

Dear Parishioners,

As everyone keeps saying, we are living in strange times with things shifting by the hour.

I will try to keep you up to date with things as far as possible. Thank you to all of you who are continuing to be part of our worshipping community by joining with each other and Fr. Gerard Kelly and myself in our live streamed Masses each day, via the web cam page on this website. Sunday Mass is at 9.30am and Mass every other day is at 10.00am. All Masses are now recorded and can be viewed later.

I'm delighted that we can be offering a service to St. John Southworth parish at the moment and also St. Joseph and St. Anne's parish in Accrington while they do not have their own website up and running.

Fr. Stamp at Accrington is our Dean, and therefore you might also like to have a look at what he is saying on his parish's page.

### **Things happening soon:**

Friday, 5pm London time. Pope Francis will lead a time of prayer for the whole church before the Blessed Sacrament in a deserted St. Peter's Square. He will give his *Urbi et Orbi* blessing to the city and the world. This will be available via the Vatican website.

Sunday, noon. The rededication of England as the Dowry of Mary will take place as planned and you can partake in this on the Walsingham website. [www.walsingham.org.uk](http://www.walsingham.org.uk) which is currently broadcasting services, devotions, Masses and reflections regularly throughout the day in preparation for the event.

### **Notices:**

Please remember that the current restrictions mean that all of our churches are locked and will not be available for any services or private prayer until further notice. Our parish halls are also closed and not available. Sadly this also applies to the parish office. It will not be staffed. This means that letters, emails and phone calls will not be received or responded to. If you need to contact me, please contact me directly and not through the office. Ie by email [peter.wilkinson@dioceseofsalford.org.uk](mailto:peter.wilkinson@dioceseofsalford.org.uk) or by phone 01282 936662. Please note that this is the only means of communication. I will not be available to meet.

I've also been requested to mention the deaths of two parishioners who have died recently, to ask your prayers. One is Norma Collins from "Hillcrest" in Colne and the other is Maureen Salisbury, lately from Padiham. May they rest in peace.

### **Confession, Sacrament of the Sick and Funerals.**

We have some information about Confessions (Reconciliation) and Anointing of the Sick which I will include here. There is also a note about funerals which I have decided to share after talking to some other priests about our concerns.

#### **Sacrament of Confession**

The Bishop has also written asking us not to offer the Sacrament of Confession at this time, in order to protect the vulnerable. He has asked us to publish the recent comments on this

of Pope Francis, who encourages us to make an Act of Contrition and resolve at the same time to go to Confession as soon as it becomes possible again. I reproduce what the Bishop wrote to us below:

**In light of the government directive on staying at home, the message issued yesterday about Confessions must now be revised. If a person asks for the Sacrament of Reconciliation please advise them that, for their own safety and yours, this will not be possible at this time. Please make them aware of the statement by Pope Francis which is included below:**

**“I know that many of you go to confession before Easter ... many will say to me: ‘But Father ..... I cannot leave the house and I want to make my peace with the Lord. I want Him to embrace me ..... How can I do that unless I find a priest?’ Do what the catechism says. It is very clear. If you don’t find a priest to go to confession, speak to God. He is your Father. Tell Him the truth: ‘Lord, I did this and this and this. Pardon me.’ Ask His forgiveness with all your heart with an act of contrition, and promise Him, ‘afterward I will go to confession.’ You will return to God’s grace immediately. You yourself can draw near, as the catechism teaches us, to God’s forgiveness, without having a priest at hand.”**

#### Visits to the Sick and Housebound

At the moment, the Priests have been asked not to make home visits to parishioners who are housebound, and not to administer Holy Communion to anyone. If a person is dying and needs anointing, unless the person has already received the Sacrament of the Sick in the last few weeks, the Priest can visit them under strict guidelines and administer the Sacrament of the Sick. If you know any parishioners who are housebound, please consider phoning them just to check they are alright and to alleviate any loneliness they might be feeling in these days.

#### Funerals.

As you know, funeral services and requiem Masses are not possible at the moment. What we may be able to offer is a priest to officiate at the committal either at the graveside or the crematorium. The current restrictions are that no more than 15 people in total in addition to the funeral director and necessary staff may be present, and the committal must not be turned into a funeral service, but must be a simple committal. This could change and the restrictions could become more restrictive.

You may also be aware that it was initially said that a Mass “in memoriam” could be celebrated when the restrictions are lifted. This is causing some concern. We do not know how long the restrictions may be in place. I think we can expect to be in this situation for at least three months. During that time, even without any additional deaths due to the corona virus, the number of deaths will mount up. Already in the Good Shepherd Parish, we have had three deaths in the last few days. This potentially could mean that we will have dozens of requests for ‘requiem Masses or ‘in memoriam’ Masses waiting for us. (Depending on how things develop, we don’t even know how many priests we will have to conduct them.) It would therefore be rash for us to promise individual Masses for everyone who dies during this time. Please be aware, that when the crisis is over, parishes may well advertise a single Requiem Mass for all who have died. Perhaps we can produce a booklet with a page for each person, should the family desire it, which may contain a photo and something about

them, and we could read each name out and a representative of the family could come forward and light a candle in memory of the person to burn throughout the Mass. This would be a parish Mass for all the members of the parish family who had died without an individual Mass. I know this may not be considered ideal, but we are 'church' and this would be an appropriate church response.

May God keep us all safe and thank you all for your prayers and support.

Fr. Peter