

TO CONTACT THE PARISH/FATHER NEIL

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

Parish Website – [www.catholicchurchneath.org.uk](http://www.catholicchurchneath.org.uk)

## THE RE-OPENING OF THE CHURCHES FOR THE CELEBRATION OF MASS

### WELCOME BACK!

*“ I was glad when I heard them say, ‘Let us go to God’s House!’, and now our feet are standing within your gates, O Jerusalem!” (Psalm 122 v 1 )*

Dear Friends, God willing, the great day has arrived when we can, at long last, return to church for the public celebration of Mass ( next weekend 1<sup>st</sup>/2<sup>nd</sup> August ) and meet one another again around the Lord’s Table. It has been a “wilderness” experience, but God has brought us through and we must pray that we are stronger, more fervent in our faith and that God has a time of blessing for us in the days ahead. No doubt it will all feel rather strange to begin with but, hopefully, we shall fall into the new way of doing things whilst looking forward to the day when all these ( rather intrusive ) precautions can be finished with. Please pray that we may offer a worthy celebration of Holy Mass within these necessary restrictions. Keep praying!

#### ST.JOSEPH’S, NEATH

##### A] YOUR RESPONSIBILITIES.

Please be aware ( and prepare beforehand! ) the **TOILETS ARE CLOSED** and cannot be accessed - in order to avoid cross-contamination.

- (i) Entrance to the Church is only via the main door (except for disabled access )
- (ii) On entering, hands **MUST** be washed using the sanitising soap/gel provided.
- (iii) Masks and gloves are available but are optional.
- (iv) Please place your collection/donation in the box provided. There is no Offertory Procession.
- (v) Please follow the arrows/directions of the stewards. **UP** the central aisle. **DOWN** the side aisles.
- (vi) Every other pew is cordoned off. Three individuals may sit (apart) in a pew ( as marked ). Families, couples, those sharing a “bubble” may sit together – keeping social distance from others.
- (vii) Readers to wear gloves,
- (viii) Receiving the Blessed Sacrament. Approach the Altar by the central aisle ONLY. Form one queue, standing two metres apart. The Sacrament will be administered to you across the Prie dieu/kneeler. Return to your pew via the side aisle.
- (ix) At the end of Mass, leave your pew via the central aisle ( all the time being careful to observe social distancing); walk toward the Altar ( genuflect ) and turn right and exit through the Lady Chapel, sanitising your hands on the way out. Please exit the church slowly and carefully, not congregating with others when sanitising your hands. Conversations/catching up with friends can take place outside the church, observing social distancing.
- (x) The church must be cleaned after every Mass.

##### B] THE CELEBRATION OF MASS

There will be no hymns, no Bidding Prayers, no Sharing of the Peace, no Offertory Procession, no altar servers. Readers must wear gloves.

Any newsletters/information sheets/booklets that may be provided – **IF YOU TOUCH THEM** – must not be replaced on the table but **MUST** be taken home with you.

**Please note** – there is a limit of (approx) 64 who can attend Mass at one time. With some choosing to stay away from Mass until a later date, it is hoped that we can accommodate all those choosing to attend Mass.

**An extra Mass will be celebrated at 8-00a.m.** on Sunday morning for a temporary/experimental period. Please consider attending this Mass to allow space for others to attend the Saturday Vigil Mass and 10-30 a.m. Mass.

If we cannot accommodate all those wishing to attend Mass, unfortunately, we will have to set up a booking/ticket system to regulate who will be able to attend – I would like to avoid this if possible.



## **ST. JOHN KEMBLE, GLYNNEATH**

Mass will resume, God willing, next Saturday, 1<sup>st</sup> August at 4-00p.m. We hope to set up extra chairs in the hall as we shall be very restricted in how many we can accommodate in the church itself. Otherwise, all the above, where relevant, will also apply and adapt as necessary.

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**FREE COPIES** of the CTS New Sunday Missal 2020 ( worth £7-95 ! ) are available as you enter church. These were ordered to be handed out for use during the lockdown but the lockdown came first! Please take a copy **BUT** (!) IF YOU PICK UP A COPY TO LOOK AT, YOU **MUST** TAKE IT AWAY WITH YOU – DO NOT RETURN IT TO THE TABLE.

**Prayers before the Blessed Sacrament.** Included in this week's posting to all parishioners are leaflets on praying before the Blessed Sacrament. Why not come early to Mass and spend a time of prayer before the Blessed Sacrament? ( If you bring the prayer card with you – you must not leave it behind in the pew! ). PLEASE RESPECT THE WISH OF OTHERS TO HAVE A TIME OF QUIET PRAYER BEFORE MASS AND OBSERVE A REVERENT SILENCE BEFORE MASS. THANK YOU.

**Mass Intentions** – St. John Kemble, Saturday 4-00p.m. Parish & People ( Thanksgiving); St. Joseph's, Saturday 6-00p.m. Nell O'Connell (RIP) (John and Jane Smith ); Sunday 8-00a.m. Parish & People ( Thanksgiving ), Sunday 10-30a.m. Maureen McAteer (Special Intention) (Jean Evans).

**The Parish S.V.P Group/St. Joseph's Community Support Group/Legion of Mary (and others).** I have paid tribute in this week's Homily to the amazing work ( ministry ) carried out in the parish over these last few months keeping us together and providing much needed support. We are very grateful to all those who have kept in contact by phone and helped out with shopping and in other ways, often behind the scene and unknown to others. **THANK YOU TO YOU ALL!**

**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 Church Driveway** Many of you are probably not aware that we have not been in possession of the church driveway ( in front of the church and presbytery ), which was obtained by Neath Port Talbot from the previous owners in the 1950s. You will be pleased to know that we are nearing completion of purchasing the driveway from NPT, thus securing our ownership and right of way to the church and presbytery (!), and I record our very grateful thanks to Councillor Mrs Sheila Penry (Mayor, Neath Town Council ) for her help and assistance in overseeing and guiding the paperwork through the NPT Legal Department on our behalf, and also to Mrs Clare Tregoning, at Gomer Williams & Co Ltd ( Karen and Doug's daughter ) for thoroughly researching and investigating our claim over many months and generously acting as our Solicitor (without costs ) to obtain the driveway for us; and to the anonymous and generous benefactor for paying the costs of the survey and purchase of the driveway and meeting the legal costs of NPT.

Having already met the challenge of raising funds for removing asbestos from the church boiler room, installing a new boiler, dismantling the chimney, repairing the sanctuary arch and redecorating and refurbishing the church ( a total cost of approx. £25,000 ), we now have the further challenge to raise a similarly larger sum ( approx. £35,000? ) to tarmac and properly drain the driveway.....donations gratefully received!

Also, with regard to the driveway and grounds, we would like to establish a group of volunteers to help Kevin maintain the grounds around the church and presbytery, as we continue to be very grateful to Kevin for his many years of commitment to maintaining the grounds for us and keeping everything in such splendid order, involving many hours of (freely given ) hard work throughout the year.

**Church Redecoration and Refurbishment.** Many thanks to the painters David Jones and son David ( D.J.Jones ) and to the carpenters Dan and Richard Irons for the tasteful refurbishment of the church – a splendid setting for the worthy celebration of Holy Mass.

**CAFOD. SUMMER OF HOPE:** At long last the DEC emergency appeal has been launched. As we continue to pray for the most vulnerable people on the planet, CAFOD asks us to consider these simple ideas: to donate part of what we might have spent on a celebration or holiday lost to lockdown; or to give the cost of a haircut or two that weren't possible. ( Lots more suggestions on [www.cafod.org/summeofhope](http://www.cafod.org/summeofhope) ) Also there is still time to sign the debt cancellation petition. The pandemic has shown that we are not safe until **everyone** is safe. Thank you. Please donate on line, or by phone via the DEC: 0370 60 60 900. Postal address: DEC, PO Box 999, London EC3A 3AA. ( Sandra )



## The Seventeenth Sunday in Ordinary Time – 26<sup>th</sup> July 2020 – St. Matthew 13 v 44 – 52

In today's Gospel, Jesus continues to teach the crowd by means of parables, and He continues to instruct the crowd about the nature of the Kingdom of God and the signs by which we are to recognise an authentic work of the Holy Spirit ( the Kingdom of God ) within us. In other parables, Jesus has spoken of the beginning of the life of grace within us as a "seed" sown widely by Divine Providence which successfully takes root in the furrowed and fertile soil/heart of the believer. In today's parables, Jesus draws attention to the appropriate and authentic **response** to the seed planted within us. The authentic response ( a sign that the Word of God/the life of grace is alive and active – Hebrews 4 v 12 - within us ) is the value we put on the interior life and what we do to protect, promote, nourish and encourage the life of grace within us. **Is Jesus precious to us?** Do we value Him so that we are willing to make sacrifices to ensure that the life of grace remains a living presence and active principle within us? St. Peter writes, " to you therefore who believe, Jesus is **precious**" ( 1 Peter 2 v 7 ); that we are saved by "the **precious** Blood of Jesus" ( 1 v 19 ), and that our faith is "more **precious** than gold" ( 1 v 7 ), recalling today's parables that the life of grace/the Kingdom of God is "treasure" (v44 ) and a pearl of "great value" ( v 46 ).

If we find that our faith and the life of grace is flickering and in danger of being snuffed out, how precious to us is that flame of faith? How important is it in our daily lives? What value do we put on it? Will we fan the flame and feed it or are we content for it to expire? Our parables today suggest that the appropriate and authentic response to the life of grace is a willingness to make the necessary sacrifices to promote and protect, to nourish and encourage it. To fan the flame by prayer, obedience and faith; to feed the interior life by attending to Word and sacrament – the "precious" means which God has provided to promote, quicken and enliven the life of grace within us.

The Sacraments are fountains of grace and the more we absent ourselves from those fountains, the further we fall back in the life of grace. For those who have no access to the sacraments, there are other "means of grace" but for those who deliberately ( or through apathy/weakness of will ) separate themselves from the life of the church ( from those fountains of grace ), like a coal plucked from the fire, faith will slowly dim and all the light and warmth of the life of grace slowly expires.

Over the last few months there has been a "famine" in the life of the Church. The sacramental fountains of grace have been closed to the faithful and the Church has been drawing upon those other ( and equally necessary ) means of grace, those of prayer, of fasting and of almsgiving/charitable service.

I wish particularly to give thanks to those who have faithfully and generously continued to support the church through the weekly envelopes, donations and standing-orders during these last few months. Also to give thanks, on behalf of us all, for the work ( their ministry to the Body of Christ ) of our parish S.V.P.Group, the Legion of Mary and St. Joseph's Support Group ( and others ) for the outstanding contribution to the welfare and healthy community life of the parish during these difficult days of lockdown. I know also that others have taken the opportunity to develop a deeper and more regular prayer life and a return to the reading of Scripture. These "means of grace" ( serving Christ in others, a deeper prayer life, the reading of Scripture ) prepare us for our return to the sacramental fountains of grace and our meeting together ( observing social distancing!) when our two churches of St. Joseph's and St. John Kemble re-open for Mass next weekend 1<sup>st</sup>/2<sup>nd</sup> August. ( See the Parish Newsletter for further details ).

From today's Gospel, let us return to the celebration of Holy Mass with excitement and joy, as to a "treasure" that has been "hidden" ( withheld ) from us. May God grant that our love of the Mass ( of Word and Sacrament), and our longing to be together with God's Holy People, has deepened and become more fervent during these "days of famine" as we look forward with great joy to the celebration of Holy Mass next weekend.

***" Lord, we thank you for accompanying us through these "days in the wilderness", and for keeping alive within us our faith in Your Son, Jesus Christ and our hope in the Gospel. Continue to protect us all, we pray, and in Your great mercy, pour out rich blessings upon us and the abundance of grace, as we gather once again as Your Holy People around Your Holy Altar, to worship and adore the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world (Revelation 13 v 18), and to praise the Precious Blood of Jesus. Come Holy Spirit! Come, Lord Jesus!"***