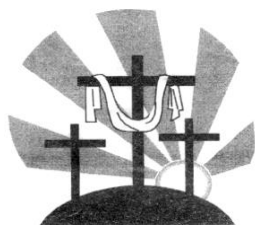


REST IN PEACE



Your prayers are requested this weekend for the souls of Sr. Francis Catherine Barrett; Aster Ernest and Carmel Kavanagh, who died this week.

And for the souls of the following whose anniversaries occur at this time: Sinéad D’Arcy Van den Akker; Baby Claire Kennedy; Niall Browne; Nora & Thomas Lacey; Fr. James Hurley; Eileen Lynch.

MAY THEIR SOULS AND THE SOULS OF ALL THE FAITHFUL DEPARTED THROUGH THE MERCY OF GOD REST IN PEACE. AMEN.

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CHURCH COLLECTIONS

The amounts collected last weekend are:

DATE	GREEN BASKET	Share
4 th April	€580	€130

The green basket is the collection for the support of the priests of the Diocese.

The white basket is the collection for Share, which meets the needs both of poorer parishes and of central agencies of the Diocese.

We thank you for your contributions to the Church collections and for your continuing support of all the collections.

TROCAIRE

We would ask you to return your Trocaire boxes as soon as possible to the Parish Office and on behalf of Trocaire, we thank you for your generous support.

WEEKLY **BULLETIN**



St. Mary’s, Star of the Sea, Sandymount

Parish Office 6683894 / 6683316 – Monday to Friday 9.30 – 12.30
Fr. John McDonagh, Tel: 6684265 – Fr. Cormac McIlraith, Tel: 6686845
www.stmarysstaroftheseasandymount.com

Sunday 11th April 2021

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Doubts, Questions and Faith

The second Sunday of Easter brings an annual reading of the encounter of the questioning apostle, Thomas, with the risen Lord. “Unless I see the holes that the nails made in his hands and can put my finger into the holes they made, and unless I can put my hand into his side, I refuse to believe,” he had told his friends who reported on their joyful meeting with the risen Lord.

Thomas in his hesitancy may be seen to speak for many who respond with multiple “ifs” and “buts” to news of Christ’s resurrection. Some respond by saying they believe only in “science.” Well and good but the uniqueness of Christ’s Resurrection as an historical event is beyond the realm of science whose subject matter is specified and focused on regular patterns in nature. “Doubt no longer, but believe,” Jesus tells Thomas.

The great philosopher and theologian of the 13th century, Thomas Aquinas, saw no need to oppose faith and reason but that they complement one another.

In modern times psychologists of faith perceive the faith of a person developing through different stages from childhood faith to mature adult faith. Interestingly, it is questions and doubts experienced at one level of faith that can be key to moving to a deeper and higher level of faith. It is really unfortunate that some people who experience doubts don’t stay with the issue and choose instead to drift away from a life of faith when those questions and doubts handled differently in encounter with the Lord would

enhance rather than diminish one's faith life. For all his questions and doubting, Thomas was present with the disciples when they gathered eight days later. There they met the risen Lord and he in turn met Thomas, precisely where he was at. It prompted his deeper faith: "My Lord, and my God."

Universal Brotherhood (the Pope's Encyclical) continued: Chapter Six

Following the chapter devoted to a new politics that truly embraces universal brotherhood, social charity and the common good, Pope Francis devotes chapter six to the place of dialogue and friendship as an essential language in the development of our world. 'Unlike disagreement and conflict, persistent and courageous dialogue does not make headlines, but quietly helps the world to live much better than we imagine'. He sees dialogue as key to a healthy culture of encounter.

However, dialogue is often confused with the feverish exchange of opinions on social networks that are in effect little more than parallel monologues. 'The media's potpourri of facts and opinions is often an obstacle to dialogue because it lets everyone cling to their own ideas, interests and choices, with the excuse that everyone else is wrong.' He alludes to the extent to which manipulation is exercised in public discourse, discrediting and insulting opponents and far removed from a respectful dialogue aimed at achieving agreement on a deeper level. The pursuit of the common good is lost sight of in such exchanges and the heroes we need are those who can break with this unhealthy mindset and instead set about respectfully seeking truthfulness, aside from personal interest.

The Pope then identifies authentic social dialogue as a building together inclusively. It involves the ability to listen respectfully to other's point of view and acknowledge it may include legitimate convictions and concerns. There must be genuine dialogue and openness to others and when it is so the whole of society benefits. Besides specialised scientific advances society also needs a greater interdisciplinary communication. Reality can be approached after all from various angles and methodologies and the objects of our study can benefit from a more comprehensive and integral knowledge of reality. He sees enormous opportunity in modern means of communication to create a sense of unity of the whole human family. It is something truly good, that can 'guide us to generous encounter with others, to honest pursuit of the whole truth, to service, to closeness to the underprivileged and promotion of the common good.'

He then asks a telling question. 'What is the basis of consensus in such dialogue?' He begins to answer it immediately by telling us what it isn't. 'The solution is not relativism. Under the guise of tolerance. Relativism ultimately leaves the interpretation of moral values to those in power, to be defined as they see fit'. When objective truth and universally valid principles are no longer upheld, the law can only be seen as arbitrary imposition or obstacles to be avoided. 'What is law', he asks, 'without the conviction, born of age-old reflection and great wisdom, that each human being is sacred and inviolable'. Here, Pope Francis is touching again on the moral failure of modern society that he saw as an obstacle to universal brotherhood in the first chapter. He speaks very strongly in his conviction. 'What is now happening and drawing us into a perverse and barren way of thinking, is the reduction of ethics and politics to physics. Good and evil no longer exist in themselves; there is only a calculus of benefits and burdens. As a result of the displacement of moral reasoning, the law is no longer seen as

reflecting a fundamental notion of justice but as mirroring notions currently in vogue'. (*The seriousness of what the Pope is saying here should not be lost on any of us.*)

In a pluralistic society, he asserts, 'dialogue is the best way to realise what ought always to be affirmed and respected, apart from any ephemeral consensus.' Constituent elements in such dialogue are 'clear thinking', 'rational arguments', 'variety of perspectives', 'the contribution of different fields of knowledge and points of view' and the further 'conviction that it is possible to arrive at certain fundamental truths always to be upheld'. Indeed, once those fundamental values are acknowledged and adopted through consensus and dialogue, we realise also that they rise above consensus, now non-negotiable and beyond our concrete situations because of their meaning for life. Both agnostics and believers can in dialogue confer a solid and stable validity on such ethical principles that could serve to prevent further catastrophes in society, he asserts. Nor does this imply rigidity or the imposition of any one moral system because fundamental moral principles can be embodied in different practical rules. The room for dialogue, in consequence, will always exist.

He ends this chapter by advocating a culture of encounter that transcends our differences and divisions. (*His personal example as Pope exemplifies such a culture of encounter*). It entails being passionate about meeting others, seeking points of contact, building bridges, planning a project that includes everyone and is an aspiration for life and indeed a style of life. Importantly also, it calls also for the virtue of kindness. 'Kindness facilitates the quest for consensus; it opens new paths where hostility and conflict would burn all bridges.'

Our Thanks

We are deeply grateful to all in our parish, who in the difficult circumstances of the pandemic have kept their faith, hope and love strong and helped keep our community of faith alive. We thank all who continue to visit the church for private prayer; all who link with us via webcam for daily Mass, and the many, who in kindly donations have supported the church at a time of need.

A particular thanks to Jimmy Mc Glynn and to Gerard Lincoln who open and close the church each day; to Carol, Kathleen and Mary who sanitize the church each morning for the safety of all who visit. We're very grateful to Jimmy O'Doherty and his team who, against all the Covid time odds, have built an Easter Garden for us and provided us with a supply of palm this week. Our thanks to Carol and Catherine who have decorated the altar so beautifully for us. A big thank you to Joe McNamara and members of the Pastoral Council in overseeing pastoral needs and to both Joe and Seamus Brett in creating the Stations of the Cross in an online version for us. A special thanks too to Deirdre Seaver and Seamus for their ongoing service to the liturgy and to cantors and readers who, within Covid restrictions, have been very generous in their willing help.

The Parish Office is closed to the public for the time being. Because of the current seriousness of concern for public health, we have decided to close the parish office to the public for the time being. However, parishioners are invited to leave a message on the phone (01 6683316 or 01 6683894) or to contact Fr John (01 6684265/0876294325) or Fr Cormac (01 6686845) for any services required. Phone messages to the parish office will be checked daily and responded to.