

**NEWSLETTER 14<sup>th</sup> June 2020**

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My dear parishioners

Just before starting to write this newsletter, I was reading the news. I hardly know what to make of it all. The good news is that the lockdown is gradually being lifted- social bubbles are being introduced in particular to help those who have been cut off from family and friends, some shops are getting ready to reopen, the churches too (more about that at the end of this newsletter). But on the other hand, many jobs are being cut, shops are being placed in administration, the schools are not likely to reopen before September and it seems that the NHS waiting lists could double to 10 million by the end of the year. So, it is a mixed bag of news.

I was reflecting on all of this and thinking how hard our journey through life can be at times, especially during this pandemic. We all have many worries, anxieties, and difficult problems to face. So many reasons sometimes to be afraid.

On Sunday we celebrate the Feast of the Body and Blood of the Lord- Corpus Christi. The Church asks us to celebrate this feast in order to strengthen our faith in the mystery of the Eucharist-Jesus remains with us and walks with us on our journey- in all the ups and downs of our lives. How fitting is this for what we are living now.

We often ask the question- How can Jesus be present in the Eucharist? Once again, this is a mystery. Do we need to understand it? No. But can we experience it? Yes. This beautiful feast reminds us that Jesus has given his own flesh and blood for each one of us- personally- on the cross and in the Eucharist.

For the Hebrews, the term flesh and blood meant the whole person. So in Sunday's gospel (John 6: 51-58) when Jesus says, **'He who eats my flesh and drinks my blood lives**

**in me and I live in him'**, He is speaking about the intimacy of his relationship with us. Jesus is fully present in the Eucharist and in that Presence, he gives us himself, to transform us and to make himself present in us. How encouraging, uplifting and strengthening.

I do understand, my dear parishioners, how hard these months are for you all, because you are deprived of the Eucharist. And I suffer with you. But until the day when we are allowed to celebrate a public mass once again and everyone can receive communion, please hold on to the knowledge that Jesus is still with us. He is in our midst and in our hearts.

And please be absolutely sure that when I celebrate my mass every day, you are with me. At the offertory I offer all of you with Jesus, to the Father. You are all there on that little paten.

I just would like to encourage all of you to make the Spiritual Communion of St Alphonsus every day. Jesus will surely answer that prayer as you invite him into your hearts. ***"Since I cannot now receive You sacramentally, come spiritually into my heart."***

We can be absolutely sure, even if we cannot receive because of the pandemic, that Jesus will come into our hearts and remain with us, walking with us every day and filling us with joy, peace, courage and strength. How could we journey through this life without him? We need him so much and He is there for us.

Eight of our children were due to make their First Holy Communion on this Sunday-14<sup>th</sup> June. I would like to assure those children, their catechists and their parents that I understand how disappointing this is. It is always such a wonderful family and parish occasion. At the moment it is impossible to say when we will be able to have a public mass again, but be assured that as soon as things are back to normal the First Holy Communion mass will be one of my priorities. Until then we will just have to be patient.

Cardinal Vincent Nichols will celebrate mass for the Feast of Corpus Christi live from Westminster Cathedral. It will be broadcast live on Radio 4 on Sunday 14<sup>th</sup> June at 8.10 am. In fact, it is the first live radio broadcast of mass since the lockdown began. I am certain this will be a very beautiful, meaningful and prayerful mass.

Friday 19<sup>th</sup> June is the Feast of the Sacred Heart of Jesus. I know that many people, including myself, have a great devotion to the Heart of Christ. Very briefly and simply, the Feast assures us that Jesus loves us, with all our failures and weaknesses and limitations. He invites us to place our wounds and hurts into his most loving and compassionate Heart. And so, we can say with great confidence, ***'Most Sacred Heart of Jesus, I place all my trust in you.'***

### **Opening of the Church for Private Prayer**

The good news is that the Government has announced that churches can open for private prayer from 15<sup>th</sup> June. The Diocese has instructed all churches to open for a limited time each week, but only if we adhere to strict hygiene and social distancing rules. There will also need to be stewards present to ensure that these strict rules are adhered to. (Stewards cannot include those who are shielding from those who belong to group considered vulnerable to the Corona virus). We need to make the church as safe as possible for all who wish to come and pray.

At the moment the necessary products to ensure the safety of everyone have not arrived. (I am expecting them in the coming week.) and I do not yet have the required number of stewards. I am hoping we can open the following week. Please keep looking at the website or the weekly newsletter for more news.

If you feel you can volunteer as a Steward please email me so that I can let you know exactly what is required.

Have a lovely week. May God bless you all and keep you safe in his loving and gentle care.

Fr Lijo