

## **SAFEGUARDING**

Today, we offer Holy Mass for Patrick Doyle: may he rest in peace. We also pray for our Safeguarding Commission and for our Safeguarding Representatives. We thank you for joining this Day of Recollection. We thank Angela for organising it for us, Fr. Kieran O'Brien from Arundel and Brighton for leading us and Fr. John Lee for his support. We thank all of you for the vital work you do in our parishes and communities to ensure that the Catholic Church is a safe environment for children and vulnerable adults. We also thank Canon Paul and the parishioners here at St. Peter's for their warm welcome and for their prayers at this Mass.

THE MARKS ON MY BODY ARE THOSE OF JESUS said St. Paul in the 1stR. The dramatic life-story of IL Poverello is well-known. Born into a wealthy family in 1181, Francis was a soldier, a man of the world, until badly injured, he was captured, a prisoner of war. He escaped but on the way home went into the ruined church of San Damiano, where God gave him the grace of an extraordinary conversion. In a vision he heard Jesus say to him: REBUILD MY CHURCH. Instantly, he gave everything away, even his clothes, and embraced a life of radical poverty, simplicity and closeness to nature, to raise money for the project. Full of joy and the Holy Spirit, a fantastic preacher, he attracted many to follow him and thus founded two of the fastest growing orders in Church history, the Friars Minor and with St. Clare the Poor Clares. Their work was mission and evangelisation, spiritually to rebuild Christ's Church at a time of great decadence. Later in life, he was given the special grace of the stigmata. He was 45 when he died, and canonised just two years later.

Before I became bishop, I was a parish priest near Stockport (up North) and I welcomed a priest newly arrived from Nigeria. Fr. T had never been to Europe before and after collecting him from the airport, I took him out to a meal in a local pub. I'll never forget his eyes when he saw the prices: they were like soup-plates. It wasn't a posh pub and the main courses were only about £7, but he said to me, FATHER, THIS IS A PUB FOR MILLIONAIRES! My point is that most of us today enjoy a level of affluence and standard of living unimaginable to our forebears, let alone to those from the world's South. For this, we should be truly thankful to God. But we should also remember our duty to be good stewards of what God has given us, and to use what we have

for God's glory. We may not be called to espouse Lady Poverty in the radical way of St. Francis, but he reminds us that every disciple like Jesus must be radically dependent on God. As Pope Francis calls for, we must adopt a simpler life-style if we are to find in our lives the joy of the Holy Spirit and to give a clearer witness to Christ in our secular culture. I don't pretend this is easy but today's feast challenges us, at least to review our priorities and to let go of whatever holds us back.

COME TO ME ALL YOU WHO LABOUR AND ARE OVERBURDENED AND I WILL GIVE YOU REST. With Jesus on our side, who can be against us? With the Holy Spirit in our hearts, what else could we want? In this Mass, as we pray for Patrick Doyle, let's also pray for ourselves. Let us ask the Heart of Jesus to pour out lavishly upon us the gifts of the Holy Spirit. And let's ask the prayers of St. Francis of Assisi that we may in our own lives rebuild Christ's Church in this era of affluence. May we live more simply, more counter-culturally and thus be more holy, more like Christ our Master.