



St Hugh of Lincoln Bilborough, St Teresa of Lisieux Aspley, St Thomas More Wollaton

Three parishes, one community in the Trinity of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit

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The impact of the Corona Virus on our parish life: Emerging from Lockdown

Dear Parishioner

It is now some six months since lockdown began and although the strict restrictions have been relaxed and have enabled us to gradually return to some of our “normal” activities, the sense of anxiety still remains and is likely to be the reality for sometime to come. We are grateful for all the efforts that have been made to maintain contact and to keep in touch via the telephone and various social media links, but we accept that parish life over these last six months has been a challenge for us all. So we wish to thank you all for your patience and understanding during this time. To thank you for the prayers and masses that have been offered and for all the acts of kindness and generosity that have been shared amongst us. We deeply appreciate the commitment you have towards your parishes. As we begin to emerge from lockdown, what then should our priorities be

Getting our Churches and Church Halls open

Keeping our buildings open and Covid secure is the essential and primary requirement of ensuring that our parishes can begin once more to show how living the gospel is possible, even in these difficult times. St Teresa’s opened for Mass on 16 August, St Hugh’s on the 20 September and St Thomas More will also be opening on the 3 October. Our communities need to come together in a physical way, around the table of the Lord, as this is the pinnacle of our witness. We urge you then to please make a special effort to attend mass in person so as to receive the sacramental food which sustains and nourishes all our work and effort. As we become more confident about coming to mass, more masses will be scheduled to allow greater numbers access. The more masses we have, the more stewards we will need to ensure that our venues are safe and covid secure, so we encourage those of you who are able, to come forward and offer yourselves in this role.

We hope soon to have our Church Halls open too, although, at this time the Diocese has not yet sanctioned their use for parish activities, but only for third party hirings. Nevertheless we need to act on this in order to secure an alternative income stream for our parishes. Those of you who have indicated a willingness to help with Church/ Hall cleaning will provide a vital role in assisting with keeping these buildings open and safe.

Towards our Shared Future: A Working Document, Three Parishes One Community

This document was our response to the Bishop's proposal of Deanery re-organisation. It was submitted to the Bishop and the Dean last November. The impact of Covid has to date suspended the implementation of any final Deanery decision, but we feel that we should now begin to put into action those recommendations which will, notwithstanding any final decision, still offer benefits for our parishes. In particular

- the formation of a joint parish pastoral council.
- the formation of three finance committees, one for each parish.
- the appointment of a part-time administrative assistant working across the three parishes.

These three actions will help to co-ordinate and provide a formal structure for discussion, strategic planning, decision making and communication in and across our three parishes.

On-going pastoral care, support and Sacramental formation

Each of us, as members of the the Body of Christ, possess the gifts of the priestly, prophetic and kingly roles endowed by the Holy Spirit through our baptism. This potential is waiting to be energised. The covid virus must not be an obstacle in our endeavour. Whilst we may feel thwarted by the restrictions, we know that through the means of the internet and social media we can open up our horizons to encounter newer and more innovative ways of outreach and learning. We can share our experiences and educate ourselves through on-line and FaceTime opportunities. In time we will be able to gather again for Bible study, prayer groups and other social interactions, but for the moment such realities remain unavailable. However we should not close down what is available. To assist in this, as a three parish community, we will be offering through "Zoom" the opportunity to attend on-line Bible study groups, prayer groups, welcome groups, social activity groups, as well as sacramental preparation classes to help us. We will also be involved in piloting the Diocesan initiative to bring Caritas - the world wide body which projects the Church's Universal Social Mission - into our parishes and so show how we can become alive and active in the practice of our faith.

Finance

Finally we have to say a few words about finance. The impact of the virus on the finances of our parishes has been hard. Because most of the income of each parish is derived from the Sunday collection, the inevitable reality of the shutdown has been that our parishes have suffered. We are though acutely aware of how Covid has caused immense uncertainty and difficulty for many of our parishioners and families. We would not want to exacerbate such difficulties and uncertainties as we come out of lockdown, but if you feel able to resume your weekly offering, this would be deeply appreciated. There are various way of doing this:

- by bringing your offering to mass and placing it into the collection box as you leave.
- by making a standing order through your bank
- by using the donate button on the parish website

This letter is to thank you for your resilience in these difficult times. For your determination in making the Gospel the source of your hope. For your faithful commitment to your parish and for your witness to the presence of Jesus Christ who lives amongst us in sacrament, word and community.

The Word was made flesh and he lived among us, and we saw his glory, the glory that is his as the only Son of the Father, full of grace and truth. *John 1 v14*

May that glory continue to shine in our lives and in our parishes. God bless you all

Fr Stanley Fr Richard Deacon Anthony