. You may have had cause to pop into Timpson’s, to have a buckle repaired, a key cut or some first aid for a shoe. Timpson’s are always ready to employ ex-prisoners and over 10% of its staff is made up this way. The company works with the Prison Reform Trust and is always ready to give a second chance. *Give me a year, let me dig round it.....* For the management of Timpson’s doing nothing with ex-prisoners is not an option.

Prior to the telling of the parable Jesus has warned ...*unless you repent, you will all perish as they (the Galileans) did.* There is much we need to change; there is always need for repentance in our own lives, there is always need for a second chance. Doing nothing in our lives is never an option, there is always something that we can do. After all the death and destruction that is served up in our news bulletins on a daily basis, we desperately needed some good news and this week we learned of the release of Nazanin Zaghari-Ratcliffe and Anoosheh Ashoori. The former is well known to us, the latter less so. When Nazanin was first imprisoned, the Foreign Office urged Richard Ratcliffe, her husband, to keep a low profile, not to make a fuss for fear of inflaming the situation. He would have none of this. He would not do nothing – he would do something. So, there were hunger strikes, putting his own health at risk; he lobbied, he protested, he organised a support structure, gave media interviews. He was not prepared to let the politicians and authorities forget the plight of his wife. He refused to do nothing. He would do something. Likewise, doing nothing is not an option for us. There is much that needs to be done in our own lives – and that is why Lent is so important. There is pruning to be done, nutrients (prayer) to be dug into the soil. Like so many jobs in the garden we cannot afford to tarry, for before we know it, weeds will spot their opportunity. There should be urgency in our application to the task in hand. There are only four weeks of Lent left. Let’s go for another push.... Doing nothing is not an option.

NB *Benignus* at his very best this week....

FINDING THE HIDDEN TREASURE by Benignus O'Rourke

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

Chapter 60 – A Listening Heart



We may not all acquire the deep peace of Seraphim of Sarov [*a Russian Saint, see last week*]. Such deep interior peace comes from years of being immersed in inner silence. But one thing we can all offer the world is the gift that Solomon chose, a listening heart. Our prayer of silence is a prayer of listening.

But not an impatient listening. And being silent before God prepares us for being silent before others. As we grow in stillness we are able to listen endlessly. We are able to listen in a new way: *to listen without judging, to listen without offering advice, to listen in a way that*

makes others feel accepted. When we listen in this way we allow people to feel free, free especially of the tyranny of self-condemnation. Once people feel they are not being judged they begin to cease judging themselves.

Ministry today is much more about listening than about preaching. Paul Tournier (a Swiss Christian physician) describes priesthood in our time in these words: *'To listen, to understand, to love, to pray.'* This is an area of ministry in which we all can share. Listening without judgement and without giving advice makes people feel understood and believed in. And such understanding leads to loving.

Spending time listening in prayer opens the inner ear of the heart. When we listen deeply, we are able to pick up the half-uttered cries for help that reach our ears every day. Most people are too shy to ask directly for our help. Or too proud. They are unable to reveal their woundedness. They may have called out in the past and no one heard them. They may have had their appeals ignored. So, they lost faith. They carry their burdens alone. It takes a special ear to pick up the cries of such people.

On a visit to a children's ward, I said to the sister in charge, *'It must be dreadful to listen to these little tots cry and not be able to find out what is painning them.'* She replied: *'Father, we don't worry so much about the babies who are crying. We worry about the ones who have stopped crying. The ones who cried and cried, and nobody came. They are the ones we are most concerned about, the ones who have given up, but who are crying all the time inside. You can see it in their eyes.'*

All around us are people who have stopped crying and need our help. When the surface of our consciousness is calm, we can hear not only what people are saying to us, but we hear within ourselves what is troubling them deep within. Our minds need to be emptied and at ease if we want to be able to hear what people are really saying to us.

Psalm 39 reminds us: *'You do not ask for sacrifice and offerings, but an open ear. You do not ask for holocaust and victim. Instead, here am I.'* The sooner we come to our inner stillness and say, *'Here I am, Lord,'* the more people God sends us.