

SS PETER AND PAUL, APOSTLES (YEAR A)

28th JUNE 2020

The Gospel for the Solemnity of SS Peter and Paul emphasizes the role of the Church and of Peter, the rock of her foundation, as “gate-keepers” of the Kingdom of Heaven, entrusted with its keys. “The gates of the underworld can never hold out against it.” The “underworld”: in Greek Hades; in Hebrew Sheol, is the realm of the dead. Death shall have no power over the Kingdom of Heaven and those who belong to it.

In the First Reading from Acts of the Apostles, we hear how King Herod imprisoned Peter in his heavily guarded cell as the Church prays fervently for him. Luke recounts Peter’s miraculous deliverance by the angel of the Lord. The chains fall from his wrists and the prison gates swing open.

Later in life, when both he and Paul were put to death under the Roman emperor Nero, it could seem that the gates of death had prevailed. But we should note Paul’s words in our Second Reading as the time of comes for him “to be gone.” He says: The Lord will rescue me from all evil attempts on me, and bring me safely” – through yet another set of gates – “to his heavenly kingdom.” This is the ultimate deliverance and true cause for praise and thanksgiving!

How strong is Paul’s faith! How eager is his expectation as his death draws near – knowing that the gates of the underworld will not prevail and anticipating what awaits him beyond heaven’s gates. At times, he desires it fervently. “I want to be gone and be with Christ, which would very much be the better” (Philippians 1:23) What glory awaits us too beyond those gates!

Utterly human, SS Peter and Paul give us hope. Our faith journeys will always have many ups and downs. Yet Christ remains with us at all times to proclaim his Good News to others through us – who are his witnesses. May we experience Christ’s merciful love as surely as Peter and Paul, and run the race that invites other to follow Jesus.

On Tuesday we had the news that, from 4th July, places of worship will be able to reopen for public worship. I have to tell you that this announcement took many priests, me included, rather by surprise. We were not expecting the Government to announce this step quite so soon after the announcement about the re-opening of churches for individual prayer.

The reopening of the church for public worship is something for which to give thanks to God. I’m sure we all feel, in different ways, a sense of loss at not being able to come to Mass in these last few months, and joy at being able to return.

However, the reality is that we will only recommence the celebration of Mass only if we can be confident that we have a clear workable plan, sufficient numbers of stewards and cleaners for each Mass and the confidence that we open the church for Mass in a way that is as COVID safe as possible.

The Catholic Archbishops of England have written a message to all Catholics in England and I encourage you to read it. You will find it on a page on each parish website titled Message from the Metropolitan Archbishops of the Catholic Church in England. I highlight here a few points of great importance in this message:

- We will not simply be able to return the way things were before lockdown
- A significant number of churches may remain closed as they are unable to meet the necessary COVID safe requirements

- There will be a limit on the number of people who can attend Mass. This will be determined locally in accordance with distancing requirements
- When we return to Mass there will be some differences in how the celebration takes place. For the time being there will be no congregational singing and Mass will be shorter than usual.

The Cardinal has also recorded a short video in which he explains that we cannot go back to the celebration of Mass as we have previously know it. He also makes appeal to parishioners to, where possible, volunteer to help with the stewarding and cleaning which will be an essential element in the recommencement of the public celebration of Mass. The Cardinal's message is on the Diocesan website and can also be viewed here: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=CLsYL5yggVI&feature=youtu.be> I encourage you to view it.

I am sure you will appreciate the logistical challenges involved in all of this for our two parishes. I am going to hold two Zoom meetings where everyone is invited: OLMS – Chipperfield (ID: 3205288221 Password: 9skM7F, 7pm) and St Saviour's, Abbots Langley (ID: 3205288221 Password: 9skM7F) to discuss the safest and more practical way to resume Masses. A workable program of public weekday Masses in any of the churches will be announced during the week. In all of this, I must stress to you that our prime consideration is to ensure the safety of every person who enters our churches.

Although we have only just begun to re-open the church for individual prayer, I am afraid that hours will have to change as we will need to focus all our resources, energy and the goodwill of our volunteers on ensuring we have enough volunteer stewards and cleaners for each Sunday Mass.

I know that many of you are longing for the day when once again we can safely participate in person in the celebration of Mass and receive the Lord Jesus in the Eucharist. I long to see that day too! I'm sure you will appreciate that preparing for safe public worship in this new situation will require continued generosity, hard work, understanding, and patience from everyone. I believe we will be all the stronger by continuing to support each other in order to make safe public worship a different, but no less joyful, reality.

Please pray for Fr Dido and me, and all those working with us, in the challenging tasks that lie ahead.

With every prayer and blessing

Your Parish Clergy.

CHURCH OPENING TIMES FOR INDIVIDUAL PRAYER

Saint Saviour's is open for individual prayer at the following times each week:

Tuesday 9.30am – 12noon

Friday 9.30am – 12non & 4pm – 5.30pm

Saturday 9.30am – 12noon

Sunday 10.45am - 1pm

RECOGNITION OF THE MIRACLE

ATTRIBUTED TO FR. FRANCIS JORDAN



The Holy Father, Pope Francis, has authorised the promulgation of the decree regarding the miracle attributed to the intercession of Father Francis Mary of the Cross (in secular life John Baptist) JORDAN, Founder of the Salvatorians.

The miracle

A young couple that was expecting a baby in 2014 in Jundiai (Brazil), was informed by several medical doctors and specialists that their unborn child was suffering an incurable bone disease (skeletal dysplasia). Being members of a group of Lay Salvatorians, the parents began to pray through the intercession of the Venerable Servant of God, Fr. Francis Jordan, inviting other members of the Salvatorian Family to join them. The child was born in a complete healthy condition on 8 September 2014, the day of Fr. Francis Jordan's death anniversary. After the required canonical procedures had been successfully completed, the Holy Father, Pope Francis declared that this miraculous healing was worked by God through the intercession of Fr. Francis Jordan.

Towards the beatification

The declaration of the Pope on 19 June 2020 finishes the process on the miracle and opens definitely the way towards the beatification of Fr. Francis Jordan. As soon as the date and place of the beatification ceremony will be determined by the Holy See, we will announce it.

Food Collection: In response to the growing needs in the community during this lockdown period, we are asking all the parishioners to donate if they can.

All donations can be dropped to the Fathers house. If you ring the bell and leave your donation at the door it will be collected.

Food parcels/boxes will then be made and distributed; part will be sent to Watford Foodbank.

If you are aware of any family or individuals that you know may be struggling and would benefit from this please make the priests aware.

Thank you very much for your support and we pray for all to stay safe.

God bless!

We pray for the intentions offered at our Masses this Sunday: ... We also pray for the sick at home and in hospitals, especially those affected by the Corona Virus, that God may heal them and strengthen their hope of eternal glory.

Recently Deceased in the Parish:

Clare Bleakley: She passed away on the 18th June 2020. Requiem Mass at St Saviour's 8th July 2020 followed by Cremation at West Herts Crematorium, 11.20 am. May she rest in peace!