

THE PARISHES OF ST JOHN THE EVANGELIST AND ST MARY MAGDALENE

35 Brighton Place, Edinburgh EH15 1LL

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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

Fourth Sunday of Lent - 27 March 2022



“A man had two sons. The younger said to his father, ‘Father, let me have the share of the estate that would come to me.’ So, the father divided the property between them. A few days later, the younger son got together everything he had and left for a distant country where he squandered his money on a life of

debauchery ... So, he left the place and went back to his father ...

While he was still a long way off, his father saw him and was moved with pity. He ran to the boy, clasped him in his arms and kissed him tenderly. And they began to celebrate ...

(from The Parable of the Prodigal Son, in today's Gospel – Luke 15:1-3.11.32)



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.

This 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). With this newsletter are Pastoral Letters from **Archbishop Cushley** and **Bishop Toal**.

It is also our **Reconciliation Sunday** – when several priests will be available at the start of each Mass to celebrate the Sacrament of Reconciliation – many thanks to Fr Martin Moran, Fr Jim Smith and Fr Joel Linabag for their presence at different Masses.

With this newsletter, there are the **2021 Accounts** for both our parishes, with a commentary explaining the reason for any differences from previous years. Many thanks to our two **treasurers, Jean McNally** and **Gary Zoltie**. Both would be very willing to respond to any queries or questions.

The 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 will be submitting a summary report to the diocese next week which 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.

Perhaps most importantly, we need to make sense **for ourselves** of what this all means for us. It was agreed this week 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!’

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

JUST ONE OR TWO MORE VOLUNTEERS ARE 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)

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.

THIS WEEK

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**

Monday 28 March

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

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

9.15pm – Zoom – **Prayer at Night**

Tuesday 29 March

4pm – Zoom – **Synosd Co-ordinating Group Meeting**

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

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

9.15pm – Zoom – **Prayer at Night**

Wednesday 30 March

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

9.15pm – Zoom – **Prayer at Night**

Thursday 31 March

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

9.15pm – Zoom – **Prayer at Night**

Friday 1 April

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

11.00am – Seafeld Crematorium – **Funeral Service for Noel Whyte**

9.15pm – Zoom – **Prayer at Night**

Saturday 2 April

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 of Mass**

9.15pm – Zoom – **Prayer at Night**

From Archbishop Leo's Weekly 'Ad Clerum'

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

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

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 29 March and will feature a reflection from Fr Michael John Galbraith of St James' Parish in St Andrews. Pray with clergy and parishioners for mothers, unborn children and all pro-life intentions. Register at 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 on Tuesday 5 April at 6:30pm in SS John Cantius and Nicholas, West Main Street, Broxburn.

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, 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: bit.ly/ArchYouTube

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

Lourdes Pilgrimage - The Archdiocesan Lourdes Pilgrimage is back! Demand is expected to be high for this popular and life-enhancing trip so booking now is recommended. **It takes place from 8-15 July and will be led by Archbishop Cushley. All the details you need are at www.edinburgh-lourdes.com/lourdes22**

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/>

Catholics in health and social care - If you work in health and social care and are interested in learning about the ethical challenges, register now for Catholics in Health and Social Care. It's a Zoom event and is ideal for those who missed the same event which took place recently at the Gillis Centre in Edinburgh. It takes place 11:30am-4:45pm on Saturday 14 May. Register at <https://www.stmarys.ac.uk/events/2022/05/catholics-in-health-and-social-care>

The Margaret Sinclair Story - The online Premiere of The Margaret Sinclair Story will be broadcast live on Tuesday 29 March at 7pm The Story of Venerable Margaret Sinclair, a religious sister 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 8pm at <https://zoom.us/j/96814393754>

NOTICEBOARD

An Update from Legion of Mary - Maria Igoe writes: 'For several months now Anna-Maria from Malawi has been attending the Legion of Mary Meetings on Tuesdays at 10.30am in the Presbytery. She has been a member of the Legion in her own country for many years and was delighted to attend the meetings in St John's while visiting her daughter in Edinburgh. She has felt at home with us, as the meetings are exactly the same as in Malawi. It has been a joy for local legionaries to have her with us, as she is very enthusiastic and experienced in our apostolate. Next Tuesday will be the final meeting she can attend, as she will be travelling home soon. We will be sad to say, "Goodbye", but thank her for her friendship and prayerfulness. May God bless her and the Legion of Mary in Malawi.'

A message from Bethany Christian Trust - Jim Roarty writes: 'Can you leave a lasting legacy? Be part of a future where no one is homeless by leaving a gift in your Will. Each year over 10% of the funds that Bethany relies on comes from kind donations left by supporters in their Will. These donations are vital to our work in ending homelessness in Scotland.

Today, I'm excited to announce our new Will writing partnership with Balfour+Manson LP. Balfour+Manson are making it easier for you to leave a gift to Bethany in your Will by waiving the fee for writing and updating Wills, regardless of the amount you choose to donate.

Balfour+Manson LLP have been providing advice and support to their clients across Scotland since 1888, with offices in Edinburgh, Glasgow, and Aberdeen. We are so grateful to Balfour+Manson and hope this partnership will make it easier for you to support our work.

For more information, go to the Bethany Christian Trust website and search for the Legacy Booklet or click here - <https://www.bethanychristiantrust.com/support-work/leave-a-gift-in-your-will/>

A Message from Pamoja Fashion Team - 'The next Pamoja Fashion sale will take place next Saturday - 2 April - 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 in advancing the education of the public in the life and culture of Tanzania and to share Scottish culture with Tanzanian people by fostering good community relations at all levels of society. Please visit <https://twendepamoja.org.uk/> for more information. Thank you.'

A CREATIVE 'TAKE' ON THE PARABLE OF THE PRODIGAL SON (This Sunday's Gospel)
(taken from Henri Nouwen's *The Return of the Prodigal Son*_)

He who is born not from human stock, or human desire, or human will, but from God himself, one day took to himself everything that was under his footstool and he left with his inheritance: his title of Son and the whole ransom price. He left for a far country - where he became as human beings are and emptied himself. His own people did not accept him and his first bed was a bed of straw. Like a root in arid ground he grew up before us, he was despised, the lowest of men, before whom one covers one's face. Very soon he came to know exile, hostility, loneliness. After having given away everything in a life of bounty, his worth, his peace, his light, his truth, his life. All the treasures of knowledge and wisdom and the hidden mystery kept secret for endless ages. After having lost himself among the lost children of the house of Israel: spending his time with the sick (and not with the well-to-do) with the sinners (not with the just) to whom he promised entrance into the Kingdom of the Father. After having been treated as a glutton and a drunkard, as a friend of tax collectors and sinners, as a Samaritan, a possessed, a blasphemer. After having offered everything, even his body and blood. After having felt deeply in himself sadness, anguish and a troubled soul. After having gone to the bottom of despair, with which he voluntarily dressed himself as being abandoned by his Father. Far away from the source of living water, he cried out from the cross, "I am thirsty." He was laid to rest in the dust and shadow of death.

And there, on the third day, he rose up from the depths of Hell to where he had descended, burdened with the crimes of us all: he bore our sins, our sorrows he carried. Standing straight he cried out: "I am ascending to my Father and your Father, to my God, and your God." And he ascended to heaven. Then, in the silence, looking at the Son and all his children - since his Son had become all in all - the Father said to his servants, "Quick! Bring out the best robe and put it on him, put a ring on his finger and sandals on his feet. Let s eat and celebrate! Because my children, who were dead, have returned to life: they were lost and have been found again. My Prodigal Son has brought them all back" And they all began to have a Feast dressed in white robes washed in the blood of the Lamb.

Parish Register

Warm birthday greetings to Maureen Robertson, 80 next Tuesday, 29 April

Please pray for those who have died recently:

*Alf McNamara - Alison Stewart
Jim Carmichael - John Smith
Mervyn Shipsey - Hazel Thompson*

Please pray for those whose anniversaries occur around this time:

*Betty McEwing - Helen Budge
Celia Roberts - Gerry Higgins
Helen Hanlon - Tom Thornton
Margaret Stanton*

Anniversaries:

St John's

Mar.25: Margaret McCartney (2012); Frank Connelly (1992); John Allen (1964); Maurice Brosnan; Natalie Valente;
Mar.26: Mary Brown Fusco (2005); Angelo Young (1995);
Mar.27: Eileen McCann (2017); James Lacey Jun. (1991); Alice Baron (1970); Dorothy K Lynch (1964); Sarah Ferrier;
Mar.28: Helen Hanlon (2019); Bridie Hughes (1994); Charles Marrins; Edward Baxter (Killed in action) (1943);
Mar.29: Constance Miller (2013); Robert Duffy (2011); Charles Herriott (1998); John Ogilvie;
Mar.30: Tom Thornton (2017); John Harkin (2003); Giuseppina Nicora (1947); Jean Joyce;
Mar.31: Elizabeth Kelly (2008); Peter Sheridan (2003); Anthony John (2002); Margaret Thackery (2002); Agnes Clyne (1956); Alison Stewart (1994);

St Mary Magdalene's

Mar.25: Stephen Archibald (1998); James Donoghue (1983); Kathleen Edwards (1981);
Mar.26: Elizabeth McEwing (2019); Helen Budge (2002);
Mar.28: Irene Valentine (2013);
Mar.30: Christina Renton (1980);

Please pray for those Parishioners who are sick:

St. John's: Alison Stuart, Baby Archie Williams, John Whyte, 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, 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:

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 20 March 2022

<p><i>St Mary Magdalene</i></p> <p>£268.30 total including Offertory of £118.30 and Gift Aid of 150</p> <p>SCIAF – Ukraine Appeal: further £121.00</p>	<p><i>St John the Evangelist</i></p> <p>£1090 total including Offertory of £172.60, Gift Aid of £192.40 and online donations of £725.00</p> <p>SCIAF – Ukraine Appeal: further £512.50</p>
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The Tower Tombola March Draw took place last Sunday. Pat Dishon won the monthly prize of £275. Congratulations!

The **March Charity Coffee Morning** raised £300 for the work of SCIAF in Ukraine. Thank you to all who came along and donated so generously

Your **St Mary Magdalene's Gift Aid envelopes** for financial year 2022-23 are ready to be collected in the porch after the next Sunday Masses. New applications very welcome, thank you.

A REFLECTION ON THE PARABLE OF THE PRODIGAL SON

This Sunday's Gospel – Luke 15: 1-3, 11-32

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

President Zelensky of Ukraine lives in hope. Against insurmountable odds he clings on to that hope. He never tires of appealing to world leaders; he is no stranger to ZOOM conferencing as we have seen. He never gives up hope – even as the women and children of the county he represents are slaughtered. He hopes and he keeps on hoping – for what else can he do? His dogged dedication and commitment to Ukraine inspires many. Stubbornness is one of those double-edged personality traits: We can use the word almost as an insult – “Oh! That man is so-oo stubborn. He would make a saint swear”. At other times it can become a mark of respect. “You have to admire his stubbornness – there’s no way he was going to be beaten or give in.” President Zelensky does indeed appear to possess a streak of stubbornness – but above all, he has hope.

In last weekend's Gospel we met the gardener of a vineyard with a sickly-looking fig tree. The owner wanted to cut the tree down, bemoaning the space it was occupying. *Give me time*, the gardener pleaded. *Let me dig round it and manure it. Give it one more chance.* The gardener wasn't prepared to give up just yet; he wasn't going to be beaten. I like to think that the following year, the tree did produce figs in abundance, but we were never told. How many evenings in that intervening year did the gardener look upon that tree, willing it back to fruition, stubbornly refusing to give up hope?

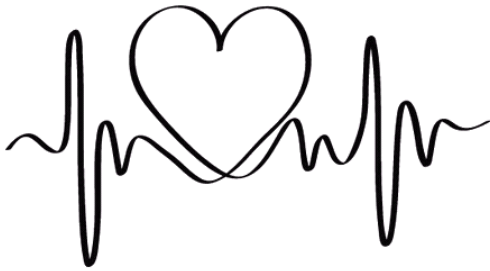
This week we encounter again the Parable of the Prodigal Son – sometimes referred to as the Parable of the Unforgiving Son. Like a multi-faceted diamond, there are many aspects to the parable. The one son requested his share of the inheritance that would eventually come his way, and went off to explore the world; the other son dutifully stayed at home, loyal to his father and with, perhaps, *a holier than thou* attitude never far from the surface. We witness the first shoots of family strife. It's not the two sons that I want to focus on today – rather the father. When I transport myself back to their grand house and estate (it must, presumably, have been somewhat grand to be able to release inheritance shares, feasts of fatted calf and the like!), I can almost hear Eamonn Holmes attempting to seduce the father into equity release so that he can re-open the bank of 'Mam and Dad' (Am I the only one who finds that advert cringingly annoying?) Ignoring Eamonn Holmes completely, I turn my attention back to the father. He is sat on the veranda, gently going to and fro in his rocking chair. The evening sun is fading and there is more than a hint of chill in the air. He scans the horizon every night looking for the tell-tale cloud of dust in the distance, that might accompany the approach of someone coming toward the house. The stay-at-home son is observing the vigil from a side window. Over the years his frustration had been growing. His father was slowing up and he could do less and less these days. This meant that more and more responsibility came his way; more and more of the day-to-day running of the household fell to him. The more his thoughts dwell on his brother – out there somewhere, drinking wine, dancing, and cavorting with women, the more his resentments grow. In reality, his brother was eating with pigs - but quick to judge, the stay-at-home brother became more and more irritated by the constant and, in his mind pointless watch undertaken by his father. *What are you wasting your time out here for? He's long gone! This is pointless. Come inside where its warm. You'll catch a chill sat out here.* But still the father stubbornly waits, and still he hopes. He never stops hoping, he never leaves his post, he will not abandon his vigil. Always hoping. Where there is life, there is hope.

There are two lessons for us. The first: God will never give up on us, no matter how often or how far we stray. Most of us are on the straight and narrow, as they say. There have been times when we were tempted to take a cul-de-sac to the left, an attractive looking village to the right. By and large, though, we have set a steady course. There are some aspects of my own life that I deeply regret and am ashamed of. Today's parable always brings me, and always has brought me, great hope. The second aspect of today's lesson is equally relevant. We must display the same levels of forgiveness in our dealings with others, the same willingness to recognise when someone is turning over a new leaf, starting a fresh chapter. This involves never writing off someone else; we must always believe that return is possible, and the only obstacle preventing that return is a hard, unwelcoming and unforgiving heart. We cannot hope for a lenient magistrate if we pursue our pound of flesh from those in debt to us!

FINDING THE HIDDEN TREASURE by Benignus O'Rourke

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

Chapter 61 – Our Love-filled Journey



One of the fruits of silence is that it breaks down the barriers that isolate us within ourselves and isolate us from others. Almost imperceptibly, we find that we are open to other people and to the world around us in a way we have never expected. It is as if our becoming aware of our union with God makes us aware of our union with all created things.

In **The Inner Eye of Love**, William Johnson (a Jesuit priest from Northern Ireland) describes ours as a love-filled journey that makes us one with ourselves, one with the human race and one with God. *'This healing of our fragmentedness begins with the call of love at the core of my being, at the centre of my soul. Profound changes take place,'* he adds. *'I may seem like a different person to myself and others.'*

One way we can tell that we are being transformed is if other people find us more available, more attentive. The more the barriers come down in our time of sitting still before the Lord, the more we can welcome people. Francis of Assisi says, *'It is important for us to draw aside from our busyness, if we are to meet with joy those who come to draw strength from us.'*

While we are weary and harassed, we are able to give the people we meet only a small and distracted bit of our attention. In a letter our religious superior wrote to us he said, *'When people come to us priests these days, they often find us so busy and preoccupied that they are loathe to approach us. They get the impression that we have so much on our minds, and so they don't feel able to bother us.'*

In our quiet hours with the mystery, we call God, we recover our freshness and spontaneity. We find we are able to give our whole attention to others. And we begin to know what it is to meet others with joy.

Our attention to others is not much good, of course, unless it is genuine, natural. Too often we encounter 'professional niceness' from other people who may not have the slightest interest in us. Their plastic cheerfulness is shallow and insulting.

Gospel love is the opposite. There is a world of difference between the love that Christ radiates in the Gospels and the artificial smiles and poses that come from our social training. The hours we spend in silent waiting renew us. Once we have learnt to be open and attentive in our time of stillness, once we have stopped looking at or thinking about self, then we can be open to receive others. More than that, we are able to see them without the distorting lens of our cloudy vision. As Augustine tells us, true seeing leads to loving.

To be able to be with God in silent attention until the din in our minds quietens prepares us for perhaps the greatest gift we have to offer others. We can give them the gift of interested, total, undivided attention. This is surely love at its most unselfish.

(NB Only seven more chapters – so savour Benignus while you can....)