

## Now that the church is open for private prayer and devotion ...

The government and the Catholic Bishops have agreed that our church buildings can be open for private prayer and devotions. We have had to put in place very strict measures to conform to the guidelines that have been issued. I know it may be difficult, but I would ask you please to follow carefully any notices around the church and to listen to instructions given by the stewards on duty.

Briefly:

- Please park carefully, and maintain social distancing in the car park.
- Please follow the one-way system.
- Please sanitise your hands upon entering the church.
- Please observe social distancing of 2m.
- Please sit only in the indicated seats.
- Please do not touch statues and other items of devotion.
- Please take a Newsletter BUT DO NOT put back any newsletters or other paper items that you touch.
- Please note that the toilets are out of use (in case of emergency talk to one of the stewards).

### When will we be able to return to the celebration of Mass and the other sacraments?

Honestly I have no idea! However I get the feeling that this might be possible, again under very strict controls, sometime during July. I will keep you all informed about any news and instructions that may be issued.

### Readings for the 12th Sunday in Ordinary Time

**First Reading** *Jeremiah 20:10-13* Jeremiah expresses confidence that the Lord will protect him.

**Responsorial Psalm** *Psalms 69:8-10, 14, 17, 33-35* God responds to the prayers of those in need.

**Second Reading** *Romans 5:12-15* Sin came into the world through one person; so salvation came through one person for many.

**Gospel Reading** *Matthew 10:26-33* Jesus assures the Twelve that God cares about them.

‘Do not fear’, ‘Do not be afraid ...’. Jesus recognises that there will be much that will cause his disciples to be afraid but tries to get them to distinguish appropriate from inappropriate fear. There is a false fear and a true fear. Disciples need not fear those (human persecutors) who can kill the body, because their entire physical existence is held within the hands of God and is precious in God’s sight: if God values the life of sparrows sold two for a penny, marking when they fall to the ground, how much more does the heavenly Father value and protect the lives of believers, worth more than hundreds of sparrows! Those who stand firm in witness to the Gospel and the values it enshrines, even to the point of death, can be confident that their ultimate fate lies in the hand of God and will one day be vindicated.

The only valid fear for disciples should be that of falling out of God’s favour and so of

losing, not one's body, but one's soul. The object of the fear in the injunction, 'Fear him, rather, who can destroy both body and soul in hell', can be understood in a number of ways. The 'him' could refer to a human persecutor or adversary, but it could also be a reference to God. Preachers may want to shy away from the latter interpretation and the image of God it suggests. It has, nonetheless, a good claim to originality and ought not be easily set aside. This is a Gospel which readily illustrates the adage that Christianity is comforting but not comfortable. The evangelist (Matthew) presents Jesus as insisting that the Gospel is not something to be talked about and lived behind closed doors. It – and the values it enshrines – demands public witness and proclamation.

We have had and in so many ways continue to have much to have be afraid of – The Virus, racism that is still so prevalent in our world, protests and anti-protests. But through it all we hear the voice of Jesus the Incarnate Word telling us: "do not be afraid".

The perfect love of God, that love revealed to us in the face of the well beloved only begotten Son, casts out all fear, fans failing faith to life and gives us hope, hope for and in eternity. This week has seen the first, very tentative reopening of our churches. We can now come into the eucharistic presence of Jesus and make our prayers and devotions. Our church buildings that have stood barred for these long weeks of lockdown are finally open again. This gives us two causes for joy and hope: yes, as I have said, we the Catholic faithful can once more come before our sacramentally present Lord, but also our building stands open as a sign and symbol in our local community. A sign of the invitation of the Good News to cast out fear and that, as step by step our society and our world attempt to find a new normal, so God is with us as Lord and Saviour, he walks with us on the pilgrim road and prepares a path before us in all our needs, fears and anxieties.

### **Sound System/Live Streaming**

In the midst of all our problems at the moment I have some good news. We are able now to go ahead with the installation of a new PA system and camera. This will have a two-fold blessing: first our present PA system is very old, in very poor order and is very patchy in the way it works. So a new system will aid the proclamation of the Good News. Also this system will allow us to live-stream Mass and other events to the housebound and others who may not be able to come to church.

The overall cost of the system is £6,050. I have already received a few donations and more are promised. On top of this our Ordinariate Mission has given £2,500 towards the costs. So we as a parish need to cover the shortfall. I know these are difficult times but if YOU would like to make a donation to this important work to aid our mission then please do have a chat with me ASAP.

Total cost of system	6,050
Donation from Ordinariate	2,500
Other Donations received	960
(I have been promised another three donations that are still to come)	
Present shortfall	2,590

Fr Rob