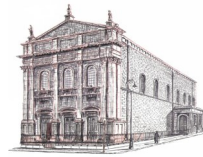




**PARISH OF ST. AGATHA**  
**5TH/6TH DECEMBER 2020**



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**ANNUAL PUBLIC MASS FOR THE DEAD:  
 TUESDAY 8TH DECEMBER 5:30pm**

Public Annual Mass for the Dead will be held at **5:30pm on the 8th December 2020, on the Solemnity Feast of the Immaculate Conception of Our Lady.** Candles will be already placed on the Altar Rails representing the deceased souls, in order, to reduce foot traffic. Family members attending are now obliged to wear a Mask please and thank you. May they rest in Peace. There is also an 11am Mass on the same morning in Honour of the Solemnity.

**CHANGE OF WEEKDAY MASS TIMES -  
 FROM 10AM TO 11AM**

Because all the neighbouring Churches celebrate their weekday Masses at the same time of 10am, it offers no local choice for people, if they miss 10am Mass. Pope Francis and Archbishop Diarmuid Martin are encouraging people to attend weekday Masses, in order to reduce large crowds assembling for Sunday Masses. This is in line with Government restrictions on numbers. In light of this advise, and in conjunction with the Parish Pastoral Council, and discussions with the weekday Mass attendees, the weekday Masses will be changed in St. Agatha's Church from 10am to 11am. This will begin from next **Monday 7th December 2020.** This will also be in keeping with the majority of families who request 11am for Funeral Masses. Thank you for your cooperation. The Saturday 5:30pm Vigil Mass and Sunday 11:30am Mass will remain the same. It will just be 11am Monday - Saturday Mornings. Thank you and God bless. Fr Brendan

**A TENDER VOICE CRIES IN THE WILDERNESS OF SIN**

The Readings today are all about Conversion of heart, through repenting (regretting) of our sins. The Second Advent Candle, lit today, represents the **Way to Love God**, by acknowledging our sins and repenting through the Sacrament of Confession. It is important that we exercise the virtue of humility, by coming down from our high mountain of pride, straightening out our lives to follow Christ. In today's Gospel (Mk 1:1-8), John the Baptist is the messenger, the voice in the wilderness, preparing the **Way** for the Coming (Advent) of Jesus. He will **make paths straight, fill in valleys and lower mountains.** Our Pride and Sins, can reach such mountainous heights within our hearts, that we become blind, rejecting the message of the Gospel, and depriving ourselves of Eternal Life. If we go up the mountain, it should be to *raise up our hearts* and give praise and thanksgiving to God.

**GIVE WAY TO ANGER AND FOR-GIVE**

We sin when we reject the teachings of the Church and each other. Conversion is acknowledging our faults, resulting in a holy change of attitude. The First Reading of Isaiah speaks about *deep dark valleys*, symbolising those hearts empty of God, because they are full of sin. By *filling in the Valleys*, we are allowing God's Grace and Mercy to fill our hearts, by **giving-way** to anger and **for-giving** those who trespass against us.

**SACRED TIME HELPS US PREPARE**

In the Second Reading (2 Peter 3:8-14), St. Peter reminds us to be prepared and in a state of holiness and grace for the awaited Second Coming. God has created time, for the sole purpose, to use as a sacred opportunity, in preparing our hearts and souls for His Second Coming. Peter tells us that *a thousand years is like a day to God* and we should *be living holy and saintly lives while we wait and long for the Day of God to Come.* There will be no place for sin in the new heaven and earth.

**THE INCARNATION [BECOMING FLESH] OF GOD**

The Voice, in the midst of the unbridled wilderness of sin, is the Voice of John the Baptist, but are the Words of God, announcing His arrival as Jesus Christ. Our faith teaches that we were born as vehicles for God's purpose. Earthly life is not our project but God's. We should not be absorbed in our own ways, but in **God's Ways.** Jesus calls us to spend the precious gift of sacred time and of ourselves, on those in need. We must become cleansed of all sinful attachments and addictions and live in the Spirit of Love and Holiness.

**FREEWILL IS A GIFT**

Sin pollutes our freewill and prevents us from hearing the Voice. Advent is an opportunity to strip ourselves of the cloak of pride and dress ourselves in the spiritual garment of Humility and Divine Light, to see the Word made Flesh. We can all fall into patterns of self-absorbance, addiction and attachments, but we must NEVER think we are too far gone, because none of us are ever out of the reach of God's Grace and Mercy. He is ALWAYS here, with His outstretched Eucharistic Hand. God bless, Fr Brendan.