

**NEWSLETTER 21st June 2020**

The Presbytery: New Road, Princes Risborough, HP27 0JN. Tel: 01844 345578

E-mail: [presbytery@st-teresas.org.uk](mailto:presbytery@st-teresas.org.uk)

Website: [www.st-teresas.org.uk](http://www.st-teresas.org.uk)

Join our Facebook group: St Teresa's Parish Community Princes Risborough

Parish Priest: Fr. Lijo Jose MSFS

Deacon: Sean Duffy (343705)

Safeguarding Representative - Phil Hughes (345006)

My dear parishioners

On the whole the news looks more positive. Although nearly 300,000 have been infected by the virus and more than 42,000 people have already died in UK, it looks as if the number of deaths is continuing on a downward trend and the number of new coronavirus cases is levelling off. The shops are starting to open. Is life starting to return to normal? Not yet, but it could be we are moving towards that. So there are many reasons to give thanks to God, whilst still remembering in our prayers all those who have been affected by the virus- those who have lost their jobs, those who are still ill in hospital, those who have died, those who have lost their loved ones and have been unable to grieve for them properly. Let us hold them all before the Lord. And of course, the good news is that the churches are opening for private prayer, including our own church. Please refer to the information at the end of this newsletter.

I just wanted to say a few words about Sunday's gospel Mt 10: 26-33.

Sometimes this gospel from Matthew seems a bit difficult to understand. It is best to read it in the context of Matthew's listeners. Matthew was writing for a Jewish-Christian community who no doubt had faced many dangers and persecutions and would continue to face them.

Matthew wanted to encourage and strengthen his listeners with these words of Jesus. Do not fear. God loves you and will protect you.

But as we know the gospel speaks to us today, in 2020. And we too need to be encouraged and strengthened by the words of Jesus. I think there are at least three points that can speak to us and help us on our journey.

***'Do not be afraid. For everything that is now covered will be uncovered, and everything now hidden will be made clear.'* Mt. 10: 26.**

I think Jesus is telling us to simply have trust in him and be open about our faith and witness to our faith. We have many opportunities to do this just by little acts of love, of forgiveness and forgetting about ourselves and giving of ourselves to the other. We may think they are small things but they are such a powerful way of showing that Jesus is the centre of our lives.

***'Do not be afraid of those who kill the body but cannot kill the soul; fear him rather who can destroy both body and soul in hell.'* 10: 28.**

Well, it is true that we do not have any powerful opponents to face, but we meet all kinds of distractions in our lives that sometimes prevent us from making Jesus our centre. Sometimes our worries and anxieties overcome us and we lose sight of Jesus and forget to trust him. Sometimes we are tempted to focus on things that do not come from the Lord. Following Jesus is not easy. Every day we have to consciously choose to be like him and choose as he chose. This verse simply encourages us to keep our eyes fixed on Jesus.

***'Can you not buy two sparrows for a penny? And yet not one falls to the ground without your Father knowing. Why, every hair on your head has been counted. So there is no need to be afraid; you are worth more than hundreds of sparrows.'* 10: 29-31.**

Of course, this is a very well-known passage and it can bring us great comfort and consolation. In the time of Jesus sparrows were different types of small birds that were sold in the market place- they were so cheap, that a penny, which was not of much value, could buy two of them. Here we are told that we are worth **so much more** than hundreds and hundreds of these small birds. In fact, we are loved so much that God has even counted each hair on our head! Imagine! God loves each one of us

personally. He knows us, He cares for us and protects us. And that fills us with courage, hope and joy as we continue on our journey. We are not alone.

I want to finish this reflection with 4 lines from the responsorial Psalm for Sunday. It is a lovely prayer that we can all pray together during the week.

*'In your great love, answer me, O God,*

*With your help that never fails:*

*Lord, answer, for your love is kind;*

*In your compassion, turn towards me.'*

I hope that you might find some time each day just to pray with these words, remembering just how much you are loved and cherished. Even every hair on your head has been counted so be filled with confidence.

### **Opening of our Church**

After the recent government announcement and with the approval of the Diocese of Northampton I am delighted to tell you that St Teresa's will open for private prayer twice a week from Sunday 21 June.

We have to follow very strict guidelines in order to ensure that everybody is safe so at the beginning things are going to feel very different.

We have a very beautiful church with a unique shape. So in order to meet social distancing regulations of two metres, we will have to limit the number of people who can come in at any given time. That number has to be limited to 12 to 15. I hope that by cooperating together, everybody who wishes will be able to spend some time in private prayer.

Please read through the following information very carefully.

## **How will opening the church for private prayer work?**

- As we are a small parish, we will open for two short periods per week Sundays and Wednesdays from 9.30 am - 11.30 am. This will commence on Sunday 21<sup>st</sup> June.
- Stewards will be present in the church throughout the time it is open for prayer. I must ask to please comply with their instructions for the safety of all - the most important instruction is to socially distance, inside and outside the church, leaving at least 2m between individuals (and household groups) and to sanitize your hands as you enter and as you leave the church. Face masks may also be worn but are not mandatory.
- You will be asked to enter the church through the main door and leave through the fire exit door at our Lady's chapel.
- If you are meant to be self-isolating please do not come to the church. Stay at home. Coming to use the church for prayer is wonderful, but the most important thing is your health and well-being.
- If you feel at all unwell, or have the symptoms of COVID-19, please do not come - the church will be open regularly and hopefully increasingly frequently, so please do not come if you are unwell. Please do not take risks with your health and that of others.
- You are welcome to visit the church whilst we are open, either on your own, or as a group from the same household. If you come as a group from the same household, please may I ask you to come, if possible, from 10.30 am onwards.
- Children under 16 years cannot enter the church or associated building at this time without being accompanied by an adult.
- As you enter and exit the church, please remember to sanitise your hands. The stewards will be cleaning seats, doors and fittings after each person/household group has left the church and before the next person uses them.

- The Stewards will invite you or your family to sit in a specific pew because it meets social distancing and other requirements, and takes into account who else is already there - please do follow what the stewards say. When the church prayer areas are full you will have to wait outside at the stewards' direction until space is clean and available for you.
- There will be signs to explain what you are allowed to do, but please follow the steward's directions both inside and outside the church; they will make sure we abide by the rules. Please do not get cross or annoyed if you are asked to wait before entering the church. We need to show we can comply with these rules so we can progressively move to the next stage of opening and hopefully restore Mass and the Sacraments (when the Government allows).
- As you can imagine you must not touch the statues. There will be no Holy Water in the stoup and you will not be able to buy Mass cards. You will be able to light a candle in the candle stands but you will have to light it from another lit candle. Tapers, lighters or matches may not be used.
- There will be no toilet facilities available to prevent any risk of transmission of infection.

I understand that all these measures may seem daunting. But they are absolutely necessary to ensure that the risk of infection is kept to an absolute minimum. I know that I can count on the cooperation of each one of you to comply with all these regulations.

### **Should I volunteer to be a steward?**

First of all I am so grateful to the people who have already volunteered to be a steward. Without you our church could not open. I know from my past few months here that whenever I ask for volunteers, many people come forward.

However, in this case, there are strict guidelines for stewards. The team must not include those instructed to shield themselves, or those from groups considered more vulnerable to coronavirus. So may I say very gently to our older parishioners and those at any risk, without causing offence, that I do not want you to put yourself at any risk of catching the virus. I want you above all to be safe so please consider your safety first and foremost. We need to solve the stewarding requirement from across the whole parish community. So, to everyone else, if you feel you are in a category at less risk, are fit and well, and want to volunteer, perhaps you might consider joining the team. If you want to help as a steward please get in touch with Deacon Seán Duffy on [duffyseanm@hotmail.co.uk](mailto:duffyseanm@hotmail.co.uk)

Private prayer is an important part of our lives as Catholics, so please do join if you wish - you would be very welcome - but don't take risks and don't feel uncomfortable if you can't; we can pray just as effectively wherever we are. This is a measured first step to opening our parish church more often, so bear with us as we follow the guidance and show we can use the space and comply with the rules we have been given.

One again, I am so grateful to those who have been working so hard to get the church ready to open. I will of course keep you updated on any developments/information from the Diocese regarding reopening for public worship.

Have a blessed and peaceful week.

Fr Lijo