



# OUR LADY OF GRACE PRESTWICH

‘Stay with us, Lord, on our journey’

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## 12<sup>th</sup> SUNDAY ‘OF THE YEAR’ 21 JUNE 2020

### My dear Parishioners and Friends,

**We are open again!** On Friday last, solemnity of the Sacred Heart of Jesus, Our Lady of Grace church re-opened its doors for private visits and prayer, after nearly three months of closure. A constant stream of visitors came in during the day.

The church will be open on **Mondays to Fridays from 11.00 am to 7.00 pm** and on **Saturdays from 11.00 am to 3.00 pm**. Lots of people don't yet know, so tell your family and friends.

We are following the current diocesan policy of not opening on Sundays for the time being. There are just 18 churches open in the diocese as yet. Others are expected to open up shortly. When enough have opened, the restriction on opening on Sundays will be lifted.

The thanks of the whole parish, and beyond, are due to those who have made our re-opening possible. They are the fifty who have volunteered as ‘Welcomers’. A condition of opening was that we had to have two people on duty to act as welcomers or stewards, assisting those visiting by indicating the one-way

system in church, the position of hand sanitisers, etc. They also have the necessary anti-bacterial materials to wipe down benches as required.



So, come in! The new poster on the railings outside church was made by Superior Signs Ltd, a local Bury company. It reads: **All are welcome in God's house. Come in!**

As last week's letter put it: *Mothers, fathers, bring the children in and help them to speak with Our Lord present in the Blessed Sacrament. Bring especially those children waiting to make their first Communion so that they can speak with Jesus 'face to face'.*

*Light a candle in the Sacred Heart chapel. The month of June is especially devoted to the Sacred Heart of Jesus.*

*Light a candle in Our Lady's chapel and ask her to protect you and your family and friends, and all of us in this parish dedicated to her.*



A one-way system operates, with visitors entering church by the left-hand door and approaching the altar by the left side or centre aisle, and

leaving by the right side aisle and door.

The side door of the church opposite the hall will be closed but the welcomers will open it for anyone needing disabled access.

Benches at the back of the church are roped off to encourage visitors to come nearer the front. This will also reduce the number of benches requiring cleaning.



**It was announced last week that funeral services may now take place in church**, although there are restrictions about the number of people who may attend.

Unfortunately, churches are not opening yet for Mass or any of the Sacraments or any public devotions. Even so, many of you will welcome this limited opening. We can see it as a step to the churches fully opening in the weeks ahead.

Continue to follow Holy Mass via the media. Earlier newsletters gave details of where to find live streamed services. You can find more details on the diocesan website too, as well as on the national Catholic website, [www.cbcew.org.uk](http://www.cbcew.org.uk).



From the Middle Ages, Catholic countries in Europe kept Fathers' Day on 19 March, feast of St Joseph. In this country we follow the more modern American date of the third Sunday in June. So here's wishing all Fathers a happy day. Some wise words of advice to fathers from Pope Francis follow this letter.

Fr Dearman and I send our best wishes to you all. May you keep safe and well.

**Fr Allen**



In his book, *Our Father: Reflections on the Lord's Prayer*, **Pope Francis** also recognizes the importance of earthly fathers. He tells them:

**Be present to your family**

*The first thing needed is this, that the father be present in the family. That he be close to his wife, to share everything, joys and sorrows, hardships and hopes. A father needs to be close to the children as they grow up; when they are playing and when they are working on a task; when they are carefree and when they are troubled.*

However, Pope Francis also commented: *Fathers who control too much are crushing their children, they are not letting them grow up.*

**Be patient**

Pope Francis mentioned the story of the prodigal son, which he says is better described as the story of the merciful father. *What dignity and tenderness there is in how the father stands at the door of the house, waiting for his son to come back! Fathers have to*

*be patient. So many times there is nothing that can be done but wait in patience, kindness, generosity, and mercy, and pray.*

**Correct without discouraging your children**

Patience and forgiveness go hand in hand for fathers. This doesn't mean that you can't correct your children, though. However, fathers must be aware to correct without discouragement. Pope Francis offers a story to illustrate his point. *One time at a conference on the topic of marriage, I heard a dad say, 'Sometimes I have to discipline my kids a little, but I never humiliate them.' How beautiful! The father has a sense of dignity. He has to reprimand, but he does it in the right way, to correct behaviour, and then moves on.*

**Recognize the importance of fathers**

The presence of a father is an undeniable, immeasurable gift in the life of children. *For the younger generations, fathers are the irreplaceable guardians and mediators of faith in the goodness, of faith in the justice, and faith in the protection of God, like Saint Joseph.* When children return after mistakes, they need to see their father. *Children need to find a father who is waiting for them when they return from their failures. These children will do all they can in order not to admit their mistakes, not to let their embarrassment show, but they need this security. Not finding their father at the door opens wounds inside them that are difficult to heal.*

**Rely on your Heavenly Father**

Raising children in today's culture can be a challenge. But you're not alone in the journey as a father. God, the perfect father in Heaven, offers grace to help you along the journey. *Without the grace that comes from the Father who is in Heaven, fathers lose courage and abandon the field. God the Father speaks through His bride, the Catholic Church, as well. 'The Church, our mother, is committed to supporting the good and generous presence of fathers in the families.'*



You might also say a prayer for 'spiritual fathers'. At the funeral last week of Bishop Francis Lagan of Derry, it was said: *He had no children – but he was always a family man.*



**Tomorrow, Monday 22 June, is the feast of Saints John Fisher and Thomas More.**

They were two of the few public figures who had the courage to stand up to King Henry VIII when he declared himself head of the Church in England, effectively starting the Church of England. St John Fisher was Bishop of Rochester, St Thomas More Lord Chancellor of England. Both are very good 'father figures'.



**Caritas vacancies: two support workers needed**

for a 6-month period at St Joseph's Welfare Service, funded by a grant from the National Lottery. [www.caritassalford.org.uk](http://www.caritassalford.org.uk)  
Closing date: Thursday 25 June at 10:00am