

TO CONTACT THE PARISH/FATHER NEIL

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

Parish Website – www.catholicchurchneath.org.uk

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

CORONAVIRUS - IMPORTANT UP-DATE - PLEASE NOTE

The Archbishops of England and Wales are engaged with the Westminster government on the desire of Catholics that churches should re-open for private prayers and devotions. In Wales the Faith Communities Forum is actively engaged with the Deputy First Minister, Jane Hutt, on how to lift restrictions on places of worship. The big question relates to **controlling and stewarding** access, and how places of worship are to be sanitised. A further meeting will take place on 3rd June.

If and when permission is given for our churches to re-open, they will be subject to strict health and safety conditions as are all public buildings. Archbishop George Stack informs us that amongst these will be the necessity to provide in churches – (1) social distancing measures, seating arrangements, one way system, exits and entrances, clear signage, restricted times etc (2) attendance management, queuing, ticketing, online registration, stewarding etc (3) staggering of attendance by age or vulnerability (4) infection control issues such as Holy Water stoups, leaflets, hymn books, missals, newsletters, candles, all of which can harbour the virus (5) PPE materials, sanitiser, deep cleaning materials, surface cleaning materials etc (6) liturgical issues, distribution of Holy Communion, frequency of Masses, devotions, organisation of Memorial Masses, care of the bereaved. (6) two or three volunteers – under the age of seventy – to implement these policies in order to keep churches open at specific times. The safeguarding of clergy over the age of seventy and those with underlying health issues will obviously be a priority. (8) in the first instance, large strategically placed churches would be opened. Whether large or small churches would need to ensure compliance with the above requisites.

Before the churches can begin to re-open here in the Diocese of Menevia, there needs to be a diocesan wide supply of PPE and sanitising equipment – even to enter the church for private prayer. The church authorities are working on an initial order for a supply covering the next three months. This will involve a significant cost for each parish.

Please see, on the Parish Website, “**A Message from the Metropolitan Archbishops of the Catholic Church in England and Wales**”.

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.

Faith and Fellowship / DOMSEC. Please note that as a temporary measure courses are available on-line via YouTube, from 7pm to 9pm on Wednesdays 3rd and 10th June. Go to www.ourladystaroftheseamumbles.org.uk or to www.domsec.org.uk and click “Livestream” on the top menu bar.

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.

Pentecost Sunday – 31ST May 2020 – Acts of the Apostles 2 v 1 – 11

At the very beginning of the public Ministry of Jesus, John the Baptist declared, “ I baptise you with water but He Who is mightier than I is coming – He will baptise you with the Holy Spirit and with fire” (St. Luke 3 v 16). This Baptism in the Holy Spirit, Jesus Himself was the first to receive at His Baptism in the River Jordan when, as the Head of His Body, the Church, He was anointed with the Holy Spirit (St. Luke 4 v 18) when the Holy Spirit descended upon Him in the form of a dove (St. Luke 3 v 27). He had no need, as the Second Person of the Holy and Blessed Trinity, to be empowered, indwelt or filled with the Holy Spirit but (as the Church continually professes) as the Eternal Word, He “assumed” in the Womb of the Blessed Virgin Mary not only Flesh and Blood, but Human Nature and a Rational Soul. Although His Sacred Humanity was perfect, nevertheless, it is His Sacred Humanity, His Sacred Heart, (not His Divine Person or Divine Nature) which received the fullness of the Holy Spirit at His Baptism in the River Jordan. This fullness or baptism in the Holy Spirit Jesus (as the Head of the Body) desires to pour out also as a Gift upon His Body but which Gift was dependent upon His Death and Resurrection – “ for if I do not go away, the Counsellor will not come to you; but if I go, I will send Him to you” (St. John 16 v 7).

At the Last Supper, Jesus speaks at some length about this promise of the coming Holy Spirit. “When the Spirit of truth comes, He will guide you into all the truth” (St. John 16 v 13); “ when the Counsellor comes, Whom I shall send to you, He will bear witness to me” (St. John 15 v 26); “I will pray the Father, and He will give you another Counsellor, to be with you for ever, even the Spirit of truth” and then, very significantly, Jesus adds, “for He dwells *with* you but will be *in* you” (St John 14 v 16f) thus, “it is to your **advantage** that I go away” (St. John 16 v 7). Jesus, by these words, indicates that (in some mysterious manner) although the Holy Spirit has indeed already been at work *with* them (as in the lives of the prophets, *upon* them, in the Old Testament) nevertheless there is going to be a new relationship (that we do not fully understand) whereby the Holy Spirit will indwell the Church allowing us to be caught up into the Life of the Holy and Blessed Trinity in a way that was not possible to the people of God in previous generations.

After His Resurrection, the Risen Jesus reminds the Apostles of “the promise of the Father” which, He said, “you heard from me – (as in all the promises He made to them at the Last Supper) - for John baptised with water but before many days you will be baptised with the Holy Spirit” (Acts 1 v 5) - thus confirming the earlier prophecy of John the Baptist and again, in fulfilment of John’s prophecy, on the Day of Pentecost, “there appeared to them tongues *as of fire*, distributed and resting on each one of them. And they were all **filled with the Holy Spirit** and began to speak in other tongues, as the Spirit gave them utterance” (Acts 2 v 2f). The Holy Spirit, Who came down upon the Sacred Humanity of Jesus at the River Jordan (thus anointing the Head) now anoints/falls upon His Body and unites Head and Body in the One Spirit, and this Unity of the Church is wonderfully displayed in the supernatural gift of tongues whereby these uneducated Galileans (the Apostles) are able to proclaim “the mighty works of God” (Acts 2 v 11) in a multitude of languages, signifying that the Church is to incorporate all the nations of the earth (“Go and make disciples of all nations” St. Matthew 28 v 19), and thus the division of humanity into separate languages (Gen. 11 v 7) is reversed as, IN CHRIST, all nations become ONE HOLY NATION, a Royal Priesthood, God’s own people (1 Peter 2 v 9), a new creation (2 Corinthians 5 v 17).

We might reflect, on this Pentecost Sunday, that if God the Father deemed it necessary that the (perfect) Sacred Humanity of Jesus should be strengthened and empowered by the Holy Spirit, how much more do we flawed, fallen, imperfect human beings need supernatural help to live the supernatural life of grace. How foolish we are to think that we can live the life of grace without new supplies of grace, without the grace (and graces) of the Holy Spirit

Let us pray, on this Pentecost Sunday (as we have been praying and continue to pray), for a New Pentecost in the life of the Church, and (in this Year of the God Who Speaks/ the Year of God’s Word) we continue to pray that God may powerfully speak to us and revive us by His Word. May the Holy Spirit powerfully apply the Word of God to our hearts and minds “piercing to the division of soul and spirit” (Hebrews 4 v 12) – “Come Holy Spirit! Renew the face of the earth!” - “Bend the stubborn heart and will, Melt the frozen, warm the chill, Guide the steps that go astray” Amen. Come, Lord Jesus!