FRANCIS, BISHOP OF ROME, SERVANT OF THE SERVANTS OF GOD. ON MERCY. TO ALL WHO READ THIS LETTER GRACE, MERCY, AND PEACE

6. "It is proper to God to exercise mercy, and he manifests his omnipotence particularly in this way".[5] Saint Thomas Aquinas' words show that God's mercy, rather than a sign of weakness, is the mark of his omnipotence. For this reason the liturgy, in one of its most ancient collects, has us pray: "O God, who reveal your power above all in your mercy and forgiveness ..."[6] Throughout the history of humanity, God will always be the One who is present, close, provident, holy, and merciful.

"Patient and merciful." These words often go together in the Old Testament to describe God's nature. His being merciful is concretely demonstrated in his many actions throughout the history of salvation where his goodness prevails over punishment and destruction. In a special way the Psalms bring to the fore the grandeur of his merciful action: "He forgives all your iniquity, he heals all your diseases, he redeems your life from the pit, he crowns you with steadfast love and mercy" (Ps 103:3-4). Another psalm, in an even more explicit way, attests to the concrete signs of his mercy: "He executes justice for the oppressed; he gives food to the hungry. The Lord sets the prisoners free; the Lord opens the eyes of the blind. The Lord lifts up those who are bowed down; the Lord loves the righteous. The Lord watches over the sojourners, he upholds the widow and the fatherless; but the way of the wicked he brings to ruin" (Ps 146:7-9). Here are some other expressions of the Psalmist: "He heals the broken hearted, and binds up their wounds... The Lord lifts up the downtrodden, he casts the wicked to the ground" (Ps 147:3, 6). In short, the mercy of God is not an abstract idea, but a concrete reality with which he reveals his love as of that of a father or a mother, moved to the very depths out of love for their child. It is hardly an exaggeration to say that this is a "visceral" love. It gushes forth from the depths naturally, full of tenderness and compassion, indulgence and mercy.

7. "For his mercy endures forever." This is the refrain that repeats after each verse in Psalm 136 as it narrates the history of God's revelation. By virtue of mercy, all the events of the Old Testament are replete with profound salvific import. Mercy renders God's history with Israel a history of salvation. To repeat continually "for his mercy endures forever," as the psalm does, seems to break through the dimensions of space and time, inserting everything into the eternal mystery of love. It is as if to say that not only in history, but for all eternity man will always be under the merciful gaze of the Father. It is no accident that the people of Israel wanted to include this psalm - the "Great Hallel," as it is called - in its most important liturgical feast days.

Before his Passion, Jesus prayed with this psalm of mercy. Matthew attests to this in his Gospel when he says that, "when they had sung a hymn" (26:30), Jesus and his disciples went out to the Mount of Olives. While he was instituting the Eucharist as an everlasting memorial of himself and his paschal sacrifice, he symbolically placed this supreme act of revelation in the light of his mercy. Within the very same context of mercy, Jesus entered upon his passion and death, conscious of the great mystery of love that he would consummate on the Cross. Knowing that Jesus himself prayed this psalm makes it even more important for us as Christians, challenging us to take up the refrain in our daily lives by praying these words of praise: "for his mercy endures forever." To be continued....

Parish Priest: Fr. Gregory E. Umunna Ph.D.

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Address: 8, Bank Street, Blairgowrie, PH10 6DE.

Hall Reservations: Contact no: 01250872171.

Hospital Chaplains: Please call: N/wells Direct line: 07821624124,

Hospital Pager 01382660111; P.R.I: 01738259371. *Pls let the priest know if you are on a long stay at the hospital and would like a visit.

Baptisms, Weddings and Funerals: Please make appointment with Priest

before any arrangements are made.

Diocese of Dunkeld Scottish Charity No:SC00810

Parish Ministries, Volunteers and Contact Persons: (May God bless these & others for their selfless service)

H/T: St. Steph's P. S: Lindsey Smith. Ph: 871950.

Catechists: Elizabeth Bush: Catechism Classes for 1st Holy Comm & Confirmation

everyin the Hall. Email: alzbeta.krajcikova@gmail.com Ph:07934884759

Parish Safeguarding Coordinator: Maureen Jackson. 07952376985; Email: ststephenpsc@dunkelddiocese.org.uk

Parish Webmaster: Mr. Irek Kawalinski. irekkowalinski@gmail.com Music Directors: Mr. Tom Buckham and Mrs. Gail McIntyre.

Responsible Person for Eucharistic Ministers: Mr. Alan Scott.

Responsible Person for Children's Liturgy: Mary Wojtowicz

Responsible Person for Lectors:

Responsible Group for Parish Social Justice Issues: SSVDP

Responsible Person for Church Flowers: Jean Scott (Blair). Elma Sharp (Alvth)

Resp. Person: Altar Servers: Rolly Colanse Grounds Flowers: Jennifer FitzPatrick

Adviser on Finance: Mr. Mike Coyle Adviser on Fabric: Mr. Jim Graham

Wishing you and your loved ones a lovely Sunday -Fr. Gregory

Please submit all items for the parish bulletin by 6.00 p.m. on Thursday each week. Email: peacegreg2002@yahoo.com Phone: 01250 872171



St. Stephen's RC Church Blairgowrie St. Luan's R C Church Alvth St. Mary's Coupar Angus

Second Sunday of Easter: Year B 7/4/24

Parish website: https://www.st-stephens-blairgowrie.org.uk/ E-mail: ststephen@dunkelddiocese.org.uk

Address: 8 Bank Street Blairgowrie, PH10 6DE

Warm Welcome to all our Parishioners and visitors. Whether you are visiting our parish or just moved into the area, please feel very welcome ... thanks.

Father Gregory E. Umunna Ph.D. Parish website: https://www.ststephensblairgowrie.org.uk/ E-mail: ststephen@dunkelddiocese.org.uk Contact Address: 8 Bank Street Blairgowrie, PH10 6DE 01250872171

Parish diary: Week beginning from 7/4/24.

DIVINE MERCY WEEKEND

Saturday 6th April - 5.30pm: Easter Vigil mass St Stephen's Sunday 7th April - 9.30 am: Holy mass at St. Luan's Alyth Sunday 7th April -11.00am: Holy mass at St. Stephen's Tuesday 9th April -10.00am: Holy mass at St. Stephen's:

Wednesday 10th April - - 6.00pm adoration, 7pm: Holy mass at St. Stephen's Thursday 11th April - 10am: Stations of the Cross & mass at St. Luan's;

Friday 12th April - 10.00am: Mass at St. Stephen's. Saturday 13th April - 5.30pm: Vigil mass St Stephen's Sunday 14th April - 9.30 am: Holy mass at St. Luan's Alyth Sunday 14th April -11.00am: Holy mass at St. Stephen's.

This Sunday, the resurrection morning, ...

Thomas Merton wrote in his book Asian Journal, 'Faith is not the suppression of doubt. It is the overcoming of doubt, and you overcome doubt by going through it. The man of faith who has never experienced doubt is not a person of faith'. There was a great honesty about Thomas; he didn't pretend to believe when he didn't. The gospel suggests that such honesty is never very far from authentic faith.

Mass intentions for the week:

Jim Warden, Monsignor Vincent Mba, Catherine Nolan: 90th Birthday, Bishop Gregory Ochiagha.

Other Devotional Programmes of the Parish.

Family Rosary and adoration. Every Wednesday 6.00pm -7.00pm. -Mass for the sick every Wed 7.00pm, -Sacrament of Reconciliation: 5.00pm every Saturday and 9am every Sunday, -Divine Mercy Devotion: Tues after morning mass. -Mass with St. Stephen's Primary School: 1st Fri. of the month; end of terms and core events masses.

In your prayers, kindly remember those on our prayer list:

Michael Rolls, Neil Mcdowall, Pam McKenna, Val Naugton, Dr. Paul Kinnear, Mary and George Flockhart. Snooky Marshall, Maud McGinn, Alex Forrester, Cipriano and Carmelita, Tom O'Malley, Roy Sweeney, Diana Richardson, Pamela -

You are never alone:

For a shared a prayer, or just have someone listen to you, a candle lit for you or yours, have a mass offered for your intention or that of a loved one living or dead, please speak to the priest. Thanks.

Warm Welcome:

Tea/Coffee, biscuits and a warm welcoming space in the Lower Hall after the 11.00am mass every Sunday to May 2024. Please feel free to pop in. More volunteers to help with

Let us Pray:

serving please. Thanks.

God of life, source of all faith, through the waters of baptism you have raised us up in Jesus and given us life that endures.

Day by day refine our faith, that we who have not seen the Christ may truly confess him as our Lord and God and share the blessedness of those who believe. Grant this through Jesus Christ, the resurrection and the life. who lives and reigns with you in the unity of the Holy Spirit, God for ever and ever. Amen.



Today and Up Coming Events:

-6th April: Couper Angus and District Action Group of the Scottish Bible Society: Coffee Morning on Saturday 6th April in St. Anne's Church Hall Forfar Road C/A 10-12noon £3 for adult, £1 for children. —Pauline Dolby.

-27th of April: Episcopal Ordination of Father Martin Chambers as the new Bishop elect of Dunkeld on the 27th of April at the Cathedral, 11am. Everyone is invited."

-28th April: Building maintenance Fund 🤐 collection. please support it.

Dates for the Sacraments in 2024

day, 8th of May 2024. Time. 5pm. -Sacrament of Confirmation: Sunday, **19th of May** 2024. Time 2.00pm. First Holy Communion for School and Parish Candidates: Sunday, 2nd of June 2024. Time 2.00pm.

for Scotland, Edinburgh all morning and afternoon.

nication. Special collection.

collection. please support it.

tion. Please support it.

-30th June: Building maintenance Fund parish a bit more. Thanks. collection. please support it.

July: Peter's Pence. August: The Apostleship of the Sea.

-At the repository: available are our 2024 Diary, rosaries, medals, holy pictures, candles etc and these will make lovely presents for family and friends. Please visit Our Parish Reposi-

-St. Mary's Coupar Angus will, ad inter- Many thanks for your support to the im, be happy to receive and store your parish. unwanted gift items and other items you may wish to donate in support of the Church fund. Please hand them in or leave in the Lower Hall. Stalls will be set up in St. Mary's Coupar Angus at

specified date in Spring and Summer. Contact MOB 01828627723.

-Children's Liturgy: -Many thanks to Mary Wojtowicz and her team of the Liturgists for the wonderful work they do for

us and I encourage the parents to please support their children to use this wonderful opportunity.

-New to the Parish? Please pick a form at the entrance of the church, complete and hand in the form. Thanks. New members are always welcome to come along and attend or visit the following parish groups: SVDP, Wednesdays 7.30pm: Divine Mercy, Tuesdays 10.30am; Adoration, Wed. 6.00pm.

-Parish Finances: All of us hope to leave the world a better place than when we came into it. When making your will please consider leaving something to St. Stephen's R C -Sacrament of Reconciliation: Wednes- Church so that you will continue to assist our parish to flourish and leave behind a legacy of Faith. If you feel able to support the parish in whatever way you could via Standing Order, occasional or one-off payment, it would be very much appreciated.

-June 12th: National Prayer Breakfast -Offertory Collection is part of our church tradition. A massive appreciations to those who make their offertory -19th May: The Apostolate of Commu-collection or support the parish via Standing Order, Direct debit, telephone **26th May**: Building maintenance Fund transfers, envelops or put their support in the offertory collection box in the -9th June: Day of Life Special Collec- Church. By signing the Gift Aid form, vour offertory collection can earn the

> Details of Parish account: Royal Bank of Scotland, 14 Allan Street, Blairgowrie. PH10 6AD. Sort code:- 83-16-33; Account No:- 00240708. Account name:- Trustees of the Roman Catholic Diocese of Dunkeld No3 Char TST St Stephens RC Church. Many thanks.

*Last Sunday's offertory coll. £445.83; Holy Places £194.37, BMF £546.07.

*Figures exclude takings from Standing orders, bank transfers and direct debits. Comprehensive Parish Accounts are published on the Notice Board, Thanks,

First Aid Training: The following people have indicated their interest to be part of the proposed First Aid training in the parish:

Amanda Donnelly, Kian Donnelly, Juliet Vivers, Hayley Ritchie, Maria Dawson, Katherine Fraser, Ellie William, Gail McIntyre and Mary Wojtowicz. This is the final call before a meeting is arranged soon. Thanks.

An Amazing Evenening of Parish Musi-

cal Concert: It was an amazing evening last Friday as those who gathered enjoyed a brilliant evening of musicality from Blair Bells, the Evergreens, the Brown family, the Jackson family show and from youngsters such as Vanessa, William, Dominic, Gabriel and Tom Buckam who gracefully directed the show. Many thanks to Gail and Tom for setting up and to all who attended for all your support.

When we cut ourselves off from the community of believers like Thomas did, ...we lose out greatly.

For all its flaws and failings, the church is the place where we encounter the risen Lord. The Lord continues to stand among the community of disciples. especially when we gather in worship and pray, when we gather to serve others in the Lord's name. It is there that we hear the Lord say, 'Peace be with you', that we experience his forgiveness for our past failures, that we hear the call to go out in his name as his witnesses, that we receive the Holy Spirit to empower us to be faithful to

The community of disciples reached out to Thomas; they shared their newfound faith with him, their Easter faith, 'We have seen the Lord'. Those first disciples remind us of our calling to keep reaching out in faith to all those who, for whatever reason, have drifted away from the community of believers and no longer gather with us. If we do so, we may encounter the same negative response that the first disciples experienced from Thomas, 'I refuse to

Attendance to the Episcopal Ordination their closed doors and helped them of the Bishop Elect, Rev. Monsignor over their fear. He did this by breath- Just as the disciples were unmoved by You would need the ticket to get into said. the cathedral. Please let me know by auspices of St. Stephen's Parish.

Reflection: Unlocking our doors

Most houses are well alarmed nowa- reading from Acts. He describes a He accommodates himself to Thomas' become as basic an item as table and witnessing to the resurrection both in here." The gospel today implies that cities and towns, are the days when tion of those first disciples, locked in and doubts. The Lord is prepared to you could just leave the key in the their hiding place. Any combination of stand with us on our own ground, We are more fearful about our security ment to following the Lord. than we used to be, and this fear and anxiety has led us to take more pre- Like the disciples in today's gospel, we cautions to protect ourselves.

judge us. We hesitate to share ideas back and stay safe. and plans we might have with those gladly. Fear of others can often hold of our self-imposed confinement. If to be, us back and stunt our growth.

imposed confinement.

Lord himself appeared to them behind good news.

Magdalene makes no impact on us, the Lord will find another way to enter In the gospel we find the disciples our lives and to fill us with new life and locking themselves into a room be- energy for his service. No locked cause they were afraid of the Jewish doors, nor even locked hearts, can authorities. Even after an excited Mary keep him out. He finds a way to enter Maddalene came to them from the space where we have chosen to empty tomb announcing that she had retreat and he empowers us to resist seen the Lord, this was not enough to what is holding us back. He does overcome their fear. What had been require some openness on our part; at done to Jesus could be done to them. the least some desire on our part to .. which led to their hiding in self- become what he is calling us to be. The risen Lord never ceases to recreate us and to renew us in his love. The turning point came when the risen Easter is the season to celebrate the

Martin Chambers on the 27th of April ing the Holy Spirit into them, filling the hopeful enthusiasm of Mary Magis strictly by invitation as every parish them new energy and hope, freeing dalene who had seen the Lord, so has been issued a number of tickets. them from fear and releasing them to Thomas was unmoved by the witness There are 8 tickets available for St. share in his mission. "As the Father of the disciples who told him they too Stephen's and is first come first serve. sent me, so am I sending you," he had seen the Lord. Thomas, it seems, was an even harder nut to crack than the other disciples. He is one of those Tuesday afternoon if you wish to In the power of the Spirit they came to people who insist on certain conditions attend this celebration under the life and went out from their self- being met before he makes a move, imposed prison, to bear witness to the "Unless I see, I can't believe." As he risen Lord. This is the picture of the had done with the other disciples, the disciples that Luke gives us in today's Lord takes Thomas on his own terms. days; the computerised alarm has community of believers, the church, conditions and says, "Put your finger chairs. We also need to have good word and by the quality of their living. the Lord meets us wherever we are. strong locks; long gone, at least in the We can all find ourselves in the situa- He takes us seriously in all our fears door, and let neighbours ramble in the "slings and arrows of outrageous whatever that ground is, and from casually for a chat and a cup of tea. fortune" can water down our commit- there he will speak to us a word suited to our personal state of mind and heart.

can be tempted to give up on our faith. We don't have to get ourselves to journey. The will to self-preservation some particular place in order for the Fear of what others can do to us can prevent us from doing what we Lord to engage with us. He takes tends to close us in on ourselves, not are capable of doing with the Lord's himself to where we are, wherever it is just in the physical sense of getting help. The wounds we carry from earli- a place of fear or of doubt. We might stronger door-locks, but also in other er, failed initiatives make us hesitate to pray this Easter season for the opensenses. We tend to be somewhat try again. Even when someone seems ness to receive the Lord's coming into withdrawn around people whom we full of enthusiasm and hope like a the concrete circumstances of our own perceive to be critical. We are slow to Mary Magdalene, we shrug it off. We lives, so that we too might say with open up to someone we think will let them get on with it, while we hold Thomas, "My Lord and my God." We might also pray that, like the Lord, we would receive others where they are. who are known not to suffer fools. The gospel today suggests a way out rather than where we would like them



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