

## **Monsignor Anthony Conlon**

We were delighted to welcome Mgr. Conlon for his first visit to the Island LMS. Mgr Conlon married John and Rosamond Poncia twenty years ago in London and it was at their invitation that he came to spend a week on the Island, after leading a school pilgrimage to Lourdes. His first Mass was on the Feast of Sts. Abdon and Sennen. In his sermon Father reminded us of the faith and fortitude of the martyrs who laid down their lives for Christ. It was the Holy Innocents who were the first martyrs of the Church. They were baptised into the Church by their blood when they were murdered by King Herod. *"We must not equate today's political martyrs with the saints who loved Jesus and who suffered persecution for God and His Holy Church. They died loving and praying for their persecutors. The same cannot be said of non-Christian martyrs"* . After this Mass at Holy Cross Church, Seaview, Father gave Benediction.

On the next two days Father offered Mass (New Rite) at St. Mary's in Ryde and heard Confessions during Exposition. He then visited some sick members.

On 2nd August fifty people attended the Sung Mass in St. Mary's for the Feast of St. Alphonsus. Father reminded the congregation in his sermon, *"St. Alphonsus, the founder of the Redemptorists, is a jewel in the 18th century history of the Catholic Church. We have much to learn from him in loving and understanding the Faith and the traditions of the Catholic Church. We probably remember the Redemptorists from our youth. They frequently gave missions and related tales of hell-fire and damnation, but this was their means of promoting the Sacrament of Penance. Alphonsus encouraged people to go to Confession regularly in order to receive Our Lord worthily in Holy Communion. He further promoted a deep respect for the Blessed Sacrament, which is the reality of Christ present among us. Who better to turn to when we are in trouble, anxious or depressed? In the Holy Eucharist we will find our consolation and the confirmation of our faith"*.

In the second part of his sermon Father Conlon expressed his gratitude to the Holy Father for his foresight and courage in the recent Motu Proprio, "Summorum Pontificum" *Father reminded those present that the Old Mass representing a golden age when the faith and devotion of Catholics was strong. Hopefully it will return a sense of awe and mystery to the Holy Mass.*

*Let us remember the disciples of Christ and the faithful pastors like St. Alphonsus, to whom the Church owes a debt of gratitude. We also remember today your own parish priest, Fr. John Catlin, who is ill, and pray for his speedy recovery.*

After this Mass the celebrant and servers processed to the Lady Chapel for an act of dedication to the Immaculate Heart of Mary. Many thanks to Andrew Duxson (organist), Leo Boucher (cantor) and Edward

Stratton and Mike Mason (servers). In the evening many of us enjoyed a meal at Foxes in Bembridge; after which Gill O'Meara (Parish Secretary) presented Mgr. Conlon with a framed picture of the Lady Chapel in St. Mary's. Father expressed his pleasure at being on the Island and among faithful, traditional Catholics, clearly seeking spiritual nourishment.

The following day was the First Friday in August and this was the first time that we were permitted to have a First Friday Latin Mass. Appropriately it was a Votive Mass of the Holy Cross in the Holy Cross Church in Seaview. In his sermon Father reminded the congregation that *"the Cross is at the centre of the Christian Faith. There are many crosses in our lives; crosses of suffering, loneliness, depression, misfortune etc. These crosses that we have to bear can often become the reality of our being closer to Almighty God. The cross is a means of our shared suffering with Christ and a way of Him showing his love for us mortals."*

Many of us returned to Ryde afterwards for the traditional First Friday Holy Hour with Exposition, Devotions and Litany of the Sacred Heart. The day concluded with Vespers and Benediction at Quarr Abbey.

Our society wishes to express their thanks and appreciation to Mgr Conlon for his ministry to us during his stay, which in many ways was providential as it co-incided with Fr. Catlin being in hospital. Many thanks to all those who helped to make this visit such a success, especially Carolyn Holbrook and Rosamond Poncia for their hospitality and accomodation.