

TO CONTACT THE PARISH/FATHER NEIL

The Presbytery, Hillside Lane, Neath, SA11 1TG. Phone – 01639 643323

Parish Website – www.catholicchurchneath.org.uk

THE RE-OPENING OF CHURCHES IN WALES

Dear Friends, as you will now be aware, the Welsh Government has given permission for churches to re-open in Wales for private prayer. **PLEASE NOTE** – St.Joseph's and St.John Kemble are **NOT YET OPEN** for private prayer.

We are being asked to observe very strict precautions and must receive a **Health & Safety Certificate** from the Diocese before we can re-open even for just private prayer. (i) There must be sufficient volunteers to act as stewards before a church can re-open. At least two (and preferably three) people must be present as stewards to ensure all regulations are being observed. Volunteers must be under 70 years of age, and wear PPE (personal protective equipment). We do not yet have a sufficient number of volunteers to re-open St.Joseph's or St.John Kemble. (ii) We need to purchase signage (giving directions/instructions); safety tape (to close off certain pews) to ensure social distancing; marking tape – to mark the floors; entry and exit by different doors; alcohol handwash – not just anti-bacterial handwash; paper towels, gloves, face-masks etc (iii) toilets to be kept closed (iv) the church to be deep cleaned at least once a day after use – and thus more volunteers needed (wearing PPE)

In view of all the above, and to allow time for the painters to finish painting the nave of the Church (in St.Joseph's), my intention (having consulted others) is to wait and to apply for a Health & Safety Certificate which will allow us (when the day comes) to **re-open for the Celebration of Mass** (and not just for private prayer) and will be in contact with the Diocese to make the necessary arrangements. It will be important when we re-open for Mass that, sensitively observing all the necessary regulations, the church is made to feel as welcoming and prayerful as possible so that our thoughts are concentrated on the celebration of Mass rather than on all the tapes, signs and markings around us! **PLEASE KEEP OUR SITUATION IN YOUR PRAYERS.**

The St.Joseph's Community Support Group. If you need help with shopping, collecting prescriptions etc please contact Fr.Neil or Siobhan (07811931971) **YOU ARE NOT ALONE!** We hope to keep in contact with all parishioners over seventy by post – provided that stamps (and envelopes) are still available and the postal service continues to function. Otherwise, the Newsletter will continue to appear (God willing and health permitting) on the Parish Website each week. If you are aware of other parishioners who may not otherwise be aware of the help being offered by the St.Joseph's Support Group, please pass this information on to them. **MANY THANKS** to all our volunteers for helping those in need at this difficult and challenging time. Thank you to Siobhan for co-ordinating the Community Support Group, and to our SVP Group and Legion of Mary for keeping in contact with parishioners by phone

A Coronavirus Prayer. " Lord Jesus Christ, You travelled through towns and villages ' curing every disease and illness'. At Your command, the sick were made well. Come now to our aid, in the midst of this global pandemic, and send down Your blessing and healing upon us and protect our healthcare workers. Bring us through to Resurrection and a New Pentecost. For Thy Name's sake. Amen.

The Neath Food Bank – has a request for specific food items, which can be left at Tesco Neath Abbey (the collection point is by the café) especially they need tinned fruit 400g, teabags – 80s, dried pasta 500gms, UHT milk 1L, breakfast cereals but NOT beans or sugar! Many thanks for your help and generosity.

Please remember in your prayers those in the parish who have died recently and whose funerals have been held privately due to coronavirus restrictions, Benetia Whittington (RIP), Gary Derrick (RIP), Mary Rees (RIP), Norma Hatherall (RIP), Nell O'Connell (RIP), Judith Jones (RIP). *Eternal rest grant unto them O Lord, And let perpetual light shine upon them. May they rest in peace Amen*

Parish Collections. **MANY THANKS** to all who have continued to donate to the Church over recent weeks through cash gifts, cheques, parish envelopes and standing orders with the bank. **WE ARE VERY GRATEFUL.** For those who have asked – for donations and Standing Orders – the details of our (St.Joseph's) bank account are – Branch Code 54-10-19 – Account Number 01520296 – (Diocese of Menevia Neath Parish) Nat West, 35 Green Street, Neath, SA11 1DB.

The Fourteenth Sunday in Ordinary Time – 5th July 2020 – St. Matthew 11 v 25 – 30

In our Gospel today, Jesus is very emphatic – God does not reveal Himself (primarily) to the *intellect* (thank goodness!) but to the *heart*. Entrusting ourselves to Jesus is not an intellectual exercise but an exercise of the heart. And (sometimes) the mind has to “catch up” with what the heart already believes. This may involve a struggle, especially for those whose intellect is incisive and forensic because we believe *beyond* what we are able to understand. Of course we do! – because we believe in Him Who is far beyond our understanding - but, in the words made famous by St. Anselm of Canterbury, “we believe in order to understand”.

Faith believes, and then the mind reflects on what the heart already knows to be true. In those famous words of the French thinker, Pascal, “the heart has its reasons which reason knows nothing about”. How can this be? It is because the Christian life is the response of faith to Revelation and so, in our Gospel today, Jesus cries out, “I thank You, Father, Lord of Heaven and Earth, for hiding these things from the learned and the clever, and *revealing* them to mere children”. One does not have to be a great intellect to believe in (and to receive) Jesus because the Christian life is (essentially) a spiritual (and interior) life, and if we are to grow (spiritually) we must not obey our “*unspiritual*” selves (as St. Paul says in our Second Reading today – **Romans 8 v 9,11 – 13**) – but conform ourselves to the Holy Spirit, already at work within us, the same Holy Spirit at work in the Life of Jesus and by whose power Jesus was raised from the dead.

As St. Paul indicates, there is a *battle* going on inside our souls – between the spiritual and the unspiritual, the temptation to live a merely material and sensual existence, to live *only* through our external senses of sight, hearing, taste, smell and feeling, to be always living *outside* of ourselves, instead of seeking the fellowship of Him Who lives within us. St. Augustine tells us that he spent many years seeking God outside of himself – and (all the time!) God was at work *within* him, “ For, behold, You were within me and I outside, and I sought You outside and in my ugliness fell upon those lovely things You have made. You were within me but I was not in you”. But what a struggle he had! What a struggle *we* have! So many temptations – to lose ourselves in experiences outside of ourselves but, says St. Paul “your true interests are not in the unspiritual but in the spiritual, since the Spirit of God has made His home *within* you” (v 9). The world is passing away, St. John tells us (1 John 2 v 15 -17) No matter how attractive (or permanent) it may *appear* to be, the glory, the beauty, and the power of the world is passing away but we (in the image of God) have been made for eternal realities, to contemplate, and to seek out, eternal truths. Our outer nature, says St. Paul, is passing away, “ but we do not lose heart. Though our outer nature is wasting away, our inner nature is being renewed day by day” (2 Corinthians 4 v 16). We are a mix – the material and the spiritual, the temporal and the eternal – and these “combinations” struggle within us! We all feel this struggle! We all feel these contradictions! The struggle – the battle – to know what to do. The ethical dilemmas! How often we convince ourselves to do what is easy (and pleasant) instead of what is difficult and better. These are the daily struggles in the spiritual life and we set our course through life by means of these daily struggles. On the central highway to the Heavenly Jerusalem, we may only turn very slightly to the left but, after a few miles (in the wrong direction) we are very far from where we would have been (where we are meant to be) and it will now require far more effort to retrieve our position than if we had not, in the first instance, strayed just those few feet - or few inches!

But – thanks be to God! – when we do find ourselves far from home and lost without a compass because of the faulty decisions we have made, Jesus the Good Shepherd is looking out for us, and searching for us down the labyrinthine ways in which we have lost ourselves, and invites us to return along the path marked “repentance” not only to restore us to where we once were on the central highway but to move us forward and so, in our Gospel today, Jesus renews that gracious invitation, “ Come to me all you who labour and are heavy laden – and I will give you rest”. The peace of sins forgiven! A new start. Renewed compass bearings. A clear way ahead.

Let us pray that we may respond in faith – from the heart - to the good news of the Gospel, and then *continue* our discipleship by seeking to understand what we believe by catechising our intellect, so that loving God with all our heart, with all our *mind* and (doing *both*) with all our strength we may plumb the depths and come to know, “ the hope to which He has called you, what are the riches of His glorious inheritance in the saints, and what is the immeasurable greatness of His power in us who believe, according to the working of His great might which He accomplished in Christ when He raised Him from the dead!” (Ephesians 1 v 18f). May it be so! Amen!