

SoulSpace

SERIES: GREAT CATHOLIC PRAYERS

Season colour: GREEN

In this series, **Brendan McConvery CSsR** looks at great Catholic prayers and their stories and meaning.

Although they had the best of intentions, many of these boys complained to Alphonsus that they found it difficult to fill the time or to keep distractions at bay. He produced a set of reflections and prayers for their use. Someone who happened to be staying in the monastery on retreat, heard them being read, and was very taken by them. He encouraged Alphonsus to publish them and made a generous donation for the first printing.

Alphonsus was something of a late vocation. He had abandoned a promising career as a lawyer at the age of 26 to become a priest. The congregation he founded, the Redemptorists, have spread to every continent. Alphonsus went on to become a bishop and died at the age of 91. Even as a fashionable young lawyer, Alphonsus had a remarkable devotion to the Blessed Sacrament, and each day, he made a lengthy visit.

The book of Visits, one for every day of the month, proved to be a long-term success, and after more than 270 years, it is still popular. It has been translated into at least a hundred languages, and new editions of it continue to appear every year. For each visit, there is an introductory prayer, a short reflection leading to an 'act of spiritual communion,' followed by another short reflection on the Blessed Mother and a concluding prayer to her. While Alphonsus can scarcely be said to have 'invented' the practice of visiting the Blessed Sacrament, his little book gave people a simple method of spending the time of adoration.

In Alphonsus' time, people received Holy Communion very rarely. For many, it may have been once or twice a year; once a month or once a week was considered as frequent and daily communion, especially for ordinary folk, was practically unheard of. In his preaching and writing, Alphonsus encouraged frequent communion. The short 'act of spiritual communion' in the daily visit was a reminder to the faithful that the Eucharistic bread before which they prayed was above all else, the food of the soul, meant to be received at each celebration of Mass.



THE PRAYER

My Jesus, I believe that you are present in the Blessed Sacrament. I love you above all things and I

desire to receive you into my soul.

Since I cannot now receive you sacramentally,

come at least spiritually into my heart.

I embrace you as if you were already there.

I unite myself wholly to you.

Do not permit me to be separated from you.

THE MEANING OF THE PRAYER

The sacrament of the Eucharist is a sign of God's love for us. The truth that God comes to us in the form of bread and wine is a great mystery of faith. Our prayer begins by professing our faith in the mystery of the Lord's presence in the Eucharist. Reflecting on the gift, the person praying is reminded of how deeply each of us is loved by God and no other response is possible to love than love and the desire to give one's self totally to the Beloved. Eating the bread and drinking from the cup of the Lord is a vivid example of that kind of self-giving.

There are reasons why one may not always be able to receive the Eucharist. Daily Mass for example may not be possible because of distance from the church, conflicting work and church timetables, illness or even recognising that there is something seriously wrong in one's life that should be rectified through the sacrament of reconciliation. It is in such moments that Alphonsus' prayer reminds us that we still belong to God and can enjoy the intimacy of friendship with him, even if we cannot physically share the sacrament. ■



AN ACT OF SPIRITUAL COMMUNION

STORY OF THE PRAYER

Like many familiar Catholic prayers, there are many different forms of this one. The original appeared in a short book called Visits to the Blessed Sacrament and to the Most Blessed Virgin Mary, first published in Naples in 1745. It was the work of a Neapolitan priest called Alphonsus Maria de Liguori. He wrote it to help the teenage novices of the religious congregation he had founded thirteen years earlier to spend some time each day in personal prayer before the Blessed Sacrament and before an image of Mary.

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Today's readings

Ecc 15:15-20
1 Cor 2:6-10
Mt 5:17-37

GOD'S WORD TODAY

At the time of Jesus, faithful Jews, such as the scribes and Pharisees, observed many religious laws. The life-blood of the Pharisees was the law of Moses, which comprised not only the written Torah, the first five books of the Old Testament, but also interpretations of the written law which developed over time.

The Pharisees believed that only knowing the law thoroughly and following it to the letter would save a Jew. The emphasis was strictly on external observance: if you followed the law exactly, you were all right with God.

But for Jesus, such an approach is not enough. He demands much more and he takes his followers a giant step beyond the law of Moses. Jesus knows that it is possible to keep the law, and yet to sin against those commandments by breaking them in spirit. For him, what really matters is not external observance but what goes on inside the human heart - our thoughts, our values, our attitudes, our motivations, what guides our whole approach to life. Following Jesus means more than avoiding sin, or keeping the law. It is much tougher than that. Following Jesus means internalising our faith, making it part of the very air we breathe.



SIXTH SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME.

Today, Sunday, 12th February 2017

The negative formulation of God's will in the law is necessary for those who are morally immature. But Jesus leads us by a more perfect and positive understanding to the maturity which makes us realise our full obligations to God and to our fellow human beings.

WORDS FROM POPE FRANCIS ON THE FAMILY

“Against this backdrop of love so central to the Christian experience of marriage and the family, another virtue stands out, one often overlooked in our world of frenetic and superficial relationships. It is tenderness”. (Amoris Laetitia, Par 28)

WORLD MEETING OF FAMILIES AUGUST 2018

As part of the preparations for this special event there are Valentine's Day suggestion leaflets available in our Cathedral inspired by the words of Pope Francis in “Joy of Love”. Please take a leaflet and celebrate St. Valentine's Day with your loved one.

PRAYING WITH THE PSALMS

Bishop Kevin will give a presentation on this topic on Wednesday 22nd February from 7.30pm - 8.45pm in Summerhill College Library. All welcome. For further details see: www.elphindiocese.ie/lent

MASS FROM RTE WITH FR RAYMOND BROWNE Mass today, Sunday, 12th February will be broadcast from the RTE Studios in Dublin and will be celebrated by Fr. Raymond Browne of Kilbride parish. Roscommon Solstice Choir will perform the music, under the direction of Andrew and Eimear Reynolds. The Mass will be broadcast on RTE 1 TV, RTE Radio 1 and online at <http://www.rte.ie/player/ie/live/8/> and <http://www.rte.ie/radio/>

LOST IPAD (red case) on 5th Jan. in Wine street carpark. Sentimental value. Contains photos & video of deceased family. Reward offered. Contact Phil Cunningham on 087 2746090.

READINGS FOR SUNDAY NEXT, 19th February 1st Reading: Lev. 19: 1 -2. 17-18 ; 2nd Reading: 1 Cor. 3:16-23 ; Gospel: Mt. 5:38-48.

DIOCEESAN VOCATIONS Men who are willing to accept the challenge are asked to explore their vocation to the priesthood by contacting Fr. Jim Murray at 071-9162136 or Fr. John Coughlan at 071-9662012, or email vocations@elphindiocese.ie for more information.

BINGO - GILLOOLY HALL - TONIGHT Sunday, 12th February at 9.00 p.m. With a jackpot of €3,200.

SLIGO CATHEDRAL PARISH – 2200 FAMILIES
SUNDAY 5th FEBRUARY PARISH ENV: €1,483 PL/STAND. ORD: €2,264
THANK YOU for your contribution.
ST MARY'S PRESBYTERY ☎ 071 9162670 SACRISTY ☎ 071 9161261
✉ email us at news@sligocathedral.ie We welcome your comments.

DATE FOR DIARY - HUNGER LUNCH on Ash Wednesday, 1st March, in the Gillooly Hall from 12noon to 2pm marking the beginning of Lent and in aid of Trocaire. Please support. All most welcome.

VARIETY CONCERT of Ballads Songs & Stories, to help defray the costs of our ongoing renovations of our Cathedral, on Friday 24th February 2017 at 8.00pm in the Gillooly Hall. Tickets €10, available from Liber Bookstore, O'Connell St., Sligo; Parish Area Representatives and Selected outlets in the Parish. Please support.

CATHOLIC MARRIAGE ENCOUNTER Gift yourselves a special weekend break together to boost and refresh your relationship by making a Marriage Renewal Weekend. The next Weekend will be at The Creggan Court Hotel, Athlone from 3rd to 5th March 2017. For more info and / or to book, visit www.marriageencounter.ie or call 087 7840408. Weekends are presented by Catholic Marriage Encounter in Ireland.

VOLUNTEERS REQUIRED

FORÓIGE BIG BROTHER BIG SISTER MENTORING PROGRAMME FOR YOUNG PEOPLE WITH AUTISM

The Foróige Big Brother Big Sister Youth Mentoring Programme is currently seeking male adult volunteers in Sligo & Leitrim who can make a real difference by sharing 1 - 2 hours a week with a young person aged between 15 & 24 years who has autism. If you are interested in becoming a volunteer or would like to find out more about the programme please contact Elaine Granaghan on 086 0497089 or email elaine.granaghan@foroige.ie

FRI 3RD MARCH TEA DAY FOR NORTH WEST SIMON COMMUNITY

If you, your friends, work colleagues, club, school or group wish to host a Tea Day in aid of your local homeless charity- North West Simon Community please register your interest by email to mary@northwestsimon.ie or ring 087 7708865. If Fri 3rd March doesn't suit any day around this is fine. You can make a difference in your local community. www.northwestsimon.ie

KNOCK PILGRIMAGE TO NEW YORK

Will take place from 8th—14th May. Itinerary includes a Requiem Mass on Saturday, 13th May at Old St. Patrick's Cathedral for the re-internment of the remains of John Curry, the youngest of the Knock witnesses which will be celebrated by His Eminence Cardinal Dolan. For more info contact JWT 01 2410800 or email: bronwyn.clinton@joewalshstours.ie

CATHEDRAL of the IMMACULATE CONCEPTION

Upcoming **EVENTS** THE WEEK AHEAD

Wed 15th Feb “Wednesday Tea” after 10.30am Mass
Saturday 18th Confessions 2.00p.m. - 4.00p.m.

DATES TO REMEMBER

ANNUAL CHURCH GATE COLLECTION for The Irish pilgrimage trust takes place this weekend, 11th/ 12th February.

ST. JOSEPH'S YOUNG PRIESTS SOCIETY Next meeting will take place tomorrow - Monday, 13th February, immediately after the 10.30am Mass in the Upper Room of the Cathedral Sacristy. New members welcome.

RSA CHECK IT FITS Get your child's car seat checked for free by visiting Toyota, Davey Motors, Hazelwood, Sligo on Tuesday, 14th February. www.rsa.ie/checkitfits

SLIGO ACTIVE RETIREMENT ASSOCIATION Monthly meeting at 2.30pm in the Presbyterian Hall, Church Street on Tuesday, 14th February. New members welcome.

FR. FLANAGAN PRAYER GROUP - Next Meeting is Tuesday, 14th February at 8.00 p.m. in St. Mary's Presbytery. All are most welcome.

PARISH HEART SCREENING OFFER Pulsewave Ireland Cardio Heart screening in Sligo next week. The Bpro certified to measure CASP to 99.17% in comparison to an angiogram and as seen on TV. As Heart Disease is still the biggest killer in Ireland we try to make it affordable for everyone to be screened. Normal cost of screening is €50 per person, Parish offer €30 per person, for that we check your Blood Pressure, Heart Rhythm, Casp of heart, arterial flexibility and Blood flow. We can access the risk of heart attack or stroke with a simple non invasive test. Venue: Tuesday, 21st February in Sligo City Hotel, Sligo. Appointments available from 11am to 8pm. Call 087 7151623 to make an appointment spaces are limited.

HEART SUPPORT GROUP meeting will be held in Sligo Park Hotel on Wednesday, 22nd February at 7pm. Speakers: Anthony Ryan, Anita Flynn, Sally Begg. (Cardiac Investigations Department). Topic: All you need to know about Cardiac Devices i.e. Pacemakers, ICDs etc.

LEAVING CERTIFICATE ESSAY WRITING ESSENTIALS - A Concentrated Mid-Term Course for English Papers 1 & 2 or any subject requiring essay or paragraph answers. 5th or 6th year, higher and lower level. Thursday, 23rd February (Essay and Paragraph Answers) and Friday, 24 February (Short Story and Personal Essay) 10am-1pm at Yeats Memorial Building, Sligo. Phone 083 8561559 to register or for more details. Places limited.

INTRODUCTION TO HORTICULTURE COURSE, starting the 3rd March at St Michael's Family Life Centre every Friday from 10-1pm, for info contact Cathy or Gary at 071 9138415.

MARIA VADIA is a powerful speaker and Intercessor for Healing. She will be at Carraroe Community Centre on Sunday, 5th March 2017 from 9.00am to 5.30pm. Contact 085 7765294.

ELPHIN DIOCESAN PILGRIMAGE TO LOURDES Monday 28th August to Saturday 2nd September 2017. For further information and to book contact JWT on 01 2410800.

BAPTISMS We welcome into God's family OLIVER MOSZKOWSKI recently baptised in our Cathedral.

Anniversary & remembrances

DAY	8.00am	10.30am
TUES 14 th	—	TOM WEIR
WED 15 th	—	EAMON HARGADON
THURS 16 th	—	NANCY BREE
FRI 17 th	COLIN WATTERS	AGNES MORRISON
SAT 18 th	MICHAEL LYNCH	Month's Mind MAUREEN O'DONNELL

Rest in peace Your prayers are asked for the repose of the soul of: MARY HENRY, Highfield. *May God grant her eternal rest and comfort and console her bereaved family and friends.*