

Parish of Malin (Clonca) Sunday 21st February 2021
First Sunday in Lent (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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Facebook: Malin Parish

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

Trocaire Boxes are available in the churches and shops of the Parish. Giving to charity, which includes our own parish, is an essential part of our Lenten journey, along with prayer and fasting.

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. Sincere thanks to our promoters and members of the draw. It is an important part of parish fundraising.

The Net – February 2021. Sharing the fruits of the faith in the Derry Diocese. With Covid-19 restrictions still in place, the February edition of 'The Net' will only be available on the Diocesan website - <https://www.derrydiocese.org/news/the-net-february-2021>. However, the publication will be available again in parishes when the restrictions are lifted. Enquiries to – editorthenet15@gmail.com.

Knock Shrine: Exploring the Word of God through Prayer. A series of online Scripture Reflections at 9pm each Tuesday night. Knock Shrine will show a series of online night prayer with reflections on Scripture. Students from St. Louis Community School Kiltimagh, Co. Mayo will deliver this series of talks inspired by Scripture. You can join us online for this new series at www.knockshrine.ie/watch-live every Tuesday at 9pm. Knock Shrine are launching a new online series to engage you each Thursday at 8.30pm during Lent.

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>. Accord Inishowen will be hosting a **Virtual Interactive Marriage Preparation Programme** (Pre-Marriage Courses) via Zoom on Saturday 5th June 2021. To book online: <https://www.accord.ie/services/marriage-preparation> or email: accordinishowen@gmail.com for more information.

St. Patrick's College Maynooth. Annual Trócaire Lecture. "Caring for the Human Family and our Common Home". Cardinal Luis Antonio Gokim Tagle will deliver the keynote address. The event will be delivered online this year. Tuesday 9th March @ 6.30pm. Registration for this free online event is required. Please register at https://trocaire-org.zoom.us/webinar/register/WN_bLnu0_aLSYSONMPEi3AYpg. For enquiries about this event please contact colm.hogan@trocaire.org

First Sunday of Lent: Children of the Desert

Some years ago I was on a pilgrimage to the Holy Land with a group of others to follow in the footsteps of Christ. We visited Bethlehem, Nazareth and Jerusalem; climbed the Mount of the Beatitudes and swam in the Sea of Galilee and even in the Dead Sea (not a pleasant experience!). We walked from Jerusalem to Jericho, looked into Jacob's Well, stood on the place in Cana where Jesus changed the water into wine and even knelt at the place where he was crucified. Everywhere we went, we took our gospel with us and read the appropriate passage. It was a moving experience all the way. But the strongest impression I have retained is that of the desert where Christ spent forty days before starting his public life. During our pilgrimage, we spent a day and a night in the desert.

It is not surprising that the three great world religions, Judaism, Christianity and Islam, were all born in the desert. It was through the desert that Moses led the Israelites from slavery in Egypt to the Promised Land. It was from that desert that John the Baptist came to herald the Messiah and soon after Jesus followed to proclaim himself Messiah. After my visit there, I came to realise the significance of the desert. The desert is a purgatory we must pass through to reach paradise. What is impressive about the desert is its sheer aridness. There is no vegetation, no bird life and, apart from the odd tiny lizard, almost no animals.

The silence is almost total. In that bleak landscape, nothing comes between man and his God. One either discovers God or succumbs to despair. It is no wonder that those Bedouins who ply the salt trade following their caravans across the desert are deeply religious. No life thrives here except the inner life. It is not surprising that it was the Desert Fathers who created that great institution dedicated to fostering the inner life, Western monasticism. It has so profoundly marked Christianity that we are all now, in a sense, children of the desert.

Living now as many of us do, in built-up areas, piled high on top of each other in high-rise apartments, bombarded day and night with the roar of city traffic and the blare of electronic music, we are in danger of losing our desert roots. And with that our inner life. We need to create a time and a space to nurture our spiritual lives. Lent is such a time. The Spirit drove Jesus out into the desert and he remained there for forty days. Like Jesus, we should let the Holy Spirit lead us out into the desert this Lent where we can confront the devils that haunt our lives, and like him too, triumph over them. That is the freedom, dignity, and gift that is offered in today's gospel.

Opposing forces :

Last Wednesday we began the season of Lent. We have five weeks of Lent now until Easter. It is worth reminding ourselves that Lent is beginning. As a church we have set out on a journey which will end at the Easter Triduum, those three great days of Holy Thursday, Good Friday and Easter Sunday. The gospel reading for the first Sunday of Lent is always the gospel reading of the temptation of Jesus. Mark's account of the temptation of Jesus is the shortest by far. We are given no dialogue between Jesus and Satan; the temptations are not spelled out in any way. Instead we have that enigmatic statement that Jesus 'was with the wild beasts and the angels ministered to him'.

We could think of wild beasts and angels as two opposing forces. The wild beasts could be understood as servants of Satan, putting Jesus' relationship with God to the test, enticing him to put himself rather than God at the centre of his life. The angels, in contrast, are servants of God, supporting Jesus in his time of struggle, giving him the strength to stand firm in the test, to withstand the onslaught. There is some parallel between where Jesus found himself in that wilderness at the very beginning of his ministry and our own lives. We too can find ourselves caught between wild beast and angels. We too can find our best convictions, our deepest values, being put to the test. The values of the gospel are not always at home in the world in which we live. The pressure to compromise with those values can be very strong. We can find ourselves in something of a moral and spiritual wilderness where there is very little appreciation for or understanding of the gospel message. Indeed, we can feel very alone as Jesus must have felt very alone in the wilderness.

At such times we have to remind ourselves that we are not alone, no more than Jesus was really alone in the wilderness. The angels are ministering to us. The Lord's ministering, empowering and comforting presence is always at hand. That was the opening message of Jesus as soon as he stepped out of the wilderness, 'the time has come; the kingdom of God is close at hand'. Jesus had come up against the kingdom of Satan during his forty days in the wilderness. However he emerged from that testing time knowing that the kingdom of God was stronger than the kingdom of Satan, proclaiming that the reign of God was present for all. In his letter to the Romans Saint Paul would put that conviction in a very succinct fashion, 'where sin abounds, grace abounds all the more'. That is why Paul could say to the members of the church in Corinth, 'God is faithful, and he will not let you be tested beyond your strength, but with the testing he will also provide the way out so that you may be able to endure it'. There may indeed be wild beast out there, forces that seek to undermine our faith in the Lord and the way of life that flows from that. However, today's gospel reading assures us that there is an even more fundamental reality, and that is the reality of the Lord's empowering presence. The angels will minister to us; the Lord will stand by us. He has given us and will continue to give us an abundance of resources. God is constantly at work among us and within us. Like Saint Paul we can say, 'I can do all things in him who strengthens me'.

One way of understanding Lent is to see it as the time when we try to give in to the many ways that God may be trying to touch our lives. We often think of Lent as a time when we try to give up things. There can be a real value in that. However, more fundamentally and more positively we might think of Lent as a time when we give in to the Lord who is always present to us and calling out to us. The church sets aside this season of Lent in the springtime of the year as a reminder that we may need to awaken spiritually. Although the Lord is present to us, we are not always present to him. Although the reign of God is at hand, we don't always entrust ourselves to that good news. As we awaken spiritually, as we give in to the Lord, as we become more aware of the Lord who is around me, above me, below me, at my right hand and at my left hand, then we may experience a new desire to give up whatever is not serving our relationship with the Lord. We enter this season of Lent not just as individuals but as a community of faith. It is as a community that we are called to turn more fully towards the Lord and to walk together in his company towards Holy Week.