

Father Stamp has asked me to forward to all of you the following letter. If you require any clarification, you can contact me at siobhan.wood@dioceseofsalford.org.uk or contact Father directly at simon.stamp@dioceseofsalford.org.uk

Kind regards,

Siobhan Wood
Parish Administrator

Dear Friends,

Firstly, thank you for providing your contact details so that we can keep you regularly updated on what is happening in the Parish during these uncertain times. I would be extremely grateful if you could make known to any parishioner whose contact details you have the important news contained in this email.

I'm sure some of you will have already heard that the Bishops of England and Wales have taken the decision to suspend all public acts of worship in our churches from this Friday evening. That means there will be no public Masses in our churches, either at the weekend or on weekdays, until further notice. There will also be no other public acts of worship such as Baptisms, Funerals or Weddings in our churches until further notice and no devotional gatherings such as Stations of the Cross or group Rosaries. We need to get the news out to as many people as possible that this coming weekend, there will be no public Mass.

During these times, Father Livesey and I will be celebrating Holy Mass each day, both in St Anne's and in St Joseph's, privately, without any congregation. The Bishops have made clear that the obligation to attend Mass on Sundays is suspended for all Catholics.

I must also ask that Extraordinary Ministers of Holy Communion (Eucharistic Ministers) do not take Holy Communion to the sick and housebound until further notice.

However, we want to ensure at this time that people are able to access our churches for times of personal prayer, even though we cannot gather for Mass.

At St Joseph's, the Church will be open from Monday to Friday from 10am until 12pm, except on Thursdays when it will be open from 9am until 10am. On Saturdays, the Church will be open from 10am until 12pm. On Sundays, the Church will be open from 9.30am until 11.30am and from 4pm until 5pm.

At St Anne's, the Church will be open each day from Monday to Friday from 8am until 10am and again from 5pm until 6pm. On Saturdays and Sundays the church will be open from 10am until 12pm. We can review these arrangements from week to week and I will keep you all updated via email. Please pass these things on. There will be notices displayed with the necessary information in both churches as well.

During these times, the Sacrament of Confession is by request. Please feel free to approach me during the times I have outlined above whilst the church is open and I will go into the confessional. Father Livesey will also ensure he is around for Confession in St Joseph's on Saturday mornings or by request at other times.

I know that this will be a challenging and difficult time for parishioners but let us use this opportunity to intensify our personal prayer to the Lord and grow in our deep love and appreciation for the supreme gift of the Holy Mass. As we are currently deprived of assisting at Mass during these days, let our longing to receive Our Lord in Holy Communion become a burning and consuming love in each one of our hearts, so that when we are able to assist once more at Mass and once more receive Our Lord sacramentally, we will do so with a greater awareness of how precious the Sacrifice of the Mass truly is. We will never take such a gift for granted again.

In the meantime, let us be full of joy and peace. We are sons and daughters of the living God and He

has not abandoned us. He remains always with us in the tabernacles of both of our churches where He awaits us with such love. Whilst we cannot receive Him sacramentally in Holy Communion, we can receive Him spiritually by making a spiritual communion. I include below two forms of the spiritual communion we can make each day when we visit the church and kneel before Our Lord really and truly present in the Blessed Sacrament:

"I wish, Lord, to receive You with the purity, humility and devotion with which Your Most Holy Mother received You, with the spirit and fervour of the Saints."

"My Jesus, I believe that You are truly present in the Most Holy Sacrament. I love You above all things, and I desire to receive You into my soul. Since I cannot at this moment receive You sacramentally, come at least spiritually into my heart. I embrace You as being already there and unite myself wholly to You. Never permit me to be separated from You. Amen."

This coming Friday, there will be Mass as usual in St Joseph's at 9.30am followed by Stations of the Cross and Mass in St Anne's at 9am. Please note, these will be the last public acts of worship in both churches until further notice.

With my prayers for you and your families, and uniting myself spiritually to each one of you and especially the sick in Holy Mass each day,

Yours in Christ,

Father Simon Stamp
Parish Priest of St Anne's and St Joseph's, Accrington
Rural Dean of St John Vianney Deanery