



From Fr James, Thursday 19 March 2020, Solemnity of St Joseph

Dear Parishioners,

I write to you with important information for the parish regarding the suspension of normal activities due to the Covid-19 coronavirus disease. We are following the instructions from the Cardinal, the Diocese of Westminster and the Catholic Bishops' Conference of England and Wales (CBCEW).

From Saturday 21 March the *public* celebration of Masses will be suspended. Please note carefully that this does not mean there will be no offering of Mass. The Eucharist is always the centre of our lives and of the saving work of Christ in his Church. Fr James and Fr Tom will continue to celebrate Mass every day for your intentions as already offered and for the spiritual good of all. Mass will be celebrated each morning at 8am, without a congregation. If possible unite your prayer with others at that time, wherever you are.

Those following the 33 day preparation for Marian Consecration are invited to make the consecration in private. The formal Rededication of our faith to Mary is postponed.

Our churches will remain open. This is important. If you are among those who are still able to go outdoors, please continue to visit the church, light candles and offer prayers here. Please know that Christ's presence is always amongst us, even in the most difficult times, in the Blessed Sacrament. We can always meet him in the tabernacle, offer our prayer and intentions before him. We kindly ask that you do not associate in the church in large groups. Please carefully note that all other activities in the church and hall are now cancelled or suspended, including our groups and catechetical programmes. The parish, however, is a *living body* – we are not disappearing. We must continue here differently, spiritually, until this moment is over.

Churches open as follows:

St Gabriel's: Monday - Friday: 9.30am - 2.30pm

Monday, Wednesday, and Friday: 7.00pm - 8.00pm

Saturday: 12Noon - 1.00pm

Sunday: 9.00am - 1.00pm

St Bernard's: Monday - Friday 9.00am - 6.00pm door open or use code C8645

Monday, Tuesday and Thursday: 7.00pm - 8.00pm

Saturday: 9.00am - 12Noon

Sunday: 9.00am - 7.00pm

Some advice on spiritual life:

- Set regular times for prayer
- Pray together as a family

- Pray the Rosary together; pray the Angelus at Noon and 6pm.
- Watch Mass on TV (Links to parishes and to the Shrine at Walsingham are detailed separately and in church.
- Unite yourself to the parish Sacrifice of the Mass at 8am. Use the “Spiritual Communion” resource on the website or as previously distributed at church.
- Offer intercessory prayer for all aspects of this crisis and all other needs
- Maintain a good personal routine at home: getting up; eating; bedtime.

The Parish Office will operate a limited service. Intentions for Mass can be offered. Please contact us preferably by phone or email, unless you have pre-arranged to come in, as we also have a duty of care for our staff. We all need to follow official guidance issued by HM Government, especially the elderly and those with ongoing health concerns who are asked to observe special measures. It is also important that you let us know how you and your neighbours are coping, or if people are in need of help.

Those of us who remain in good health have a Christian responsibility to look out for others. Rather than establishing a specific group to look out for Catholics, we are asking the whole community to be involved, to the extent that we are able. Looking out for the elderly or vulnerable in your own street is one way everyone can help. You don't need to be a parishioner or indeed a Catholic to find yourself in need of help, and we should all be ready to help *everyone* in need. Please do not hesitate to be in contact with the clergy either by phone or email if you are in need or know someone who is.

The mission of the parish continues, as do all the costs necessary to maintain our presence here in. We kindly ask that, if you are able, you might still consider contributing to this undertaking so that we do not find ourselves in further difficulties, and we thank you once again for everything you give to our parish, financial, spiritual and pastoral

Fr James and Fr Tom hold you all in our prayers and I hope we are all united in this most difficult of moments. We are also in solidarity with the people and priests of our deanery and the wider area who form the living Church in this part of the Diocese of Westminster.

This Lent has proved to be the most challenging of seasons. But every Easter we celebrate the triumph of God's love over sin and death. Let us pray that God's love may be among us at this difficult time, as we seek to overcome our present difficulties with the strength of his grace and the power of his victory.

With prayers and united with you in the Lord,

Fr James and Fr Tom