

EASTER SERVICES 2021

The Easter services will be shared between Hill Chapel and Claughton, as usual. As we have less space in the churches at the moment it will be essential for all who wish to attend to book in advance.

6.30pm Holy Thursday, Mass of the Lords Supper at Claughton

3pm The Celebration of the Lords Passion at Hill Chapel

8pm Holy Saturday, The Easter Vigil at Claughton

9am Easter Sunday, Mass of the Resurrection of the Lord at Claughton

10.30am Easter Sunday, Mass of the Lord's Resurrection at Hill Chapel

To book a place at Claughton ring Catherine on Tel: 01995 640360 or Whatsapp. To book a place at Hill Chapel ring Mary on Tel: 0789 116 2929 or give your details to the stewards after mass on Sunday.

INGOL FOOD BANK

For many people, life this year is harder than ever. We are continuing our collections for Ingol Food bank in Preston. If you would be able to give any tins or packets of food – please leave them in a carrier bag in the box at the back of church or in the box by the presbytery if church is not open. Many thanks for supporting the needy and vulnerable during these difficult times.

PARISHIONERS WHO ARE UNWELL

If you would like the parish to pray for someone who is currently unwell, please email news@stfrancisgoosnargh.org.uk or ring Father Sony on 01772 865229. It will be then be included in the newsletter. We have an area in church where you can write a prayer intention on a card and hang it up if you prefer it not to go on the parish newsletter.

CHURCH DONATIONS

With many people still unable to attend church we still need to maintain an income for maintenance. There are several ways you can still make your contributions including by cheque or direct debit. For details please go to the church website or contact Tom Smyth on 017722 865689.

Attendance: Sunday 28 February – 23

Collection: Sunday 28 February – £269.50

Wednesday 17 March: feast of St Patrick

Friday 19 March: solemnity of St Joseph



St Francis Hill Chapel Parish Newsletter

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news@stfrancisgoosnargh.org.uk

**In case of emergency (and unable to contact Father Sony) please ring
Father Dutton on 01772 782641 or Canon Doyle on 01772 782244**

FOURTH SUNDAY OF LENT (Laetare Sunday)

14 March 2021 (Readings: Year B)

Parish Mission Statement

Our Parish, guided by the example of our patron St Francis of Assisi, seeks to be a welcoming Catholic Community, by living, sharing and growing in faith. We strive to deepen our own relationship with Christ and meet the needs of others.

Church is now open again for Sunday mass at 10.30am. **Please only attend mass if you feel safe to do so. The dispensation for Sunday mass is still in place.**

Mass today is for Francis Gornall. Please pray for all those whose anniversaries occur about this time, especially Lara Kristie Jones and Dominic Flynn.

During Lent your prayers are asked for candidates for the sacraments, the needy and hungry of the world, survivors of sexual abuse, and penitents and wanderers. Please also pray for those whose anniversaries occur around this time.

Daily Mass live at 9.30am from St Clare's in Preston can be accessed on their YouTube channel at <https://www.youtube.com/user/StClaresChurch/>

SAFETY RULES FOR MASS

Stewards will be on duty to ensure that safety procedures are followed. Full details are on our website. Please do read them. **Face masks will need to be worn** as specified by the government.

Please follow these guidelines once entering church:

- * **Sanitise hands** on entry.
- * Please do **keep your distance** – use the high visibility tape on floor as a guide.
- * Place your collection on the collection plate **as you enter**.
- * Please take a mass sheet & newsletter on entry and **take them away when you leave**.
- * At Holy Communion:

Please wear a mask as you go up the aisle to communion and remove their mask before they receive the sacrament.

People from upstairs will go first down the right-hand side and return down the opposite aisle to maintain social distancing.

People on the right-hand side will then receive Holy Communion, followed by people on the left-hand side – guided by the stewards.
Communion will be given in silence.

BIDDING PRAYERS

Loving Lord, bring us closer to you this Lent through prayer. Help us to gain strength and inspiration from your never-ending love for us as we offer our prayers to you on this mid-Lent Sunday.

On this Mothering Sunday, we pray for all mothers. We give thanks for all the love, understanding and care they have given to us. We remember especially all those mothers who are sadly no longer with us. **Lord in your mercy, hear our prayer.**

As the Coronavirus infection and hospital admissions fall, we pray that the onward decline will provide us all with hope for a brighter and safer future. **Lord in your mercy, hear our prayer.**

We pray for all carers who are nursing loved ones at home and feel isolated and weary. May the Holy Spirit bless, protect and restore them with renewed energy. **Lord in your mercy, hear our prayer.**

We give thanks for your never-ending presence in our lives. May your love and compassion be constantly with us as we face the week ahead, through Christ our Lord, Amen.

FROM THE ARCHIVES

At the beginning of the month, we celebrated the feast day of St David. This week the focus turns to St Patrick, the Patron Saint of Ireland, whose feast day we celebrate on Wednesday. St Patrick lived from 387 AD to 461 AD and, as with many other saints of this period, much of what has been written and recorded about him is based on tradition and legend. However, St Patrick of Ireland is one of the world's most popular saints. He was born in Roman Britain and when he was fourteen or so, he was captured by Irish pirates during a raiding party and taken to Ireland as a slave to herd and tend sheep. At the time, Ireland was a land of Druids and pagans, but Patrick turned to God and wrote his memoir, *The Confession*. "The love of God and his fear grew in me more and more, as did the faith, and my soul was rosed, so that, in a single day, I have said as many as a hundred prayers and in the night, nearly the same. I prayed in the woods and on the mountain, even before dawn. I felt no hurt from the snow or ice or rain."

Patrick escaped back to Britain for a brief period but then travelled to Auxerre in Burgundy where he studied for the priesthood. He was ordained a priest by St Germanus, the Bishop of Auxerre, and was later ordained a bishop himself before travelling back to Ireland to spread the Gospel. Patrick arrived in Slane, Ireland on 25 March, AD 433. There are several legends about what happened next, with the most prominent claiming he met the chieftain of one of the Druid tribes, who tried to kill him. After an intervention from God, Patrick was able to convert the chieftain and preach the Gospel throughout Ireland. There, he converted many people – eventually thousands – and he began building churches across the country. He often used shamrocks to explain the Holy Trinity and entire kingdoms were eventually converted to Christianity after hearing Patrick's message. After years of living in poverty, travelling, and enduring much suffering he died on 17 March, AD 461. He is believed to be buried in Down Cathedral, Downpatrick and his grave is now marked with a granite stone. 'The Breastplate', Patrick's poem of faith and trust in God is one of the best known and popular Christian prayers and hymns:

**Christ with me, Christ before me, Christ behind me,
Christ in me, Christ beneath me, Christ above me,
Christ on my right, Christ on my left,
Christ when I lie down, Christ when I sit down, Christ when I arise,
Christ in the heart of every man who thinks of me,
Christ in the mouth of everyone who speaks of me,
Christ in every eye that sees me,
Christ in every ear that hears me.**

Mike Bryan

First reading

2 Chronicles 36:14-16,19-23

God's wrath and mercy are revealed in the exile and release of his people.

All the heads of the priesthood, and the people too, added infidelity to infidelity, copying all the shameful practices of the nations and defiling the Temple that the Lord had consecrated for himself in Jerusalem. The Lord, the God of their ancestors, tirelessly sent them messenger after messenger, since he wished to spare his people and his house. But they ridiculed the messengers of God, they despised his words, they laughed at his prophets, until at last the wrath of the Lord rose so high against his people that there was no further remedy.

Their enemies burned down the Temple of God, demolished the walls of Jerusalem, set fire to all its palaces, and destroyed everything of value in it. The survivors were deported by Nebuchadnezzar to Babylon; they were to serve him and his sons until the kingdom of Persia came to power. This is how the word of the Lord was fulfilled that he spoke through Jeremiah, 'Until this land has enjoyed its sabbath rest, until seventy years have gone by, it will keep sabbath throughout the days of its desolation.'

And in the first year of Cyrus king of Persia, to fulfil the word of the Lord that was spoken through Jeremiah, the Lord roused the spirit of Cyrus king of Persia to issue a proclamation and to have it publicly displayed throughout his kingdom: 'Thus speaks Cyrus king of Persia, "The Lord, the God of heaven, has given me all the kingdoms of the earth; he has ordered me to build him a Temple in Jerusalem, in Judah. Whoever there is among you of all his people, may his God be with him! Let him go up."'

Second reading

Ephesians 2:4-10

You have been saved through grace.

God loved us with so much love that he was generous with his mercy: when we were dead through our sins, he brought us to life with Christ – it is through grace that you have been saved – and raised us up with him and gave us a place with him in heaven, in Christ Jesus.

This was to show for all ages to come, through his goodness towards us in Christ Jesus, how infinitely rich he is in grace. Because it is by grace that you have been saved, through faith; not by anything of your own, but by a gift from God; not by anything that you have done, so that nobody can claim the credit. We are God's work of art, created in Christ Jesus to live the good life as from the beginning he had meant us to live it.

Gospel Acclamation

Jn3:16

Glory and praise to you, O Christ!

God loved the world so much that he gave his only Son:
everyone who believes in him has eternal life.

Glory and praise to you, O Christ!

Gospel

John 3:14-21

God sent his Son so that through him the world might be saved.

Jesus said to Nicodemus:

'The Son of Man must be lifted up

as Moses lifted up the serpent in the desert,

so that everyone who believes may have eternal life in him.

Yes, God loved the world so much that he gave his only Son,

so that everyone who believes in him may not be lost

but may have eternal life.

For God sent his Son into the world

not to condemn the world,

but so that through him the world might be saved.

No one who believes in him will be condemned;

but whoever refuses to believe is condemned already,

because he has refused to believe in the name of God's only Son.

On these grounds is sentence pronounced:

that though the light has come into the world

men have shown they prefer darkness to the light

because their deeds were evil.

And indeed, everybody who does wrong

hates the light and avoids it,

for fear his actions should be exposed;

but the man who lives by the truth comes out into the light,

so that it may be plainly seen that what he does is done in God.'

Homily

Believe it or not, in the late spring/early summer of this year, it will be forty three years since Boney M topped the popular music charts with their version of today's psalm, "By the rivers of Babylon". So, if you remember that, I am afraid that you can no longer claim to be in the first flush of youth.

This psalm is Israel's lament during the Babylonian exile, which is described in the passage from the Second Book of Chronicles. Jerusalem was destroyed, the country was laid waste, and in a series of expulsions, the population was taken to exile by Nebuchadnezzar, king of Babylon, an exile which lasted for seventy years. Finally, in 538BC, Babylon was itself conquered by the Persians, and Cyrus the Persian king allowed the people of Israel/Judah to return home and to rebuild the Jerusalem Temple.

For the Jewish people, this was an overwhelmingly powerful illustration of God's love for them, a new Exodus, almost equal in scope to the original Exodus from Egypt. Later, Christians would see it as a foretaste and promise of the even greater liberation of the human race from sin and death by the grace of God who "loved the world so much that He gave His only Son".

These are words which we need to ponder: "God loved the world so much that He gave His only Son". Take those words away with you and let them soak into you. Then add to them the words which come later in today's Gospel "For God sent His Son into the world, not to condemn the world, but so that, through Him, the world might be saved".

How often do you or I reflect on those words, or on those which we have heard from the Letter to the Ephesians: "God loved us with so much love"? Throughout history, God has repeatedly shown His love, forming a people, rescuing them from slavery, settling them in the Land of Promise, bringing them home from exile, and finally sending His Son to redeem the whole world.

Notice that in particular: "God so loved THE WORLD"—not certain people or groups of people, but "THE WORLD". Certainly, He has chosen and formed a people to be His Body on earth, but His love encompasses all people, who are linked to His Body in various ways, as the Second Vatican Council reminded us. Hence, Pope Francis in Iraq, like his predecessors Pope St. John Paul II and Pope Benedict XVI at Assisi, prayed with Jews, Muslims, and even non-Abrahamic people, inhabitants of a world which God "loved (and loves) so much".

So, I ask again, do we take those words seriously, do we use them as a guiding star in our lives, or do we forget that Christ came "not to condemn the world"? Do we sometimes view life as an obstacle race, bobbing and

weaving to avoid enough sins to save ourselves from condemnation, forgetting that we have been saved by Christ?

Another question strikes me. Jesus the Son of God redeemed the world by being lifted up on the Cross, and He tells us today that He "must be lifted up as Moses lifted up the serpent in the desert". This, as you may be aware, is a reference to an incident during the Exodus, when the people, not for the only time, grumbled against Moses and against God. We are told that, as a punishment, God sent fiery serpents among the people, and their bite was fatal, but He also gave a remedy. Moses was to make a bronze serpent and hold it up on a pole: whoever looked at the bronze serpent would live.

My question therefore is this: have you been bitten by a serpent recently? There are many serpents about: the serpent of rage, the serpent of malice, the serpent of bitter words, the serpent of greed, the serpent of self-centredness, and that serpent which is said to be the most deadly of all, the serpent of discouragement.

Have any of those serpents bitten you? And, more importantly, have you looked for healing to Him whom Moses' bronze serpent foreshadowed, Jesus lifted up on the Cross? Remember: He was sent to us because God loved the world so much.