

A People who Hope in Christ:

A Message from the Metropolitan Archbishops of the Catholic Church in England and Wales

Dear brothers and sisters in Christ,

The radiance of the risen Lord shines upon us. At a time when so many shadows are cast into our lives, and upon our world, the light of the resurrection shines forever to renew and restore our hope.

In the words of our Holy Father, Pope Francis: "In the midst of isolation when we are suffering from a lack of tenderness and chances to meet up, and we experience the loss of so many things, let us once again listen to the proclamation that saves us: he is risen and is living by our side." (27 March 2020)

The impact of COVID-19, both nationally and internationally, has been immense. So much of what we take for granted has changed. Our health and physical interaction, our capacity to travel and gather, have all been affected. There is uncertainty in our future, especially with work and the country's economy. As we know, very sadly, large numbers of people have died because of the coronavirus, and others have been or remain seriously ill. Keyworkers, not least in the National Health Service and care sectors, are serving selflessly to sustain the life of our nation. Our hearts and prayers go out to everyone who is suffering because of COVID-19, and to all those battling to overcome its effects. May those who have died rest in peace and those who are bereaved find comfort.

When the Prime Minister announced the lockdown, this included places of worship and therefore Catholic churches. These measures were put in place to stem the general transmission of the virus. It is right that the Catholic community fulfils its role in contributing to the preservation of life and the common good of society. This must continue until the restrictions applied by the Government are lifted.

None of us would want to be in the situation in which we find ourselves. While the live-streaming of the Mass and other devotions is playing an important part in maintaining the life of faith, there is no substitute for Catholics being able to physically attend and participate in the celebration of the Mass and the other sacraments.

Our faith is expressed powerfully and beautifully through 'seeing, touching, and tasting.' We know that every bishop and every priest recognises the pain of Catholics who, at present, cannot pray in church or receive the sacraments. This weighs heavily on our hearts. We are deeply moved by the Eucharistic yearning expressed by so many members of the faithful. We thank you sincerely for your love for the Lord Jesus, present in the sacraments and supremely so in the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass. The bishops and priests of every diocese are remembering you and your loved ones at Mass each day in our churches as we pray 'in hope of health and well-being.' We thank our priests for this faithfulness to their calling.

As the Government's restrictions are relaxed step by step, we look forward to opening our churches and resuming our liturgical, spiritual, catechetical and pastoral life step by step. This will also be of service to those beyond the Catholic Church who depend on our charitable activity and outreach through which much goodness is shared by so many volunteers from our communities.

None of us knows, as yet, how or when the lockdown will end. There is likely to be a phased return to travelling and gathering. As a church, we are now planning for this time and our discussions with the statutory public health agencies and Government

representatives are ongoing. Together with Catholics across England and Wales we desire the opening of our churches and access to the sacraments. Until then, we are continuing to pray and prepare.

We want to acknowledge with gratitude the service of our fellow bishops and priests, our deacons and religious, our families and lay faithful, together with all our parish and school communities, for the wonderful ways the life of the faith is being nourished at this time, especially in the home. We also pay tribute to the Catholic organisations and networks that are working to support the vulnerable and needy.

On that first Easter day, the disciples were in lockdown and the doors were closed. In their isolation the Lord Jesus came among them and said 'Peace be with you.' May the peace of the risen Lord reign in our hearts and homes as we look forward to the day we can enter church again and gather around the altar to offer together the Sacrifice of Praise.

We unite in asking the intercession of Our Blessed Lady and assure you of our prayers and blessing

Yours devotedly in Christ,

- ✠ Cardinal Vincent Nichols, Archbishop of Westminster
- ✠ Malcolm McMahon OP, Archbishop of Liverpool
- ✠ Bernard Longley, Archbishop of Birmingham
- ✠ George Stack, Archbishop of Cardiff
- ✠ John Wilson, Archbishop of Southwark

Lately dead. We keep in prayer all who have died recently especially Ellen Walters and Mary Monica McGrail whose funerals are later this week. We also pray for Fr. Paul Dillon who used to be parish priest in Whalley, who was buried in Ireland last week.

Mass for health workers: The Catholic Bishops of England and Wales recognise that this time of the COVID-19 pandemic is affecting every person in our countries. Those who are sick, and their families, are suffering many hardships of isolation from contact with those they love. Our front-line workers in hospitals and in care homes all over our lands are giving exceptional service to those who are vulnerable at this time. In order to show a spiritual solidarity with all those who are involved in the ways described above, each Thursday, a Catholic Bishop will celebrate Mass in their Cathedral which will be livestreamed for people to join. This will take place every Thursday at 7pm. Links can be found at <https://tinyurl.com/yaf2rprj>

Cardinal Nichols said, 'Use that time before 8 o'clock on a Thursday to offer your prayers of thanksgiving for these generous, courageous people, for their support – their encouragement – that God will sustain them in this great work that they're doing. We applaud, but we pray and we pray fervently for them. May God bless them all.'

14th May, Bishop Robert Byrne, Hexham & Newcastle

21st May, Bishop Mark Davies, Shrewsbury

28th May, Bishop Terence Draney, Middlesbrough

Live streamed Masses: It is possible to see Mass live streamed from various places by going to

SPIRITUAL COMMUNION

St. Thomas Aquinas – Spiritual Communion is “a desire to receive Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament.

This practice was explained by Pope Paul in his encyclical, *The Church and the Eucharist*. *It is good to cultivate in our hearts a constant desire for the sacrament of the Eucharist. This was the origin of the practice of “spiritual communion,” which has been established in the Church for centuries and recommended by saints who were masters of the spiritual life. St Teresa wrote: “When you do not receive communion and you do not attend Mass, you can make a spiritual communion, which is a most beneficial practice.*

The [Eucharist](#) which is the “summit and source of the Christian life”, is at the root of this practice.

St. John Vianney: If we are deprived of Sacramental Communion, let us replace it, as far as we can, by spiritual communion, which we can make every moment; for we ought to have always a burning desire to receive the good God.

The ACT OF SPIRITUAL COMMUNION:

St Alphonsus:

My Jesus, I believe that Thou art present in the Blessed Sacrament. I love Thee above all things and I desire Thee in my soul. Since I cannot now receive Thee come at least spiritually into my heart. As though you were already there, I embrace Thee and unite myself wholly to Thee; permit that I should never be separated from Thee. Amen.

In the first words of Jesus in today’s gospel (John 14:1-6) , Our Lord says to us very calmly, “Do not let your hearts be troubled. Trust in God still, and trust in me”.

What powerful words, and much needed for all of us to hear again during these days.

So let us try and maintain a calm and trusting peace. God is with us, he does understand and care for us. Jesus is the Way that leads us to the Father, the Truth that will set us free, the Life that endures for ever.

When life is tough and things seem bad, may we all hear those powerful but gentle words of Jesus saying to us again, “Trust in God still, and trust in me”.

Keep safe and well, and let us continue to pray for each other.

During the coming week I will celebrate Mass each day at 9am (in a locked church), when you will be daily remembered in a special way. God bless you all. Fr. Paul.

From the archives:

St Michael & St John’s

The entry in the diary for 1873 written by the Parish Priest Rev W Lea:

The number of children instructed for the Sacraments is small, but it is only fair to add that there is a large class both of Boys and Girls who are nearly ready for their First Communion. Fr Wm Lea came to take charge of the Clitheroe Mission in place of Fr Thomas Cooper on January 2nd 1873. A few days after his arrival Fr Legnani left Clitheroe for the Seminary. whither he went as Professor - his place was filled up by Fr Pittar, who remained here till the latter part of September, when he left for his tertianship. and was succeeded by Fr Walter Lomax.

During the year 6 beautiful new Candlesticks were bought for the High Altar, at a cost of £30; and the Tabernacle together with all the centre part of the Altar were taken down and brought forward at a cost of a little more than £20.

The infants School was made a distinct Compartment - a wooden partition separating it from the Girls School - Also a new and more convenient entrance was made into the infants School. The Cemetery was drained at a cost of a little more than £71. A good wall was built in place of the old one that was low and in danger of falling.

Behind our cottages in Lowergate Thos Bernard Trappes re-built part of the wall separating our garden from his own.

At the beginning of this year we commenced haying Rosary & Benediction on Saturday evenings at 6 o'clock. On Trinity Sunday Dr Vaughn came to preach for his Seminary - the Offertory was £29. Fr Lea made a very vigorous effort to prevail on Mr Garnett to allow our Catholic half timers at Low Moor to come to their own School.

The Children of Mary had their usual retreat before the Feast of the Immaculate Conception.

May 23rd 1873

For Sabden 1876

On Whit Monday there was a grand Procession of the Congregation & School children to Sabden, for the purpose of laying the Foundation Stone of a new School Chapel. The stone was blessed by Fr Anderson & laid by Captain Trappes.

Has anyone out there any memories of days gone by that may make an interesting entry on our shortened newsletter since we have had lockdown? Please ring Janet 01200 424657 or 07866 898109 or email janegg@hotmail.co.uk or janet.clegg@dioceseofsalford.org

And finally...

Please do not use the smsj@btinternet.com email address from now on as we cannot access it. If you have sent any messages you will of course not have received a reply so use

janet.clegg@dioceseofsalford.org.uk