

THIRD SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME

26th January 2014

St. Mary's, Belford Road, Fort William, PH33 6BT Tel. (01397) 702174

www.stmarysfortwilliam.org

Charity No. SC002876



Noticeboard

Sunday Masses: Vigil Mass, Saturday 6 p.m.
Sunday Morning Mass 10.30 a.m.

Weekday Masses: 10.15 a.m. (Except on Tuesday, when Mass will be at 1 p.m. being the Funeral Mass of Norah MacKinnon RIP)

Sacrament of Reconciliation: Saturday:
9.45 to 10 a.m. 4 to 4.30 p.m.
5.30 to 5.45 p.m.

Tuesday is the Memorial of St. Thomas Aquinas; Friday, the Memorial of St. John Bosco.

Our sincere thanks to all the parishioners who came along to last Sunday's **Christian Unity Service**. Along with our organist and cantor, you helped make it a very special occasion, much appreciated by our friends from other churches and fellowships.

We pray for our Faithful Departed. We remember very specially **Norah MacKinnon**, of Victoria Court, who has died peacefully in the Belford Hospital, aged 92. We give thanks for Norah's faithfulness to her Saviour and for the devoted and generous love she shared with family, friend and neighbour. May she now rest in peace, and may the Lord grant comfort to Helen, John, Mary, Ronald, Rosaline, Angela, Allan and to all of Norah's grandchildren and great grandchildren. We remember also those whose anniversaries are about this time: **Margaret Doyle, Margaret MacIntyre, Kathleen Gibson, Kenneth MacDonald, Flora MacKinnon, John Tully, Morag Fitzsimons, Christina Turner, Angus Morrison, Margaret Campbell, Donald Kearney (Senior), William Brannigan and Angus MacDougall**. May they, too, rest in the peace and joy of Christ.

Next Sunday is the **Feast of the Presentation** of the Lord, that is, Candlemas. As it falls on a Sunday this year, you will be given special parish candles as you enter the church. We ask you to take these candles home and use them for occasions of prayer. If you would like to put an extra pound or two in the collection plate in the next few weeks, that would greatly help towards the cost. It is a rather beautiful Feast, so let's celebrate it as it deserves.

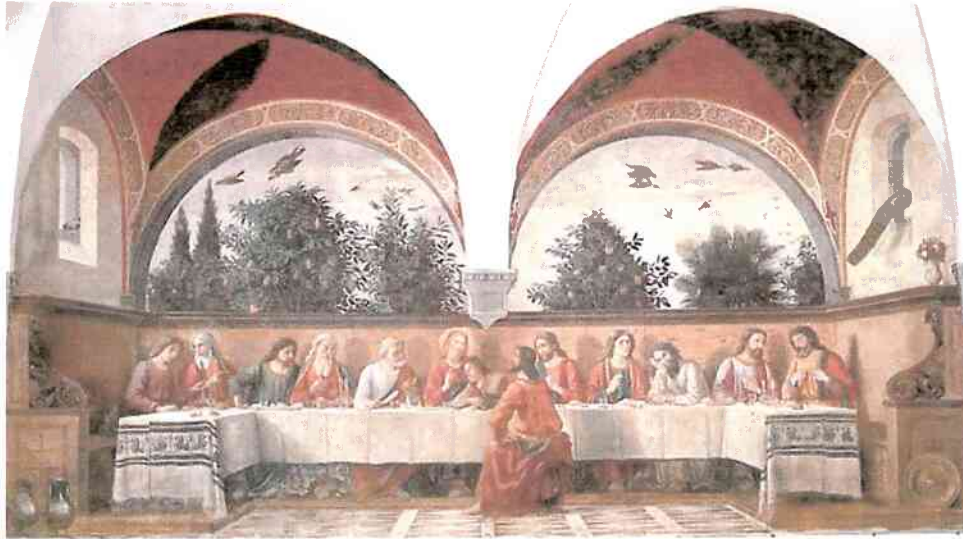
Holy Communion will be taken to the housebound in the course of this week

There has been a delay in the printing of the **history of the Diocese** that some of you have ordered. As soon as these books arrive, we will make them available.

Some adjustments have to be made to the **new church heating**. This should be attended to in February, and we will have the 55 degrees background heat that we were promised.



**Sunrise over the
Sea of Galilee.**



Of all the paintings of the Last Supper, Leonardo's fading masterpiece is certainly the most famous. Here is an earlier painting with which he was most certainly familiar. It is by Domenico Ghirlandaio, a 15th century Florentine artist. It can be found in the refectory attached to the Chiesa di Ognissanti (All Saints Church) in Florence. Founded by the Umiliati, a Franciscan lay order, the church was dedicated to all the saints and martyrs, known and unknown.

As one would expect in Christian art, this painting is rich in its iconography. On the table, together with the traditional bread and wine, there are, for example, apricots, symbols of sin; cherries, evoking the blood of Christ; and oranges, representing the garden of Paradise and eternal life. There are many birds in the background, each with its figurative meaning. These include the skylark.

The skylark has been part of human mythology for thousands of years. One can understand why, for its song as it rises into the air has never failed to thrill those who hear it. Flying straight up from its nest on the ground, the male bird hovers above, and becomes the most loved songbird of them all. Christianity saw its song as a morning offering of joy to the Creator. This little bird came to symbolise Christ himself as he ascended into heaven, blessing his disciples below. Some saw its song as a prayer for the sowers in the field, and, allegorically, for the sowers of Christ's field.



The skylark has no extraordinary plumage. It is rather drab compared with peacock for example. But compare the harsh sound that comes from the peacock with the song of the lark! There might be a message there for us: appearance isn't everything! Many poems have been written about the skylark, including at least two by the Jesuit poet Gerard Manley Hopkins. The famous English composer Ralph Vaughan Williams composed an exquisite piece called "The Lark Ascending". It was inspired by a poem by the Victorian writer George Meredith.

The 20th century French playwright Jean Anouilh wrote a play about Joan of Arc. It seems so appropriate that he named it, "The Lark" ("L'Alouette"). He once spoke of this play as follows:

"You cannot explain Joan, any more than you can explain the tiniest flower growing by the wayside. That's just a little living flower that has always known, ever since it was a microscopic seed, how many petals it would have and how big they would grow, exactly how blue its blue would be and how its delicate scent would be compounded. There's just the phenomenon of Joan as there is the phenomenon of a daisy or of the sky or of a bird. What pretentious creatures men are, if that's not enough for them! Children, even when they are growing older, are allowed to make a bunch of daisies or play at imitating bird-song, even if they know nothing of botany or ornithology. That is near enough what I have done."

There is something of the spirit of the lark in these words!

The skylark has always lived close to man, preferring to nest in our fields, as long as these are not overworked. Sadly there has been a marked decline in the number of these birds in Scotland in recent years. In all the cacophony of modern life, can we afford to lose the song of lark ascending?

This Sunday's Gospel tells us of the great light that dawned upon Galilee as Christ begins his mission. Did the lark sing its song as he did so? I like to imagine it did.