

Parish of Malin (Clonca) Sunday 7th February 2021
Fifth Sunday in Ordinary Time (Year B Week 1)

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Mass Times
St. Patrick's Church – No Mass
Star of the Sea Church – No Mass
St. Mary's Church – No Mass

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Web Site: www.malinparish.ie

Facebook: Malin Parish

Details on the times of online Masses and Prayers for the Covid 19 Crisis: <https://www.catholicbishops.ie>

Sincere Thanks to those who have sent in their collection envelopes, cheques and donations for the Parish during the past week. Please make cheques payable to "Malin Parochial". New envelopes are available now January to June 2021 are now available in all churches and from Fr. Devlin. Please use these envelopes for your weekly contribution to the parish.

Parish Draw 2021-2022: Parish Draw Cards are now available from Fr. Devlin. Due to the risk to promoters and parishioners, the parish draw this year will not begin until April. Hopefully by then it will be safe for all. Promoters should make sure they now have their Draw cards and have plenty of time to contact draw members when it is safe to do so. The first draw will be in April and the parish draw will run from April to April in future years. Sincers thanks to our promoters and members of the draw. It is an important part of parish fundraising.

Accord Inishowen Counselling: A professional confidential counselling service is available for couples or individuals through Accord at the Pastoral Centre, Carndonagh. F93 XP59. Contact 074 93 74103, e-mail accordinishowen@gmail.com or book: <https://www.accord.ie/services/marriage-and-relationship-counselling>.

Priority Insitute: Registrations for our spring semester are closing next Tuesday 9 February A link about studying theology online <https://youtu.be/hdyf3czCw9I>

Scoil Cholmcille, Glengad, Enrolment application forms for the 2021-2022 school year are now available from the school's website, scoilcholmcilleglengad.weebly.com or by emailing the school at glengadns@gmail.com or writing to: Scoil Cholmcille, Ballymena, Glengad, Malin, Co. Donegal, F93 N663. The school will cease accepting applications on 8th February. Please inform relations or friends who may not pupils currently attending the school. We are now carrying out a 'Projected Enrolment'. If you have a child or know of anyone who has a child that may be enrolling in Scoil Cholmcille in the next 5 years, please let us know.

Urbleragh National School - Enrolment application forms for the 2021-2022 school year are available from the school's website urbleraghns.weebly.com. We will commence accepting applications from the 6th January 2021. Completed forms must be submitted by Monday 1st March 2021

Fifth Sunday in Ordinary Time

(1) Job 7:1-4, 6-7 Job wrestles with the problem of innocent suffering

Job said: "Do not human beings have a hard service on earth, and are not their days like the days of a labourer? Like a slave who longs for the shadow, and like labourers who look for their wages, so I am allotted months of emptiness, and nights of misery are apportioned to me. When I lie down I say, 'When shall I rise?' But the night is long, and I am full of tossing until dawn. My days are swifter than a weaver's shuttle, and come to their end without hope. "Remember that my life is a breath; my eye will never again see good."

Gospel: Mark 1:29-39 Even Jesus needs a quiet place to pray. Then he starts a new phase of his mission

On leaving the synagogue, Jesus entered the house of Simon and Andrew, with James and John. Now Simon's mother-in-law was in bed with a fever, and they told him about her at once. He came and took her by the hand and lifted her up. Then the fever left her, and she began to serve them.

That evening, at sundown, they brought to him all who were sick or possessed with demons. And the whole city was gathered around the door. And he cured many who were sick with various diseases, and cast out many demons; and he would not permit the demons to speak, because they knew him.

In the morning, while it was still very dark, he got up and went out to a deserted place, and there he prayed. And Simon and his companions hunted for him. When they found him, they said to him, "Everyone is searching for you." He answered, "Let us go on to the neighbouring towns, so that I may proclaim the message there also; for that is what I came out to do." And he went throughout Galilee, proclaiming the message in their synagogues and casting out demons.

Faith and the Cross

We are all familiar with suffering in one shape or form, whether it is physical, emotional, mental or spiritual suffering. There is no getting away from suffering; it comes to us all and it comes in different guises at different times of our lives. To live is to suffer. Regardless of our differences, suffering is something we all have in common. Some people seem to suffer more than others. Yet, it is difficult to measure suffering, especially in others. Some who do not seem to be suffering can be in great pain and others who seem to be suffering greatly can have a deep peace. The cry of Job in today's reading is one that comes out of deep suffering. He is in a very dark place indeed. Not only has he lost his health, his property and members of his family but he seems to have lost God. He had been living an exemplary life and he cannot understand why God has allowed so much misfortune to befall him. The God whom he worshipped when times were good now seems a complete stranger to him. The God to whom he related as a friend now seems to have become his enemy. The experience of loss, whether it is the loss of health or property or loved ones, can bring on something of a spiritual crisis. Some can be tempted to abandon God, when their prayers out of the depths are not heard. They feel angry at God; they sense that their trust in God has not been vindicated. That is very much the place where Job finds himself in today's first reading. Job in that sense is every man or woman. The literary figure of Job is a very authentic depiction of the dark side of human experience, indeed, the dark side of faith in God.

The Belfast-born writer C.S. Lewis was both a great intellectual and a man of great faith. He set out to give a rational explanation for the Christian vision of life. In 1940 he wrote a book called *The Problem of Pain* in which he brought his intellect and his faith to bear on the problem of suffering. However, twenty one years later, in 1961, he wrote a very different book, called, *A Grief Observed*. In that book he recognises that his rational, cerebral, faith has taken something of a battering. The book consists of the painful and brutally honest reflections of a man whose wife has died, slowly and in pain, from cancer. The book gives a vivid description of his own reaction, as a man of faith, to his wife's death. His rational faith fell to pieces when confronted with suffering of a devastatingly personal kind. He writes at one point, 'Where is God? Go to him when your need is desperate, when all other help is vain, and what do you find? A door slammed in your face and a sound of bolting and double bolting on the inside. After that silence.' The name of Lewis's wife was Joy. He had earlier written a book called *Surprised by Joy* in which he wrote about the impact meeting her had on his life. His book *A Grief Observed* has received a wide readership because of his authentic and moving account of the impact of bereavement. Even though his rational, cerebral faith took something of a battering because of Joy's death, Lewis did not lose his faith. Through the darkness of this experience he claims to have come to love his wife more truly. He writes that God had helped him to see that because the love he and his wife had for each other had reached its earthly limit, it was ready for its heavenly fulfilment.

Faith has to come to terms with the cross and it is at the foot of the cross that faith can be purified and deepened. Jesus himself entered fully into the darkness of human suffering. In today's second reading, Paul says of himself, 'For the weak, I made myself weak.' That is certainly true of Jesus. He entered fully into the weakness of the human condition. Elsewhere, in one of his letters, Paul says of Christ that 'though he was rich, yet for your sakes he became poor, so that by his poverty you might become rich.' On the cross Jesus was at his weakest and poorest; it was on Calvary that, in the words of Lewis, Jesus went to God and found a door slammed in his face, as he cried out, 'My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?' Yet, that cry of desolation is itself an act of faith; it is the language faith uses when confronted with the harrowing darkness of loss. God did not forsake Jesus, but brought through death into the fullness of life. The Jesus who was crucified in weakness is the same risen Lord who is with us in our own experiences of suffering and desolation, just as he was with the suffering and the broken in today's gospel. He is with us as one who knows our experience from the inside. Having gone down into the depths and having moved beyond the depths into a fuller life, he can enable us to do the same. He is the good shepherd who, even when we walk through the valley of darkness, is there with his crook and his staff, leading us to springs of living water.