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Malin Parish: Resources, news and prayers: *Website:* www.malinparish.ie. *Facebook:* Malin Parish

Details on the times of online **Masses and Prayers** for the Covid 19 Crisis : <https://www.catholicbishops.ie>
Mass Leaflets for each Sunday are available in the churches and parish shops along with the weekly Bulletin.

Sincere Thanks to those who have sent in their collection envelopes, cheques and donations for the Parish during the past week.

Parish Prayer Day: Our Parish Prayer Day takes place next Wednesday 20th May. Our theme for this month is our Children and Young people. This continues to be a time of challenge and uncertainty for many young people. Thank you to the many people in our parish who have committed themselves to a specific hour of prayer on the 20th in such a way that the whole day and night are covered. Everyone is invited to join in this prayer, either by taking on an hour, or by including this intention in your own prayer during that day.

A Prayer for children and young people

God of love, we praise and thank you for the wonderful gift of life. Help us to cherish this gift in ourselves and in all whom we meet.

Bless all children that they may know the joy of being alive and that we may help them towards a great future. Bless all young women and men. Be with them through these years of change in their bodies, their priorities, and their relationships, so that nothing may damage their joy and their hope.

Bless especially all those in our parish who are doing exams this year. May they have every success, not just in their exams but in their lives. May all of them and all of us be kept safe from the corona virus and from all other forms of harm. We ask this through Christ, our Lord. Amen.

On the Death of a child: A funeral sermon on Psalm 23

Psalm 23 : The Lord is my shepherd, I shall not want; he makes me lie down in green pastures. He leads me beside still waters; he restores my soul. He leads me in paths of righteousness for his name's sake. Even though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I fear no evil; for you are with me; your rod and your staff, they comfort me. You prepare a table before me in the presence of my enemies; you anoint my head with oil, my cup overflows. Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life; and I shall dwell in the house of the Lord for ever.

Last Thursday all of us received the news of Louise Colhoun's tragic and sudden death with overwhelming shock and disbelief. Later this gave way to silence and tears, no words seemed adequate or useful. As often happens with sudden death, painful questions arise about how and why such things happen. Where can we look for possible answers or even just re-assurance in such times of deep sadness and loss?

Today as a parish community we "walk through the valley of the shadow of death" (Psalm 23). Today the familiarity, poetry, and beauty of the 23rd psalm have a different tone. The shadow is dark and the valley is long and deep. The valley is real and the shadow is here. That does not mean, however, that you and I are without hope.

Yes, the shadow of death is our reality today. But there is another reality, a greater reality. What is the one thing necessary for a shadow to exist? Light. There can be no shadow without light. And the darker the shadow, the brighter the light. Even when we don't see it, the light accompanies us through the valley. It is already a present reality. It was there the day Louise died and it is here today. The shadow is not the ultimate reality. It is, rather, proof that the light is also here.

That light does not undo what has happened or magically make everything better. It does not provide an answer or explanation. It is not. It's a way forward. It's our hope. It provides the quiet confidence that the day will come when the light pierces the shadow of painful loss, of sadness, and of unanswered questions.

The light has been with us from the beginning. It's trustworthy. It never fades. And the shadow cannot overcome or extinguish it. Until that day comes when the light pierces the shadow – and it will – our challenge, our hope, and our way forward is to put one foot in front of the other. That is easier said than done. Sometimes it takes all we have just to take the next step. That's why we must stay close, walk together, and continually remind ourselves and one another that a shadow cannot exist apart from light. Some call that light God or Jesus. Others might speak of it as the Divine, the Holy, the Mystery. Others understand it as the power of resurrection. Isaiah spoke of it as the Sprit of the Lord God bringing good news, binding up the brokenhearted, and comforting those who mourn. It is all those things and more.

That is our way through the valley of the shadow of death. One foot in front of the other. One step at a time. The light is always shining behind the shadow, and the shadow will never overcome it. One of my favourite prayers comes from Julian of Norwich, an English mystic who lived in mid-14th and early 15th centuries. Her prayer was: “All shall be well. All shall be well. Every manner of thing shall be well.”

I hope you will hold on to what those words say. Let them bind us to faith, hope, and love, and connect us to one another. The theme of those words – all shall be well – is the thread that runs through psalm 23. Whatever darkness we experience in the valley of life does not have the final word. God's light continues to sustain and support us.

Those words comfort us in times of uncertainty and sustain us through sorrows and losses. They give us courage when we are afraid. They assure us there is nothing to fear in the dark valley of death. They offer hope and strength to take our next step. They remind us there is a way forward when we feel powerless and fearful. They promise us that we never walk alone.

Let this be your new daily practice. Pray Psalm 23 daily. Pray it slowly and deeply. Allow some silence – a soaking space – between each verse. Pray them like this –

**The LORD is my shepherd;
I shall not be in want.
All shall be well.**

**He makes me lie down in green pastures
and leads me beside still waters.
All shall be well.**

**He revives my soul
and guides me along right pathways for his Name's sake.
All shall be well.**

**Though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death,
I shall fear no evil;
for you are with me;
your rod and your staff, they comfort me.
All shall be well.**

**You spread a table before me in the presence of those who trouble me;
you have anointed my head with oil,
and my cup is running over.
All shall be well.**

**Surely your goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life,
and I will dwell in the house of the LORD for ever.**

Every manner of thing shall be well.