

St Patrick's Parish Belfast



FROM COVID TO LIGHT

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Lenten Online Retreat 2021

*'The one who has hope lives differently; the one who hopes
has been granted the gift of a new life.'*

– Pope Emeritus Benedict XVI

Lent is the Christian season of spiritual preparation before Easter. It begins on Ash Wednesday and throughout Lent, many Christians observe a period of fasting, repentance, moderation, self-denial, and spiritual discipline. The purpose of the Lenten season is to set aside time for reflection on Jesus Christ—to consider his suffering and his sacrifice, his life, death, burial, and resurrection.

During the six weeks of self-examination and reflection, Christians who observe Lent typically make a commitment to fast, or to give up something—a habit, like smoking, watching TV, swearing, or a food or drink, such as sweets, chocolate, or coffee. Some Christians also take on a Lenten discipline, like reading the Bible and spending more time in prayer to draw nearer to God.

This year we invite you to **TAKE ON** a Lenten discipline and join us each Tuesday evening during lent as we gather as a Christian community in prayer and reflection based on different themes each week. The goal of these spiritual disciplines is to strengthen our faith as a faith filled community and to develop a closer relationship with God.

For Western Christianity, Ash Wednesday marks the first day, or the start of the season of Lent. Which begins 40 days prior to Easter, technically 46, as Sundays are not included in the count. This year we begin our Lenten reflections on **Tuesday 23rd February**.

This Lent we are inviting you to join us along our Lenten journey for 2021. This year's journey reflects from Easter of last year, when Covid was becoming more known, towards this Easter in which, please God, we will have more light and, hopefully, move towards the end of this pandemic.

Each of our Talks are themed, based on the Gospel of the previous Sunday, in light of Covid. The Guest speaker will reflect on the theme from their own context in light of their vocation and faith, but also in light of the Hope of this Easter and our journey through Covid, now that we have a vaccine to aid the control of this virus.

There will also be an opportunity for some prayer and questions during the evening. During this question time we, as a Christian community, can reflect on either the Talk or the Scripture of the previous week.

So, **THIS LENT, make that commitment** to spend an hour on a Tuesday evening to engage with our Christian faith in the Light of Easter and through the lens of the hope which Easter brings as we continue our earthly journey fighting against Covid.

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First Week of Lent – Talk for Week One

The Wilderness of Covid

Tuesday 23rd February 2021

Scripture:	Mark 1:12-15
Scripture Theme:	Jesus was tempted by Satan, and the angel looked after him.
Talk Theme:	The Wilderness of Covid
Speaker:	Fr James O'Reilly

Our Opening Prayer

Prayer:

Father, Lent can be a journey of renewal in faith for us all. We listen, with the hearts of children, learning old lessons, as though for the first time. And each day, we pray our prayers in faith that simply help us keep turning towards you, Our God, for the graces we need for this day, week and month ahead. Throughout the day, perhaps in the background while we are doing other things, help us to remember what we are asking for. Our desire grows as we make changes to our daily patterns. As we make these Lenten sacrifices, in order to experience freedom from self-directed needs, we experience a freedom for other-directed love and generosity. We ask you Father, with Your Son and the Holy Spirit, rekindle our Faith, Hope and Love and let us Journey 'From Covid through Light' this year. We ask this through Christ our Lord AMEN.

About our Speaker:

Father James O'Reilly is the Curate in the Parish of Antrim. Fr James is originally from Poleglass, Belfast. He was Ordained to the priesthood on 12th June 2016 in the Parish of Christ the Redeemer Church, Lagmore. Prior to his acceptance to study for the priesthood in 2010 Fr James, a graduate of St. Mary's University Belfast, spent a year living and serving as part of a missionary team in Detroit, Michigan. Upon returning home, Fr James spent a further year working for Youth Initiatives; a Christian youth organisation based in West Belfast. He was accepted to study for the priesthood in 2010 and entered St Malachy's Seminary, Belfast, in September of that year, where he began philosophical studies through the Maryvale Institute, Birmingham, and Queen's University Belfast. In 2012 Fr James continued his formation programme at the Pontifical Seminary in St Patrick's College, Maynooth, earning a Bachelor of Sacred Theology degree. He was ordained as a deacon on 31 May 2015 as the final stage in preparation for priesthood. Fr. James was appointed to the Parish of Antrim in October 2016 as curate and is now also Chaplain to Antrim Area Hospital.



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~

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Second Week of Lent – Talk for Week Two

Listen to Him

Tuesday 2nd March 2021

Scripture:	Mark 9: 2-10
Scripture Theme:	This is my Son, the Beloved
Talk Theme:	Listen to Him
Speaker:	Sr Eileen O'Connell OP

Our Opening Prayer

Prayer:

Dear Lord, as we continue the first part of Lent, during which we learn the wonderful lessons in our faith, we can feel the rhythm developing. Sunday is always our celebration of the Lord's resurrection, and establishes our theme for the week. Wednesdays and Fridays remind us of our commitment to a change of heart. Monday, Tuesday and Thursday re-introduce us to wonderful scriptures for our journey. Saturday is always uplifting and joyful. As we experience how these prayers of our life are, we find ourselves praying together in the same Spirit with one another along this Lenten journey 'From Covid to Light'. We ask this through Christ our Lord. AMEN.



About our Speaker:

Sr Eileen O'Connell OP has been a member of the Congregation of Dominican Sisters of Our Lady of the Rosary and Saint Catherine of Siena, Cabra for eight years (since January 2013). She is originally from Cork, living in St Catherine's Dominican Convent on the Falls Road since September 2019. She likes to walk in beautiful places, to cycle, to blog, to doodle, to talk about ideas - and loves dogs, nature, Scriptures, poetry, music, the sea, the hills, God, coffee and chocolate - but not in that order! Currently, Sr Eileen's ministries include: writing for publication; Committee Member of Embrace NI; volunteer at Jubilee Farm in Larne; team member on Knockadoon Music and Liturgy Week; volunteer leader at St Vincent de Paul Holiday

Week for children; Dominican Ministry Fund Committee Secretary; and others.

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Third Week of Lent – Talk for Week Three

Covid Roadmaps to Recovery

Tuesday 9th March 2021

Scripture:	John 2:13-25
Scripture Theme:	Destroy this Sanctuary, and in three days I will raise it up.
Talk Theme:	Covid Roadmaps to Recovery
Speaker:	Mr Jim Deeds

Our Opening Prayer

Our Prayer

Holy Father, with this week, we conclude the first part of Lent. We continue our lessons in the faith, as our practices of Lent to become deeper and experience more fully Your grace.

As we enter into this week reflecting our intense prayer we beg, as the Church, that we may be freed from sin and from all anxiety, we ask these same desires for those lacking in their faith. We continue to wake each morning, pausing to ask for the graces we desire for the day. Throughout each day, in the background of our thoughts and feelings we make more of an effort with what this journey means for our personal change of heart, the renewal of our Baptismal commitment to be placed with Jesus, and our growing desire to act in solidarity with the poor. We go to bed each evening, after pausing to give thanks for the gifts of the day and for the Journey we are making 'From Covid to Light'. We ask this through Christ our Lord. Amen

About our Speaker:

Mr Jim Deeds is a husband and father from the wonderful and wounded city of Belfast, Ireland. He works as an author, poet, retreat giver, and pastoral worker across Ireland and beyond. During his life Jim has also worked as a busker, a film maker, a playwright, a bartender, a social worker, a therapist, a manager of a children's home, and a health service manager. He enjoys playing music and walking the streets and hills in his native city, drawing much of the inspiration for his writing from his life experience and from finding God in the sounds, sights, people and events around him. Jim is passionate about creating sacred space where people can pray, relax and come to know the great love God has for all God's creation.



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Fourth Week of Lent – Talk for Week Four

The Light has come into the World

Tuesday 16th March 2021

Scripture:	John 3:14-21
Scripture Theme:	God sent his Son so that through him the world might be saved.
Talk Theme:	The Light has come into the World
Speaker:	Fr Conor Stainton-Poland

Our Opening Prayer

Our Prayer

Father in Heaven, with this week, we begin the second part of our Lenten journey. We ask more and more deeply to be with and like your Son, Our Brother, Jesus. We desire to celebrate the approaching mystery of our salvation with greater freedom and even greater joy. As we journey with the Gospel according to John in these days of Lent we ask that the Holy Evangelist may journey with us. We can't avoid the feeling of being in a court room for a grand trial. There are "witnesses" and "testimony." It is a battle between the forces of Darkness and the Light. The opposition to Jesus mounts. It is inevitable that he will be killed. But, we know that the ultimate Judgment in the trial is against Sin and Death. We grow in gratitude and grace as we experience more deeply that this is all "for me." Therefore, Holy Father, as we travel From Covid to Light let us always be focused on the Eternal Light of your Son, Jesus Christ. We ask this through His name. Amen.

About our Speaker:



Fr Conor Stainton-Poland is a priest of the Archdiocese of Liverpool. He was, born and raised in Lisburn Co. Antrim and was ordained twenty-three years ago. He is now an inner-city Parish Priest in the Archdiocese of Liverpool looking after St. Matthew's and St. Cecilia's Parishes and is also an area Dean of North Liverpool and advisor to the Vicariate for Clergy. Fr Conor is a regularly on BBC Radio Merseyside's Sunday Daybreak programme, and

also Chair of Trustees of Wigan Family Welfare and a board member of Peter's Place a postvention counselling charity in Liverpool. It's been his pleasure, pre-Covid, to preach in St. Patrick's on their feast day and also help welcome the Icon of World Meeting of families there. He's proud owner of Ruby the Cavachon and semi-retired as "Elvis Priestly" in which guise he has supported many charities over the years. In recent years he's spoken, in parishes, on radio and around the country at different conferences, about his own mental health having a history of depression and being diagnosed BiPolar in 2015. In his ministry Fr. Conor has supported many families bereaved by suicide as well as experiencing suicide in his own extended family. He is pleased to have the full support of his Archbishop in this new area of his ministry.

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Fifth Week of Lent – Talk for Week Five

I have Glorified it, and I will Glorify it again

Tuesday 23rd March 2021

Scripture:	John 12:20-30
Scripture Theme:	If a grain of wheat falls on the ground and dies, it yields a rich harvest.
Talk Theme:	I have Glorified it, and I will Glorify it again
Speaker:	Baroness Nuala O'Loan

Our Opening Prayer

Our Prayer

Dear Father as we journey through this week which is filled with drama we continue to prepare ourselves to be open to Your graces. We continue to try to choose Lent, to act Lent, in very concrete ways. We are examining our patterns and realigning our priorities. Our hearts are being renewed, as we experience God's reconciling love and beg for the gift of healing. During the week, throughout our Lenten reflection, we see the vision of restoration of the World – that, You, God our Father, will make anew through this covenant we have in Your only begotten Son. May each of these readings from the gospel of John rekindle our witness, testimony and judgment of our Brother Jesus. May he, being lifted up, on the cross and in glory, bring that freedom and liberation, as the fulfillment of Your Holy covenant, the new and everlasting covenant. So that as we Journey along this path From Covid to Light, we can feel and grow in devotion, and grace, as we realize that it is all done “for me.” We ask this through Christ our Lord. Amen.

About our Speaker:

Baroness Nuala O'Loan was born and educated in Hertfordshire, England. She studied law at King's College London, and became a solicitor in 1976. She taught law at Ulster for 20 years and held the Jean Monnet Chair in European Law. Nuala is married to Declan and they have five sons. In 1999 she became the first Police Ombudsman for Northern Ireland serving until 2007. For three years she was Ireland's Special Envoy for Peace and Reconciliation. In July 2009 she was appointed to the House of Lords. For 10 years she was Chair of Maynooth University Governing Authority. She is currently chairing a Panel of Inquiry into the murder of Daniel Morgan in London in 1987, and is a member of the UK Independent Human Rights Act Review. Baroness O'Loan has received many awards including Person of the Year at Ireland's Annual People of the Year Awards; honorary Doctorates of Law from the University of Ulster, Queen's University Belfast, Maynooth University, Ireland's Higher Education and Technical Awards Council Ireland and the Open University in recognition of her contribution to policing, justice and human rights. Baroness O'Loan is a renowned speaker on the issue of justice, human rights, reconciliation and peace.



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Holy Week – Talk for Week Six

From Covid to Eternal Light

Tuesday 30th March 2021

Scripture:	Mark 14:1-15:47
Scripture Theme:	Palm Sunday of the Lord's Passion
Talk Theme:	From Covid to Eternal Light
Speaker:	Miss Sionán Mullan

Our Opening Prayer

Our Prayer

Holy Father, we enter into a week made “holy” forever by the self-surrendering love of Your Son, Our Brother Jesus. Throughout this week, we remember how he loved us. Whatever we do, no matter how busy or “distracted” we might be, let the power of this week be in our daily reflections. Jesus entered into our life at Christmas - with its profound joys and, through his life, has given us the power that we might never experience our struggles alone. So, no matter what we experience this week, we can let it become a “holy” week, letting it all be touched by the graces and blessings of this week. From the humble, yet triumphant, entry into Jerusalem, to our standing together at the foot of his cross, this can be a week which helps us bring all of the elements of our lives, all our experiences of sin and death, into the font of his redeeming, liberating death resurrection. So that we can truly experience our movements From Covid in to Light and that Great day when it comes of Eternal Light in Your Loving Presence. We make this prayer through Christ our Lord. Amen.

About Our Speaker:

Miss Sionán Mullan is a professionally trained vocalist specialising in the classical, folk, operatic, popular and Irish traditional music genres. Sionán is a local of Co. Down in Northern Ireland. Having sung in the church choir from the age of 6, she has grown to become a well-known singer and performer. In addition to her presence in the church choir, Sionán joined the Living Youth in 2019. She had previously worked as a Music and Religion Secondary school teacher before taking up the role as Youth Ministry worker. Sionán has performed as a featured soloist in concerts with Liam Lawton and has also recorded a CD for the charity Autism NI. Entitled 'Gifted', it features Sionán's own arrangements of hits such as Mr. Brightside and Over the Rainbow; she released a Christmas album



called ‘Winter Snow’, a collection of Christmas hymns, back in December 2020.