

Saint Michael's Parish

7 CARDROSS ROAD ▪ TEL: 01389 762709 ▪ EMAIL: stmichael.dumbarton@rcag.org.uk

MASS THIS WEEK:

Sunday 11th Feb – 8am & 11am; Monday 12th – 10am; Tuesday 13th – 10am, *Requiem for Robert Marsland*; Wednesday 14th, Ash Wednesday – 10am & 6.30pm (*with distribution of ashes*); Thursday 15th – 10am; 7pm: Sacrament of Confirmation; Friday 16th – 10am; 6.30pm: *Reception, Helen O'Brien*; Saturday 17th – 10am, *Requiem for Helen O'Brien*; 5.30pm Vigil 1st Sunday of Lent. Carmel: Mon to Sat 9.15am



This Wednesday (14th Feb) marks the beginning of the **Season of Lent** – a time when we are encouraged to grow in faith, hope and love, through the traditional disciplines of prayer, fasting and almsgiving – focussing, especially, on those areas where we need to die to self and open up to the influence of grace. Mass & ashes at 9.15am (Carmel), 10am & 6.30pm.

- **On Wednesdays during Lent (beginning 21st Feb) we will have Mass at 8.15am (rather than 10am)** to allow children, parents and others to come along for this special time of prayer. Tea and toast will be served, afterwards, in the hall.

STATIONS OF THE CROSS

On the **Fridays of Lent at 5.30pm** there will be public Stations of the Cross in St Michael's. If any group or individual wishes to lead this devotion on any given week, then please sign-up on the sheet at side-door table. We will begin this Friday.

CONFIRMATION: Please keep in your prayers the children who are to receive the Sacraments of Confirmation in St Michael's, this Thursday at 7pm. Archbishop Nolan will administer the Sacrament. All welcome to the celebration. Selection of cards/gifts in shop!

DAY OF PRAYER FOR SURVIVORS OF ABUSE

In Scotland, the first Friday in Lent (**Friday 16th Feb**) has been designated as a Day of Prayer for Survivors of Abuse. As well as providing the space to pray with and for people who have been abused, it is also an opportunity for the Church to acknowledge its failures in safeguarding people from abuse, listening to the accounts of survivors and accepting responsibility for hurts caused.

SCIAF Wee Box in large envelope available to pick up in the porch. This year's appeal focusses on Rwanda – 30 years after the genocide in which up to a million people were killed, and where violence against women, especially, is widespread.



LENTEN ALMS

On the Sundays of Lent (except 4th Sunday) your support is asked for the Lenten Alms collection for the care and support of sick and retired priests of the archdiocese.

CRIB APPEAL

The annual Crib Appeal in support of St Margaret's Children & Family Care Service raised **£700**. The Assisted Parishes collection, last week, came to **£626**. For both, many thanks.

LENT ONLINE

RCAG Youth are running weekly Zoom sessions, 7-8pm, each Monday of Lent for 16-35s. The session will have video input, time for discussion and the opportunity to pray. The group will start just ahead of Ash Wednesday on Mon 12th Feb. tinyurl.com/rcagyouthlent

PARISH REGISTRATION

Thank you for filling in the form – if you haven't done so, then they are available on table.

REASONS FOR BELIEVING

A series of talks given by Fr Ross Campbell on the coherence of Catholic faith within contemporary culture. Wednesdays of Lent in St Patrick's hall, beginning 21st Feb at 7.30pm.

Through the Desert God Leads us to Freedom

Message of Pope Francis for Lent 2024

Dear brothers and sisters!

When God reveals himself, his message is always one of freedom: “I am the Lord your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of slavery”. These are the first words of the Decalogue given to Moses on Mount Sinai. Those who heard them were quite familiar with the exodus of which God spoke: the experience of their bondage still weighed heavily on them. The call to freedom is a demanding one. It has to mature as part of a journey.

Just as Israel in the desert still clung to Egypt – often longing for the past and grumbling against the Lord and Moses – today too, God’s people can cling to an oppressive bondage that it is called to leave behind. We realize how true this is at those moments when we feel hopeless, wandering through life like a desert and lacking a promised land as our destination. Lent is the season of grace in which the desert can become once more – in the words of the prophet Hosea – the place of our first love. *God shapes his people, he enables us to leave our slavery behind* and experience a Passover from death to life.

If our celebration of Lent is to be concrete, the first step is to desire to *open our eyes to reality*. Today, the cry of so many of our oppressed brothers and sisters rises to heaven. Let us ask ourselves: Do we hear that cry? Does it trouble us? Does it move us? Too many things keep us apart from each other, denying the fraternity that, from the beginning, binds us to one another.

Our Lenten journey will be concrete if we realize that, even today, we remain under the rule of Pharaoh. A rule that makes us weary and indifferent. Earth, air and water are polluted, but so are our souls. Baptism has begun our process of liberation, yet there remains in us an inexplicable longing for slavery.

Let us ask: Do I want a new world? Am I ready to leave behind my compromises with the old? We need to combat a deficit of hope that stifles dreams and the silent cry that reaches to heaven and moves the heart of God.

God has not grown weary of us. Lent is *a season of conversion, a time of freedom*. Jesus himself, as we recall each year on the first Sunday of Lent, was driven into the desert by the Spirit in order to be tempted in freedom. For forty days, he will stand before us and with us: the incarnate Son. The desert is the place where our freedom can mature in a personal decision not to fall back into slavery.

It is time to act, and in Lent, *to act also means to pause*. To pause *in prayer*, in order to receive the word of God, to pause like the Samaritan *in the presence of a wounded brother or sister*. Love of God and love of neighbour are one love. Not to have other gods is to pause in the presence of God beside the flesh of our neighbour. For this reason, prayer, almsgiving and fasting are not three unrelated acts, but a single movement of openness and self-emptying, in which we cast out the idols that weigh us down, the attachments that imprison us.

Slow down, then, and pause! The contemplative dimension of life that Lent helps us to rediscover will release new energies. In the presence of God, we become more sensitive to one another: in place of threats and enemies, we discover companions and fellow travellers. This is God’s dream, the promised land to which we journey once we have left our slavery behind.

Lent is also a time of decisions capable of altering the daily lives of individuals and entire neighbourhoods. I invite every Christian community to offer its members moments set aside to rethink their lifestyles, times to examine their presence in society and the contribution they make to its betterment.

Allow me to repeat what I told the young people whom I met in Lisbon, last summer: “Keep seeking and be ready to take risks. At this time, we face enormous risks; we hear the painful plea of so many people. Indeed, we are experiencing a third world war fought piecemeal. Yet let us find the courage to see our world, not as being in its death throes but in a process of giving birth, not at the end but at the beginning of a great new chapter of history”.

Such is the courage of conversion, born of coming up from slavery. For faith and charity take hope – this small child – by the hand. They teach her to walk, and at the same time, she leads them forward. *I bless all of you and your Lenten journey.*