

# ST. FRANCIS CATHOLIC PARISH NEWSLETTER

**22<sup>nd</sup> March 2020 Fourth Sunday of Lent (A)**

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**Parish Priest:** Fr. Liam Gallagher

**Assistant Priests:** Fr. Pawel Sobol, Fr. Damian Esene

**Deacon:** Rev. Ian Black

**Parish Office hours:** 9.00am – 12.00pm Monday, Tuesday, Thursday and Friday

## Catholic Schools

St Francis Primary School: Queen's Road, Maidstone, ME16 0LB 01622 771540

St Simon Stock Secondary School: Oakwood Park, Maidstone, ME16 0JP 01622 754551

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## **A LETTER FROM THE PRESIDENT AND VICE PRESIDENT**

### **ON BEHALF OF ALL THE BISHOPS OF THE CONFERENCE**

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ, In response to the Coronavirus pandemic, so many aspects of our lives must change. This includes the ways in which we publicly express our faith. It is very clear that, following official advice and in order to keep each other safe, save lives and support the NHS, at this time we must not gather for public acts of worship in our churches. This will begin from Friday evening, 20th March 2020, until further notice. Our churches will remain open. They are not closing. They will be a focal point of prayer, where you will find solace and strength. In visiting our churches at this time, we will observe with great care the practices of hygiene and the guidance on social distancing. However, the celebration of Mass, Sunday by Sunday and day by day, will take place without a public congregation. Knowing that the Mass is being celebrated; joining in spiritually in that celebration; watching the live-streaming of the Mass; following its prayers at home; making an act of spiritual communion: this is how we share in the Sacrifice of Christ in these days. These are the ways in which we will sanctify Sunday, and indeed every day. We want everyone to understand that in these emergency circumstances, and for as long as they last, the obligation to attend Mass on Sundays and Holy Days is removed. This is, without doubt, the teaching of the Church (Catechism of the Catholic Church 2181). This pandemic is the 'serious reason' why this obligation does not apply at this time. You will find more details about the pathway of prayer and sacramental life we are now to take in the accompanying document and on the Bishops' Conference website ([www.cbcew.org.uk](http://www.cbcew.org.uk)). Your own bishop and parish priest will provide further support, encouragement and information about our way of prayer together in the coming weeks. The second vital aspect of these challenging times is our care for each other. There are so many ways in which we are to do this: being attentive to the needs of our neighbour, especially the elderly and vulnerable;

contributing to our local food banks; volunteering for charitable initiatives and organisations; simply keeping in touch by all the means open to us. During these disturbing and threatening times, the rhythm of the prayer of the Church will continue. Please play your part in it. The effort of daily kindness and mutual support for all will continue and increase. Please play your part in this too. For your commitment to this, we thank you. 'The Lord is my shepherd, There is nothing I shall want.' May God bless us all.

Vincent Cardinal Nichols Archbishop President

Malcolm McMahon OP Vice-President

18th March 2020

**HOW WELL DO YOU SEE?** If you are reading this then you have the ability to use your eyes – although you might need the assistance of spectacles. Once you have finished reading this then you will be able to look around at anything else around you. Does this mean you have the ability to see? Would you say that you are not blind? In the physical surface we would have to say yes you can see and no you are not blind. The blind man in the Gospel today, was unable to see the person Jesus yet at his first conversation with him he was able to see something that nobody else could. The crowds that were seeing Jesus all the time rarely showed such conviction of faith as the man did soon after his sight was given. This is because Jesus does not want us to see with eyes of our face but with eyes of faith. This means opening our hearts and minds and letting Jesus into our lives and wanting an encounter that will change our lives. There is no doubt that just being able to see from being born blind changed his life dramatically. Can anyone imagine what it is like to see colours for the first time? Was how he imagined the world exactly the same as when he was seeing it – exciting yet bewildering at the same time perhaps. We cannot really know. Yet there is a sight he showed that we all may need to gain sometimes. That was a sight of seeing Jesus and believing in him with full conviction of heart. May we open the eyes of our hearts, remove the blindness caused by prejudice and stubbornness and see the world as Jesus sees the world.

**MASS LIVE STREAMED:** As Mass will no longer be public until further notice, we are going to be able to live stream Mass every Sunday 10.45am. On our parish website there will be a link to where Mass will be able to be watched. We are so pleased to be able to give this opportunity for everybody needing to stay at home. It will not feel the same but you are not alone – The Spirit of Almighty God will unite us, make us one as we worship in his name as his family as you follow the Mass here at St. Francis. We will make the Mass sheets available during the previous week in the porch so people can come to the church and take them home with them to follow the readings and join in the responses.

**OPEN CHURCH:** As has been requested, the church will be open everyday from 9am until the evening. This is with the exception of Sunday when the Church will be open from 12pm midday. This encouragement to come to church to pray in the presence of the Lord is very much encouraged by our bishops as long as there is the appropriate distancing inside. There shall be no public rosary, stations of the cross or devotions taking place.

**PRIEST HOUSE:** Following the pastoral guidance that has been issued to us regarding social distancing and unessential gatherings, the priest house is now for the priests only, so all groups, meetings and classes have been suspended until further notice.

**CONFESSIONS:** The celebration of the Sacrament of Reconciliation will no longer be scheduled at the usual times. You may have Confession on request or appointment only, however, it cannot be face to face but with a grille and appropriate distance.

**ADORATION:** There will no longer be Adoration of the Blessed Sacrament on Fridays until further notice

**FOOD DONATIONS:** We are always touched by the generosity that is shown by so many people in food donations which we continue to ask for (see below). In future, please can we ask that when you donate a bag of groceries, please ring the doorbell and then leave it on the doorstep. Do not wait for an answer at the door. Somebody will come and collect the food.

**FEED THE HUNGRY AT EASTER:** Thank you for your very kind donations which are much appreciated by recipients. Please continue to send regular donations. For Easter, we are collecting Easter eggs, biscuits, cakes and luxury items to give to the families we support locally and any surplus will go to the St Francis Centre in Poplar for disadvantaged children.

<b>Last weekend:</b> <b>1<sup>st</sup> Collection:</b> £1,078.16 <i>plus an average of £340 Standing Orders</i> <b>2<sup>nd</sup> Collection:</b> £294.66	<b>2<sup>nd</sup> Collection</b> Sick and Retired Priest's Fund <b>2<sup>nd</sup> Collection next week</b> Easter Flowers
<i>Thank you for your generosity</i> <i>Parish Lottery winner – Week 12 – Number 137 – Prize £70</i>	

## MASS TIMES AND INTENTIONS

<b>Sunday 22<sup>nd</sup> March</b>  <i>HMP</i>  (Preston Hall)	6.00pm (Sat)	<i>Private Intention</i>
	9.00am	<i>Kevin Maher RIP</i>
	10.15am	<i>People of the Parish</i>
	10.45am	<i>Herbert Parker RIP</i>
	6.00pm	<i>Private Intention</i>
	9.00am	<i>John McElroy RIP</i>
<b>Monday 23<sup>rd</sup> March</b>	10.30am	<i>Winefride Fisher RIP</i>
<b>Tuesday 24<sup>th</sup> March</b>	10..30am	<i>Gemma Vokes RIP</i>
<b>Wednesday 25<sup>th</sup> March</b> The Annunciation of the Lord	10.30am	<i>Private Intention</i>
<b>Thursday 26<sup>th</sup> March</b>	10.30am	<i>Annie Roberts RIP</i>
<b>Friday 27<sup>th</sup> March</b>	10.30am	<i>Annie Roberts RIP</i>
	8.00pm	<i>In reparation for abortions in Brewer St</i>
<b>Saturday 28<sup>th</sup> March</b>	10.00am	<i>Phyllis Coatsworth RIP</i>
<b>Sunday 29<sup>th</sup> March</b>  <i>HMP</i>  (Preston Hall)	6.00pm (Sat)	<i>Private Intention</i>
	9.00am	<i>Annie Roberts RIP</i>
	10.15am	<i>People of the Parish</i>
	10.45am	<i>Private Intention</i>
	6.00pm	<i>Ann Cook and Irene Hales RIP</i>
	9.00am	<i>Holy Souls</i>

**MASS INTENTIONS:** Many people have booked a Mass Intention for this weekend and forthcoming weekends. Due to the change in circumstances there shall not be the same amount of Masses celebrated over the weekend, but all three priests will concelebrate the 10.45am Mass together and each shall offer Mass for a particular intention for that weekend which will be announced before Mass begins. One of those Intentions will always be for 'The People of the Parish'. This means that the other intentions will be offered on another day which as of yet we do not know. We ask please for your patience and understanding as we put this in order. We will strive to contact the donor of the intention and inform them of any change. Please can we ask that anybody wishing to book a Mass Intention, write it out on the green envelopes provided at the back of the church and post it through the house letter box. Nobody will be able to speak to the parish secretary personally about this but she will contact you as soon as she can to clarify dates if necessary. Thank you!

**We remember in our prayers those whose anniversaries occur at this time:**

Iris Sullivan, Neil Linstead, Tony Sands, Margaret Neads, Peter Nixon, Kevin Devlin, John Murphy, Rose Collins, Patrick Maher, Alan Appleton, Annie Roberts, Mary Weale, Brigit Burke, Henry O'Shea, Jeanne Hiscox, Gemma Vokes, William Newell, Monica Call, Pawlak Krzysztof, Michael Sutton, Jane Knights and Philomena Coatsworth.