

The Ascension of our Lord

This Thursday we celebrate the Ascension of the Lord. 40 days after Easter Sunday, Jesus ascended into heaven, body and soul. He carried human nature with Him: in this event, humanity is taken into heaven. He is therefore our hope, and this important feast celebrates not only our Lord's entry into heaven, but our own hope of being redeemed, body and soul, in God's glory. The Lord's ascension also paved the way for the coming of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost. On the nine days from Ascension day, leading up to Pentecost Sunday, the first disciples joined in continuous prayer with Mary and the holy women. Each year the Church invites us to do the same, praying for a renewal of the Holy Spirit in our own lives on the days leading up to that great feast.



Today's Readings

The Gospel follows immediately the passage we heard last Sunday, in which Jesus speaks of Himself as the true vine, and we as His branches. Today He gives us the new commandment: "Love one another as I have loved you". This love, also spoken of in the second reading, is the self-giving of Jesus, who came to earth to share our humanity and to "be the sacrifice which takes our sins away." John goes further: "God is love", he teaches, reminding us that it's impossible to know God unless we live with love. Today's first reading recalls a decisive moment in the early Church: pagans receive the Holy Spirit, just as the Apostles (who were Jews) had at Pentecost. The Apostles took this as a clear sign that their mission was to preach the Gospel to all, not just to the Jewish people. So it was that the spread of the Gospel continued, encompassing every part of the world.

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MASSES THIS WEEK

Office: Psalter week 2; Sundays: year B; Weekdays: of Eastertide

Morning Mass is livestreamed each day and will be available for viewing later in the day on our YouTube channel: <https://www.youtube.com/user/StClaresChurch>

Date	Time	Occasion	Intention/Details
Saturday	6pm (vigil)	SIXTH SUNDAY OF EASTER	Josephine Mann RIP
Sunday 9 th	9:30am*		Gerard Machin RIP
	11:30am		Susan and Charles Gordon RIP
	6pm		People of the Parish
Monday	9:30am		Ints Edward Nash
Tuesday	9:30am		Patrick Hoyle RIP
Wednesday	9:30am	THE ASCENSION OF THE LORD	George Oldcorn RIP
	7pm (vigil)		People of the Parish
Thursday	9:30am		Maria Isabel Cooper RIP
	7pm		John Myerscough RIP
Friday	9:30am	St Matthias	Paul Fingleton RIP
Saturday	9:30am	SEVENTH SUNDAY OF EASTER	Ints Catherine Richardson
	6pm (vigil)		Kamla Gill RIP
Sunday 16 th	9:30am*		Private Intention (PM)
	11:30am		Ints Veronica Anderton
	6pm		People of the Parish

*** These Masses can only be attended by those who have booked in advance.**

LATELY DEAD: Please pray for all who have died recently.

SACRAMENT OF RECONCILIATION: Saturdays 11am-12noon and by appointment.

ADORATION OF THE BLESSED SACRAMENT: Monday-Friday 5pm-6pm, Saturday 11am-12noon, Sunday 3-4pm.

ANNIVERSARIES: Lilian McGuire, Patrick Hoyle, Edna Kiely, Philip Baker.

POPE'S PRAYER INTENTIONS FOR MAY: Let us pray that those in charge of finance will work with governments to regulate the financial sphere and protect citizens from its dangers.

THE ASCENSION OF THE LORD: Celebrated this Thursday. In normal times the Ascension is a Holy Day of Obligation. It's a wonderful and joyful feast day. In addition to the usual 9:30am Mass, there will be Mass at 7pm on Thursday evening and a vigil on Wednesday at 7pm. Booking is not required for any of these Masses. For more on this beautiful feast, see the front page.

COVID CRISIS IN INDIA: This weekend we will hold a special collection to help those suffering with the Covid crisis in India. Contributions may be left in the buckets as you leave, or in marked envelopes next weekend. Among the charities working to relieve suffering in India is ACN – find out more about their work and about challenges face by Christians in the country: [click here](#).

FIRST HOLY COMMUNION: Some of the children of our parish have resumes their preparation for receiving Jesus in the Eucharist. These are children in school year 4 and upwards who were due to receive Holy Communion for the first time last summer. Please remember them and their families in your prayers.

ATTENDING MASSES: It is no longer necessary to book for the Saturday or Sunday evening Masses or for 11:30am on Sundays. Booking remains necessary for the 9:30am Mass on Sunday morning – please contact us if you would like to attend this. All other services can now be attended without the need to book.

MAY PROCESSION: All the children in our primary school will be taking part in the May Procession on Tuesday 18th May at 2pm. Unfortunately families and parishioners will not be able to attend in person, but the procession will be streamed live on the parish YouTube channel.

SEEKERS AND SENT GROUPS: Our youth groups for school years 4-6 (Seekers) and Years 10-11 (Sent) have started again, but numbers are limited due to Covid restrictions. Please contact us (or Ruth or Joe directly) if you'd like to attend.

LAY CHAPLAIN JOB VACANCY at Corpus Christi Catholic High School, beginning from September. Application deadline 17th May. See poster or visit school website.

ABORTION CONSULTATION: Earlier this year the Northern Ireland Assembly voted on the Severe Foetal Impairment Abortion (Amendment) Bill and it passed Second Stage by 48 votes to 12. The Northern Ireland Health Committee is now undertaking a consultation on the Bill and is seeking submissions from the public. It is important that as many people as possible submit to the consultation in support of the Bill to clearly show that there is widespread support for this important change. Right To Life UK has set up an easy-to-use tool on their website that makes it simple to complete your submission. You can do so by following the link here. It only takes 30 seconds! www.righttolife.org.uk/nidisabilityconsultation

SPECIAL COLLECTION next Sunday for Catholic Media.

“Unlocking” the Parish: our plan

The plan below gives some sense of how the parish may move towards normality in the coming months. The plan is subject to national restrictions and guidance we receive from the government and from our bishops.

At Step 3 of the government’s national roadmap (planned for 17th May):

- Baptisms will resume.

At Step 4 of the government’s national roadmap (planned for 21st June):

- Car park restrictions will come back into force, freeing up space for the parish and for church/school events.
- Restrictions regarding face coverings, singing at Mass, social distancing etc. will be reviewed in line with latest guidance from the government and from the Bishops’ Conference.

Before the autumn (dates to be confirmed):

- Weekday Masses will revert to the old Mass times. The 11:30am Mass on Sundays will continue until social distancing is no longer required.
- An outdoor parish social event is planned.
- First Holy Communion for the 2019-2020 group will take place.
- Booking requirement for all events will be lifted, if social distancing rules are relaxed by the government and we are confident that it’s safe.
- Visits to housebound parishioners and care homes may be possible.
- The church will reopen all day for private prayer, if rules permit.

From September

- Children’s liturgy and all our youth groups should resume.
- A normal year of sacramental preparation is planned, including for children whose confessions, first Communion and Confirmation have been delayed.
- A full programme of parish social life will take place, if permitted.
- We hope to be able to hold some events to mark the 50th anniversary of our parish and school, in November 2021.
- We hope that the parish pilgrimage to the Holy Land planned for late October may be able to go ahead. Work is ongoing to assess this.

We plan to continue to livestream Mass each day, for the benefit of those who are housebound; everyone who can is strongly encouraged to attend Mass and rebuild our community. We will also continue with some other online output to assist with catechesis, evangelisation and outreach work in the parish.