



ST TERESA'S *Newsletter*

8th November 2020

My dear parishioners

As I write this newsletter, we have entered into another lockdown. Will it end in four weeks' time? That is not sure- the lockdown could well continue if the number of cases does not decrease. It is really difficult to know what to make of all of this. These are such difficult and distressing times. The government is afraid that the number of deaths from Covid 19 could be twice as high over the winter as they were in the first wave of the pandemic but of course they are well aware that there will be devastating consequences for the economy. And many many people will feel isolated and alone, with the fear of increasing psychological stress.

Yes indeed, difficult and distressing times. I think all we can do is to keep our faith and our trust in God's love and care for us. Sometimes when we feel worried or anxious, it can help to repeat a little prayer or some words from a Psalm over and over again. I myself love these words from Psalm 91. I find they give me comfort, peace and a sense of closeness to God.

***"My refuge and
My fortress;
My God, in
whom I trust."***



Of course, the lockdown will have a big impact on us as the public masses will have to be suspended for the time being. Deacon Seán and I are very much hoping to open our church for private prayer. But it depends on the availability of the stewards. We will let you know in due course. Unfortunately, we will not now be able to go ahead with our First Holy Communion Mass on Saturday 14th November. This will be the second time that it is postponed. I myself feel very disappointed and I know that the children, their parents and the catechists will be bitterly disappointed. I really understand how hard it is for all of you and I keep you in my thoughts and prayers.

I want to take this opportunity on behalf of all of us to thank our lead catechist Katherine Shaw and all the catechists for the time and effort that they have put into preparing our children for their special day. The quality of the sessions has been really outstanding. We are blessed to have such a great team.

I just want to write a few words about Sunday's gospel. As we are now coming to the end of the Church's liturgical year, (The First Sunday of Advent is on 29th November), the readings at this time of the year are all warnings about the end times and being prepared for the coming of Christ.

The gospel for this Sunday is another parable- The Parable of the wise and foolish virgins (Matthew 25: 1-13). When we read this parable and try to understand its meaning, it is important to understand the wedding traditions of Palestine in the time of Jesus. (They are very different to our traditions!) It was customary for the wedding feast to take place at night. The bridegroom, with all his friends, would come to the home of the bride, who would be waiting for him with all her friends and relatives. When he arrived, she would come out surrounded by her relatives and friends, who would lead her in procession, with lamps and torches and singing and dancing to her new wedding home. It would be a really joyous, happy occasion.

We need to remember that when Jesus tells a parable it is to make a particular point, so sometimes he exaggerates to get his point across. So in this parable we have only ten young girls waiting for the bridegroom. And there is no mention of the bride! The young girls were waiting for the bridegroom, ready with their lamps- because it was night and they needed to see in the dark. They all fell asleep because he was so long in coming. When they heard that he was about to arrive, five of them realised they did not have enough oil and their lamps were going out. They asked their companions for some of their oil, but they refused to give them any. So those five young girls (the foolish virgins) had to go and buy more and the result was that they missed the bridegroom altogether. And they could not get into the feast.



Actually, I always feel a bit sorry for the foolish virgins because they did not do anything wrong- they just did not have enough oil. They were not ready. We can interpret the parable on different levels. Jesus is obviously making a point about being ready. But ready for what? I think this parable is an invitation to look at our own lives. Life is made up of different moments- each one precious and unique. How do we respond to the present moment? Sometimes we can miss what the present moment offers us- we are too busy, we are distracted, or we don't like what it is offering us- suffering, difficulties, pain, isolation, solitude. There are so many different reasons why we miss the present moment. And so we miss the chance to pray, to reflect, or to help another person.

And yet that is the only moment that we have. The present moment is where we meet God and where He meets us. We need to try not to miss what is essential, not to miss him in the circumstances in which we are living.

I think the message is to seek and find God in the present moment, to welcome him in the present moment, so that he will always be part of our lives.

And when he comes to take us home to be with him forever, whenever that might be, we will simply put our hand into his as he leads us into unimaginable peace and joy.

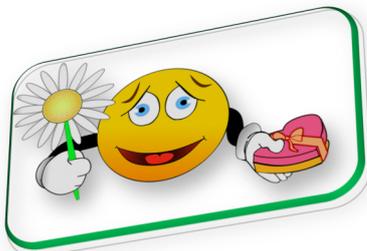
Let us ask for the grace this week to find God in every encounter, in every moment. Let us ask for the grace to be ready to meet him in whatever circumstances we have to face this week.

I want you all to know that I will be holding you very specially in my prayers this week and I will remember you when I celebrate my daily mass.

Please keep safe. May God bless you all.

Fr Lijo

Online Marriage Support: Is your marriage under stress? SmartLoving BreakThrough can help! Identify your conflict triggers, learn strategies to de-escalate an argument and find constructive ways to re-establish connection. Available anywhere, anytime through our online platform, the course is completely private and doesn't require your spouse to participate. And it's subsidized by a generous UK donor. Restore hope for your relationship now. Visit: www.smartloving.org/bto-uk



Apologies to any parishioners who tried to join the zoom coffee morning on Tuesday November 2nd. Unfortunately there was a technical hitch which made access difficult. We'll attempt to resolve the problem and try again later this month. Watch this space!

Princes Risborough Food Cupboard: Thank you all so much for your generous donations. Donations may be made to St Mary's Church Bell Tower, 10.00 a.m. to 1.00 p.m. Wednesdays and Fridays, or in the trolley at the entrance to Tesco's at any time they're open.



Things we could do with more of: Tins of baked beans, Tins of meat, Tins or jars of pasta sauce, Tins or jars of curry sauce, Tins of fruit.

Things we have plenty of, so don't need any more at the moment: Tins of potatoes, Tins of mushy and marrowfat peas, Egg boxes (empty).

Saturday morning workshops:



7th November: 11-12.30. "Planning for Advent and Christmas 2020 – reaching our families and housebound." Join us to explore a range of simple but creative ideas to help our parishes reach out this Advent. <http://formationpathways.co.uk/event/advent-and-christmas/>

21st November: 10-11am. "Covid-safe ministry to the sick". Exploring safe ways to minister to the sick including the new diocesan guidelines on taking communion to people's homes. <http://formationpathways.co.uk/event/training-for-ministry-to-the-sick/>

Post-Lockdown Church webinars: week 8: 9th November, 7.30pm. final webinar with Fr Matthew Nunes. Over the past few weeks we have taken up Bishop David's challenge to think of ourselves as "the Church as a new reality" and explored online mission, delved into Scripture, and found joy. Where do we go next with all this? Join us for the final session of these webinars: <http://postlockdownchurch.eventbrite.co.uk>.



To join the parish Zoom discussion group which will last for 1 hour every Wednesday at 7.30pm, email Deacon Seán at: duffyseanm@hotmail.co.uk