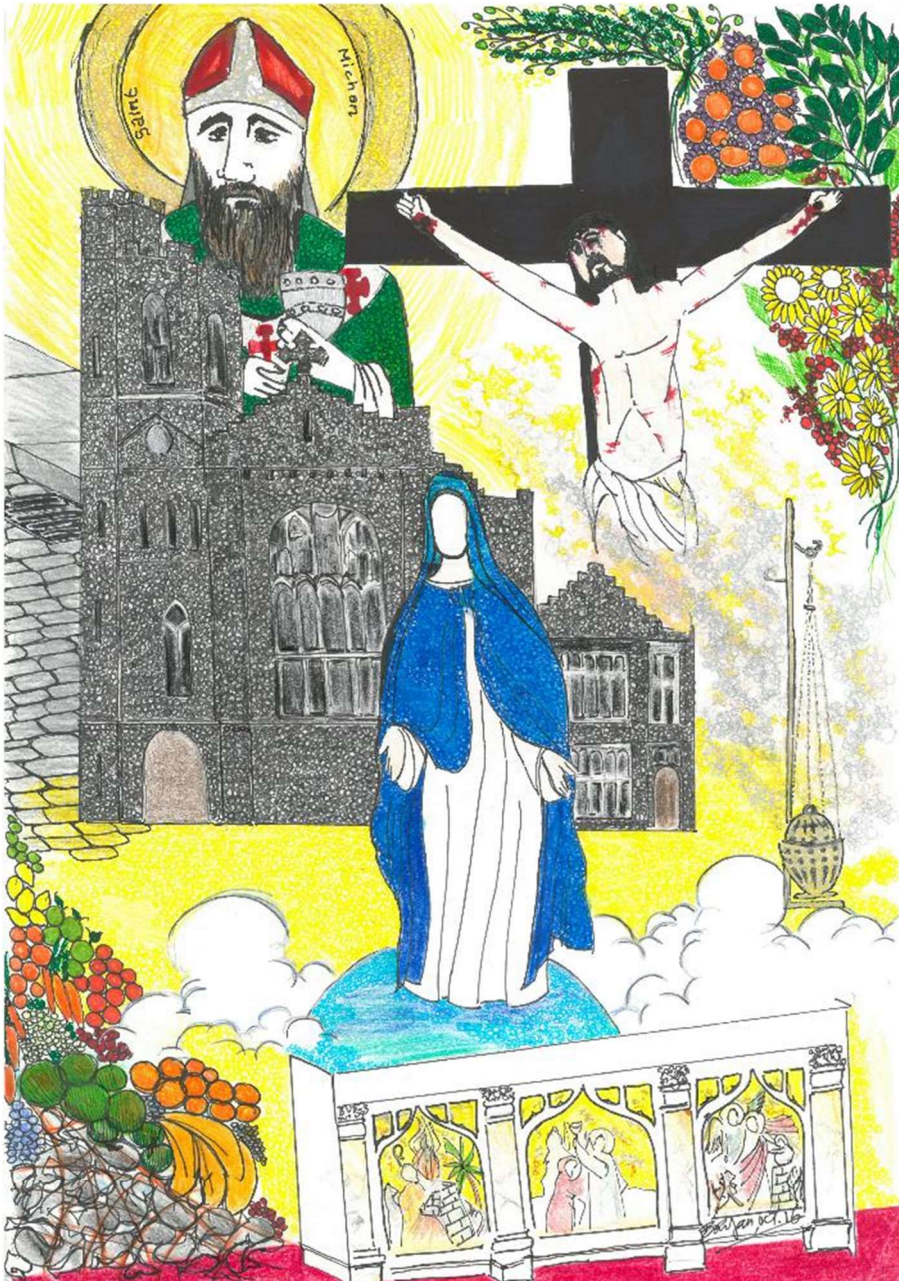


# Bicentenary of the Church of St. Michan 1817-2017



4 <sup>th</sup>	6pm	Fr. John Kelly
5 <sup>th</sup>	12noon	Fr. Adrian Curran
6 <sup>th</sup>	7:30pm	Fr. Flann Lynch
7 <sup>th</sup>	7:30pm	Fr. Des McNaboe
8 <sup>th</sup>	7:30pm	Fr. Terence Harrington
9 <sup>th</sup>	7:30pm	Canon Damien O'Reilly
10 <sup>th</sup>	7:30pm	Fr. Sean Kelly
11 <sup>th</sup>	6pm	Fr. Coriolan Muresan
12 <sup>th</sup>	12noon	Fr. Bryan

*4<sup>th</sup> March to 12<sup>th</sup> March 2017*

305<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the first  
Novena of Grace in Honour of St. Francis Xavier  
1712-2017



# Sunday, 12<sup>th</sup> March

## Transfiguration – Shining a bright light in the dark to find Good News

This past week has not been a great week. So many things happened and I had a tendency to be distracted by the niggly, small things that happened. Wednesday was the worst day but thanks to the support of the people around me, I decided to stop taking notice of the small things. In essence, walk away from them.

This week we were faced with the dreadful news of the Tuam babies. Out of the blue, two media students came looking to interview me about the story as part of their college project. They got me thinking and I offer some of my thought around these dreadful events.

- Firstly, what happened is sickening and we are rightly horrified by it. But I'd say to anyone, *"Come to a funeral in this church and see how a community rallies to support the bereaved; how they celebrate the loss of a loved one."* Funerals here tell the family that we care about our bereaved, that we care about their loved one and we care about them.
- Secondly, it is okay to speak about your anger about the events. Some are calling for an end to the Catholic Church and an end to religious orders. BUT, and this is a big BUT, think about the organisations that have done so much good.
  - Br. Kevin is a member of the Capuchin Order and see how many benefit from the work of the Day Centre for the Homeless
  - Sr. Stan is a member of the Religious Sisters of Charity and provides homes through the work of Focus Housing
  - Fr. Peter McVerry is a member so the Jesuits and he also provides care and support for the homeless.
- All of the above have large teams of volunteers who give their time freely to assist in this great work. Good things are happening in the middle of everything – and that's without mentioning all those who work as missionaries overseas.

In today's Gospel, the Transfiguration invites us to see the shining bright light in the shadows and allow it to bring out the truth.

Ever wonder about what will happen in the future? Well, there's no need for fortune-tellers because we only need to look to Jesus to find our future. We are gifted with a great and generous spirit inside.

I give thanks to God for the people around me who bring the Good News out of their consciousness.

There is bad news but I invite you to shine the bright light of the Transfiguration into the dark areas and bring out the truth.



# Saturday, 11<sup>th</sup> March

## God's call for each of us

Each time we reflect on God's word, we can see a link between the Word and our own lives. God speaks to us through the readings. And when we reflect on it we see how much God loves us.

Who was Jesus Christ? Some see him as a revolutionary type of person by the only revolution God is interested in is his tenderness to us.

In the First Reading, we see God calling Abraham to leave his land, his comfort zone and go to a land he did not know. God calls us at different times in our lives, to leave our comfort zones and try something new, something different. Our reactions are often mixed when we get his call – we can be excited, afraid, happy, sad or maybe a mixture of emotions. When Abraham was invited to leave his land, he was assured of God's blessing for him and his descendants. Likewise, each time God calls us to change, we too receive his blessing.

Lent is about changing – putting aside evil temptations and choosing the light of Christ, a choice which is about choosing the love of God which is often not easy. Lent can be a time of more temptations – our promises and penances can be difficult to live up to.

Our comfort zone is our way of daily living. Sometimes we are too dedicated to TV, our phones, computers and all the technology that is around us. These can distract us from all the suffering that is around us. Pope Francis asks us to look to the poor for the face of the suffering Jesus.

In the Second Reading, the key word is Saviour. In our lives, we will have hardships but we also always have our Saviour by our side.

In the Gospel, we hear the story of the Transfiguration and we see Jesus telling his disciples what lies ahead for him. Peter is happy to be in this beautiful place on Tabor and talks of building tents for everyone. But Peter is missing the point of the visit to the mountain. On Tabor, Jesus prepares his disciples for his Resurrection.

On Tabor, we also hear the Father telling them to listen to Jesus *"Stand up – do not be afraid!"* And these words are for us too – in our own lives. Why? Because he is always with us – through everything.

We often talk about St. Francis Xavier as a missionary but despite being of noble stock, he was a man very close to the poor. St. Francis of Assisi was also a man of noble birth who gave his life caring for the poor. Two different saints, from different centuries but both of one heart and inspired by Jesus.

It is the same call to all of us – ***What is your answer?***





## Friday, 10<sup>th</sup> March

### Persistence in prayer

A mother, walking by her son's room, noticed that he was on his knees evidently in prayer. She could not help but notice that he kept repeating one word over and over. "Tokyo," he prayed, "Tokyo, Tokyo." She wondered if this was some eastern chant he had picked up from some of his friends. Later she asked him about it. "Oh," he said with embarrassment, "we had our geography exam today and I was praying that God would make Tokyo the capital of France."

In our Gospel reading from Luke (18:1-8), Jesus tells a parable about a widow who pestered a judge until he granted her request. This was no ordinary judge. Jesus described him as one who *"feared not God, neither (did he) regard man."* In the Old West he might have been described as a hanging judge. But this stern and strict judge was no match for this *persistent* widow. She is **not** a person of influence, power or wealth. But she had a characteristic that would stand her in good stead. She would simply **wear him down**. And it worked. Just as surely as water continually dripping will wear down the strongest marble, her pestering prevailed. Even though he initially refused to hear her case, he finally ruled in her favour.

**Persistence in prayer that is the point of the parable.** If your prayer is seemingly not answered at first, don't give up. **KEEP ASKING.** That doesn't mean repeating the same chant over and over again. "Tokyo, Tokyo, Tokyo."

**Prayer does make a difference.** This is the first thing this parable says to us. Prayer changes events and prayer changes people. It is so sad that so many are neglecting this tremendous resource. Back in 1994, I met a group who took part in a Peace Walk to pray for peace in Northern Ireland. They took five days to walk from Derry to Knock, praying the rosary as they walked and celebrating Mass each evening in the town they were staying. The depth of their faith, their prayer and the conviction was palpable as we shared the Eucharist. Within months, the IRA ceasefire became a reality and a Peace Walk has taken place each year since then. Nowadays, peace walkers walk from Derry to Knock, Belfast to Knock, Dublin to Knock and Cork to Knock – all witnesses to their faith in God.

There is a rural area of Texas that, if you had visited it thirty or forty years ago, you would have discovered grinding poverty. Today you will find lush, green, irrigated crops, lovely well-furnished homes, new cars, paved roads, well-dressed people. Inquiring about the changes, you would be told that oil and gas had been discovered under the once barren land. During all those earlier years in poverty, the farmers had been living over untold riches and natural resources hidden in the ground. They simply had not discovered them, unlocked them and used them to change the quality of their lives.

Many of us live barren lives spiritually. And the sad thing is that within our reach are untold riches. In the words of a contemporary song, *"Help is only a prayer away."*

**Prayer does work.** Study the New Testament and see how important prayer was in the life of Jesus. See how much he talked about prayer with his disciples – he taught them the *Our Father*. See the effect of prayer on the early church. To dismiss prayer as unsophisticated, unscientific, or simply too selfish is to miss the meaning of the Gospel. The very power and presence of God is available to the believer. The Word that became incarnate in Jesus Christ is still at work in the lives of everyone of us today who are open to his leading.

**Prayer does work.** But a second thing needs to be said. GOD DOES NOT WORK ACCORDING TO OUR TIME SCHEDULE OR EVEN ACCORDING TO OUR METHODS IN MEETING HIS CHILDREN'S NEEDS. Why should this poor widow have to plead and pester and cajole this judge to grant her wishes?

Isn't this an acknowledgement that sometimes heaven is silent? Listen to Jesus' word in verse 7: "And will not God vindicate his elect, who cry to him day and night?"

Have you ever been in a situation where you have cried day and night?

Having affirmed that prayer does work, we must now add that prayer is not Aladdin's lamp. There is no magic genie who suddenly appears to satisfy our every need. Every saint has known what it is to go through the *dark night of the soul*. Mother Teresa spoke of her many years of this. Why it should be so will not be known until God takes away the veil and we see him face to face. Perhaps the only acceptable answer is that we are creatures and he is Creator, we are children and he is Father, we are finite and He is infinite. It is a humbling thought. We are so sure that we know best. It is infuriating to think that God may be saying to us what our parents said to us or even what we say to our children, "*Not now. Not today. That is not in your best interest.*"

**Prayer does work.** However, God often does not heed **our** time schedule or use methods that we would use and sometimes the most reasonable prayer is answered with a firm but loving, "**NO!**"

IN THE MEANTIME, WHILE WE ARE WAITING FOR GOD'S ANSWER, WE NEED TO DO ALL **WE CAN TO PROVIDE OUR OWN ANSWER**. Have you heard the story of John who prayed constantly to win the lottery. Eventually, God answered John and suggested he buy a lottery ticket – that would HELP!

You have to admire this widow in Jesus' parable. She didn't wait for someone else to solve her problems for her. She took responsibility for her situation, and did all she could. That's a good lesson for all of us. Don't give up on your prayers. God does hear and does answer. Sometimes the answer is "**Be patient**". Sometimes the answer is **no**. But always the answer will be to our best good. In the meantime, while we are waiting, let's remember that courageous and persistent widow, and do all we can to answer our own prayers **and never give up**.

Let me finish with a story about a little boy who was taken to hear the pianist Paderewski play in concert in the hope of encouraging him in his own studies. His mother left the little boy in his seat as she went to greet a friend in the concert hall. The little boy slipped away and started to explore the auditorium. He made his way through a door marked "NO ADMITTANCE". When the house lights dimmed and the concert was about to start and discovered that her son was missing.

Suddenly, the curtains parted and spotlights focused on the impressive Steinway on stage. In horror, the mother saw her little boy sitting at the keyboard, innocently picking out "*Twinkle, Twinkle Little Star*." At that moment, the great piano master made his entrance, quickly moved to the piano, and whispered in the Boy's ear, "*Don't quit. Keep playing.*"

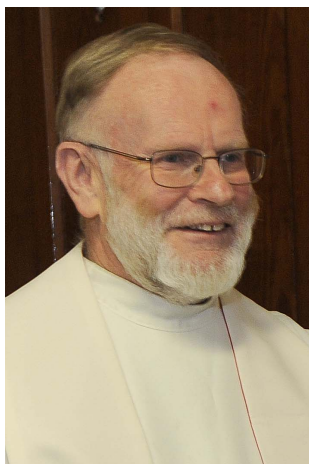
Then leaning over, Pederewski reached down with his left hand and began filling in a bass part. Soon his right arm reached around the other side of the child and he added a running obligation. Together, the old master and the young novice transformed a frightening situation into a wonderfully creative experience. The audience was mesmerised. That's the way it is with God. What we can accomplish on our own is hardly noteworthy. We try our best, but the results aren't exactly graceful flowing music. But with the hand of the Master, our life's work truly can be beautiful.

Next time you set out to accomplish great feats, listen carefully. You can hear the voice of the Master, whispering in your ear, "*Don't quit. Keep praying.*" Feel his loving arms around you. Know that his strong hands are playing the concerto of your life.



## Thursday, 9<sup>th</sup> March

### Lenten Invitation to prayer



## Wednesday, 8<sup>th</sup> March

# Healing through the Eucharist

A person's greatness lies in one's ability to endure suffering.

It's fascinating how broken, fragile and weak we all are. Suffering comes to everyone: to the old and the young; the rich and the poor; the strong and the weak. No one escapes the cross; nobody who hasn't some trouble. It is no respecter of persons.

Never underestimate the pain some people endure. Everyone is struggling. Some people are better at hiding it than others. No one knows what goes on in another person's mind. Christ didn't come to take suffering away. He came to give it meaning.

Suffering can be a sign of a person's closeness to God. When we suffer, we are in good company, in the company of Jesus Himself, Mary, St. Pio and all the saints. The cross is always a healing and saving cross. God sometimes takes us into troubled waters, not to drown us but to cleanse us.

Through suffering we share in Christ's mission. No one on earth knows the amount of good that is done by those who suffer, those who accept their cross. There is a spiritual power in suffering, so we should never waste suffering.

When life hands you a lemon turn it into lemonade – that the challenge.

Live with the mess. Face the pain. Learn to sail your ship. The answer is to be found in the ability to live with the mess and in faith in Christ, faith in the resurrection, a faith that assures us that in the end all will be well.

No matter what's happening in your life or family; no matter how depressed you may feel or how worried you may be, we believe in the words of Julian of Norwich that *"in the end all will be well"*.

Never underestimate the pain of a person because the truth is everyone is struggling. It's just some people hide it better than others.

Depression is a cross many people carry quietly and sometime secretly. Depression is not just about being sad. Depression is like a darkness that creeps over you and possesses you. It drains you; it takes everything from you and leaves you feeling hopeless, worthless and numb. It is prison. There is no hope, no self-esteem. It's overwhelming and it can be cruel. It is as insidious as cancer. Only that it is worse than cancer. It is an alone experience, a room in hell with only your name on the door. It is a monster that sleeps inside your head. It is so insidious that it is impossible to ever see the end; no light at the end of the tunnel.

Sometimes the person who smiles and tries to keep everyone happy is the loneliest of all. They can be dying inside. They go through blackness, sadness and loneliness and cover it. It's not always not that easy to notice it.

What's the answer? When something bad happens to you, you have three choices. You can either let it define you, let it destroy you or you can let it strengthen you. Name it, face it and know it is okay not to be okay. Learn how to cope with the storm. Facing depression requires courage, humility, determination and strength of character. It takes a strong person to confront depression. Medical and psychologic help and spiritual support should be availed of. Not always easy to be a friend of a depressed person, but it is one of the kindest, noblest and charitable thing you will ever do. Be a friend, listen and let the person unburden themselves.

Depression is not a sign of weakness. It can be a sign of a strong person who has tried too hard for too long. A person who endures depression is a fit candidate for canonisation and is to be greatly admired.

Worry is the cause of many of the world's problems. It is a warning sign that God is not first in my life at this point in time.

Don't ruin today by worrying about yesterday's problems. Worry does not empty tomorrow of its sorrows, but it empties today of its peace. A day of worrying is more exhausting than a day of hard work. Nothing wastes more energy than worrying. It's a total waste of time. It's useless.

Worry raises your blood pressure, hardens your arteries, causes depression, damages your health, increases your stress levels and makes you feel miserable. It gives you headaches and sleepless nights and robs you of peace of mind. It's a slow killer.

There is no pill you can take to stop you worrying; no seminar, book or tape will stop you worrying. The answer is to put God in control of your life. Trust him. He is in charge and he understands. Leave tomorrow to God. Live one day at a time. Don't open your umbrella until it starts raining and don't cross bridges until you reach them.

Hand over everything to God, yourself, your problems, plans and health, everything. Surrender your family to Him. Your future is in God's hands and in God's hands you are in safe hands. Trust Him and all will be well.

Easier said than done. It may take time. But it works.

We are all called to be healers for one another. Jesus heals through us, you and me. All of us are wounded, damaged, broken and troubled, so everyone needs healing. The healing required isn't always typical. Sometimes it is emotional and spiritual, sometimes it's the need for healing of relationships, memories, and mental health issues.

Many people experience low self-esteem, no self-confidence, depression, anxiety and self-doubt. The way to healing is through words of praise, encouragement and affirmation. Reckless words can hurt, but words of kindness can heal. Be kind. One kind word can change a person's entire life. There are three steps in the healing process: step one – be kind; step two – equally important – be kind and step three – be kind. Let your words heal not wound.

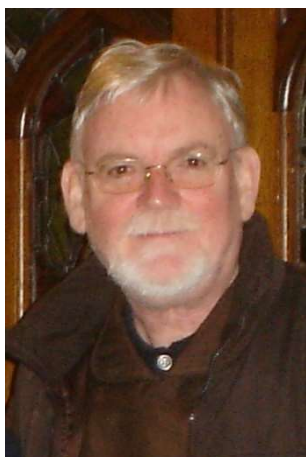
The greatest healing therapy of all is friendship and love. There is more healing done among friends over a cup of tea than in many counselling rooms. We need to take care of one another. Presence heals. Simply being present to someone, especially some who is sick, can bring healing. Listening heals.

Healing takes time and patience. You cannot heal a lifetime of pain overnight. It can take a long time. Be kind and gentle with yourself when you are going through a difficult and painful time. Be patient. Try to understand human nature and have a sense of humour. If God brings you to it he will bring you through it.

A little bit of encouragement, a kind word and a listening ear can work miracles.

*Fr. Terence Harrington OFM Cap*





## Tuesday, 7<sup>th</sup> March

# Forgiveness – the path to peace

How do we hear the words of Jesus – “*Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you*”. Does Jesus really mean this? Are we really expected to love people who terrorise others, who burn villages, rape women and children, torture and do all kinds of evil acts?

If LOVE means that warm feeling of affection, then how can we love these people? Jesus doesn't expect that kind of love but Jesus does expect that we should wish them no harm. We must wish them peace, happiness and wellbeing. Jesus does expect us to forgive. This is very hard, very difficult but very Christian.

Let me tell you a story about two families in Donegal. There was a deep-rooted feud between two families, the McDonalds and the Gallaghers. The feud went on so long that no one could remember what it was about! The local parish priest wanted to help to put an end to the fighting and when old Mr. Gallagher was dying, the priest asked the man if he would be willing to forgive the McDonalds. He said, *NO!* The priest reminded the old man that he was close to death, and he would soon be facing his maker with this fighting still unresolved. Reluctantly, the old man agreed that he would forgive the other family and he told the priest the good news. The priest was pleased but he told him he would have to share the news with his family. So, the old man called his sons together and told them that he was close to death and soon to see God face-to-face so he decided to forgive the other family. *HOWEVER*, he told them he would turn in his grave if they forgave them too!!

Sometimes, the problem starts with a cutting word, a throwaway comment or some other innocent incident. The upset can go on for years and sometimes, only when one is close to death that they apologise to each other. All the wasted years and all they needed to do was say *SORRY*. But we hold on and on to the hurt and pain.

People can hold hurt for years. They are scarred by it. It might have started with not being asked to a wedding, or not thanked publicly, or they felt excluded or left out.

When we grow to hate someone, we give them power and control over us. It can be like an open wound that festers. It poisons us. It can feel the same when we have hurts and grievances.

To forgive is very hard, very difficult but very Christian. It is what is expected of each of us.

Some years ago, the scoop of the year was a photograph of the then Pope John Paul II, now St. John Paul, embracing a prisoner. This wasn't just any prisoner, but it was the man who tried to kill Pope John Paul. The embrace said everything – *I forgive you. I wish you well. I wish you peace.*

To forgive is very hard, very difficult but very Christian.

*Fr. Des McNaboe OFM Cap*

Monday, 6<sup>th</sup> March  
Fr. Flann Lynch



# Sunday, 5<sup>th</sup> March

## Operation Transformation of the Heart

Television programmes about diet, exercise, body shape and image, and healthy lifestyles are now all the rage. Newspapers too are full of medical advice. We are told that too much fatty food leads to heart disease. Many people try to watch their diet, eat five portions of vegetable or fruit each day, and do more exercise. People run with monitors attached to their wrists or use their smart phones to keep account of exercise, the distance they travel, altitude climbed and their changing heart rate. These days, you might say, it's all about Operation Transformation! Monitoring our physical health has become a full-time preoccupation and a growing industry for many. Lent, in contrast, invites to focus on our spiritual health, our spiritual lives and keep track of the spiritual well-being of our heart....

Genesis tells us that sin enters the world through disobedience to the word of God. But there is a promise of salvation which leaves room for hope. As Paul tells us in the second reading: as sin entered the world through one man's disobedience, so salvation enters the world through one man's obedience. That one man is Jesus of Nazareth. Jesus comes in the name of God. Like God in the garden of Eden, he comes to look for those who have hidden themselves from God: "I have come to seek out and to save the lost." he said. Jesus the one who comes seeking us out, calling our names, knocking on our doors, asking to be let in. He is the quest of God in search of a lost people...The mission of Jesus is not to condemn but to save. Jesus is the Saviour...

At Easter we will celebrate the resurrection, the most important feast in the Christian calendar. But today we begin Lent as a time to ready ourselves for that great feast. We are invited to let God find us where we are. He has the same question to ask each of us: "Where are you?" During this Lent we can make time to look at where we are in our lives and discover God's presence anew. We are challenged to make time to listen to his word. We are invited to let him get close to who we are and how we are. Traditionally Lent is a time when we give up some things or take up some things...Whatever we do, it would be a good idea to allow Jesus, the word of God, to get close to us. The word of God comes to question who we are; it comes to support the kind of people we could be. So lets make a little time — five or ten minutes each day — to allow the word form us as it formed Jesus; to let it influence what we do and say; how we live. Let the word of God find us so that we can emerge from our hiding places into the peace of his presence....

Lent is about the expansion of the heart so that it becomes more loving and generous. Just as the heart muscle benefits from exercise, so our spiritual heart benefits from Lenten observances and practices (reading word of God or prayers, fasting, almsgiving). By the end of Lent, with plenty of exercise, our spiritual heart will be in better shape and more ready to resist temptation and place its trust in God. So this first Sunday of Lent, let operation transformation of the heart begin!

*Fr. Adrian Curran OFM Cap*



# Saturday, 4<sup>th</sup> March

## Monthly Mass for Recently Deceased

This evening we remember in a special way all those who died in January 2017.

Marie Byrne (née O’Gorman)  
Ellen McDonnell  
Peter Andrews

John Kelly  
Mary Reynell  
John (Sean) Corcoran

Mary Kate McDonagh  
Linda Ayers  
Owen O’Callaghan

We gather here in solidarity with each other.

The solidarity of a community gathered at the table of God’s people to receive the food of baptised people.  
The Bread of Life.

The solidarity of a community of people beginning a nine-day Novena of Grace in honour of one of the great missionary saints, Francis Xavier.

The solidarity of a bereaved families gathered to remember those from the parish who died in January.  
All of us here tonight have experienced losses of one kind or another.

Loss of health, loss of ability, loss of work, home, losses through emigration, and the greatest – the death of a loved one.

For each one here the experience of your loved-one’s sickness, dying and death is unique and special to you.

None of us have had the same experience and none of us going forward will have the same experience of grief.

There will be many similarities like the first of so many firsts without your loved one. But these will not be the same.

If there is one thing we have is TIME....

Time to grieve

Time to mourn

And none can put a time limit on that!

It’s important to grieve your way and not to be confined by others expectations or time limits of you.

We can all agree that death has robbed us of someone precious, someone who has been part of our lives and whatever the relationship their loss is deeply felt.

Their presence is missed.

And life is just not the same without them.

The one thing we can hold onto is LOVE and GRACE

Death may have the power to break the bonds of skin and flesh death cannot break the bond of love – and in a strange way I am sure you have felt that love grow/change through sickness and death.



The search for meaning in health, sickness and death is difficult to understand and grasp.

Leonard Cohan – the great Canadian singer who died late last year - throughout his life was searching for spiritual meaning and purpose and many of his songs reflect that. He was born into a Jewish family, raised by an Irish Catholic nanny and in recent years became a Buddhist monk.

In his own life, he was so down that his own brokenness lead him to search for things that last.

His latest album released some weeks before he died include the lyrics 'I'm ready Lord'

His song Halleluiah is a love song straight from the Bible– it's about David and his desire for Bethsheba – he sees her from his roof....

His songs have biblical influence because of his Jewish/Catholic upbringing – the psalms reflect life

The song Halleluiah is about his inability to understand life – **so it was Halleluiah to life,** regardless of how uncertain life can be.

A lyric from hallelujah says' I'll stand before the Lord of Song/With nothing on my tongue but Hallelujah'

His songs are littered with references to altar, and sacrifice, and to the cross.

Cohan clearly longs for a Saviour. His lyrics freely admit that we are sunk without one!

What we do during these days of Novena to Francis Xavier is search for the Saviour of our lives. A desire to do a novena is a desire to follow the Lord with faith, devotion and love.

Days of novena are days of love and grace. Love we can all appreciate and understand – the love we have for those close to us be they dead or alive. And Grace – is that power within us that gives strength to us – it's a blessing from God – a loved ones live is a Grace, a funeral and the care and support we receive is Grace, the grace that gives courage to carry on and the grace we get to reach out to others in generosity. Novena days are moments to give thanks for all the graces we have received – all the ways God has blessed us and an opportunity to bring our needs in prayer before God.

We hear in tonight's Gospel –*man does not live on bread alone – but on every word, that comes from the mouth of God.*

This Novena - This Lent reminds us that there is more to life than the physical world.

This Novena and this lent offer us an opportunity to reflect on what is really important.

We say Halleluiah to the LOVE we have in our lives!

The people that matter to us!

We say Halleluiah to the GRACES we have received –

the many blessings from God!

We say Halleluiah to St Francis Xavier and we ask him to bring our favour – our petitions before God!

We say Halleluiah to the GIFT of those who have died!

May they stand before the Lord of song

– the Lord of life with halleluiah on their lips

*Fr. John Kelly*

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*Saint Francis Xavier pray for us. Saint Michan pray for us.*

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