



# OUR LADY OF GRACE PRESTWICH

‘Stay with us, Lord, on our journey’

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## 22<sup>nd</sup> SUNDAY ‘OF THE YEAR’ 30 AUGUST 2020

### My dear Parishioners and Friends,

In William Shakespeare’s play, *As you like it*, Jaques describes the seven ages of man. He tells of ‘the whining schoolboy, with his satchel And shining morning face, creeping like snail Unwillingly to school’. That surely will not describe our own children as they return to school this week?

The children I’ve spoken to – and that’s quite a few in the past week – have all been looking forward to their return. During six weeks of the holidays, Footlights have run a class for children and the reports have been glowing. The children have loved being back in a social setting and it’s done wonders for their confidence and mental health. It should be the same for our children when they come back to class and to teachers they know and like.

So here’s wishing a **warm welcome back** to our teachers and all the staff and pupils. I hope you have enjoyed a restful holiday and are fully refreshed. May you all have a safe and happy term.



A message from Bury Council tells us: *‘Our infection rate is increasing while the rate is falling elsewhere. It’s clear and simple – if cases don’t start to fall, we risk going back into lockdown.’*

*‘But ultimately the only thing that will work is for people to take responsibility for their actions and follow the guidance and the law.’*

*‘With schools and colleges about to reopen next week, it’s essential that we all work together to reduce the risks of transmission.’*

Here in church, we try to reduce risks by following the guidance received from both diocese and government. Visitors have noted our arrangements with approval. Let’s keep up the high standards!

You know that **the church is open Monday to Friday** from 11.45 am to 4.00 pm, and on **Saturdays** from 11.45 am to 3.00 pm, opening again at 6.40 pm for the first Mass of Sunday at 7.00 pm Saturday evening. Mass is at 12 noon each day, Monday to Saturday. Our **Sunday Masses** are at the usual times: 7.00 pm on

Saturday, 9.00 and 11.00 am on Sunday.



It was good to get a telephone call during last week from **Monica Edordu** in Nigeria. With husband Chris, she has been caught up in the lockdown in that country. Both are keeping well, send their greetings and look forward to being back with us in the near future.



Last Sunday’s Gospel reading was a famous passage from St Matthew’s Gospel, where Our Lord says to St Peter: *You are Peter, and on this rock I will build my church. And the gates of the underworld can never hold out against it.* (Matthew 16:18)

In my homily last Sunday I mentioned the Papal Monument in Heaton Park. It commemorates the visit of Pope St John Paul II on 31 May 1982. I described how a rock was chosen for the monument. People have said I should put that explanation into writing, so here goes.

It fell to me to chair the central coordinating committee that arranged Pope John Paul’s visit to

Manchester. After the visit there was a widespread wish for a monument to mark his visit. So the coordinating committee met again.

One of the committee members was Roy Bee, the superintendent of Manchester's parks and cemeteries. Roy was a very good Christian man. He was a regular worshipper at a Quaker-inspired chapel in South Manchester. We were discussing what form the papal monument should take, when Roy spoke up, quoting Psalm 18: *The Lord is my rock, my fortress, my deliverer. My God, my rock, in whom I take refuge.*

Roy said we should have a rock in Heaton Park to remember the Pope's visit because John Paul strongly taught the world about God who is our rock. All members agreed. We also thought of Our Lord's words to St Peter, quoted above.

What kind of rock should it be? There was general agreement that granite would be best. Granite is a hard stone; a knife blade won't scratch its surface. We felt that granite would best reflect the strong faith and the hard life of Pope John Paul.

There are granite quarries at Shap in Cumberland, and after the meeting I went there with two other committee members: **Vernon Cressey**, deputy town clerk of Manchester, and **Brian Kennealy** from Manchester Town Hall. We chose the rock that is now in Heaton Park, and for this reason.

Pope John Paul walked with a little stoop. When he was about 20, the Nazis had taken over his native Poland. Karol Wojtyła (as he then was) was forced to work in a

quarry. He was knocked down by a lorry and seriously injured. It affected the way he walked ever after. If you look at the monument from a certain angle you can discern the same kind of stoop there.

The rock weighs about 23 tons. Only two-thirds of the rock are visible above ground. The other third is set in the ground in concrete.



In today's Gospel, Jesus speaks about the importance of the cross. I'm reminded of a little girl who was once lost in a big city. People could see that she was lost and they tried to help. A policeman came along and asked her where she lived. 'I don't know', the little girl replied. 'The name of the street?' 'No'. 'Have you a telephone number?' 'No'. 'Can you tell me anything about where you live?' asked the policeman.

The child hesitated and then said, 'Do you know the church with a big cross on top of it?' The policeman nodded – yes. 'Take me there', said the little girl, 'and when I come to the cross I can find my way home.'

There are hidden depths in that answer.



See the outside notice board for a series of online talks, "Saints, Scholars and Spiritual Masters", over the next few months. It's easy to register.



The flowers in the Lady chapel have been given by the Boggiano family in memory of deceased members, and celebrating Our Lady's feast day in their home village in Italy.

The 'school run' begins this week. Take care! We will also celebrate some well-known saints, including St Gregory the Great and St Edmund Arrowsmith. Let us enjoy the coming week!

Fr Allen

**Fr Dearman's reflections on the Lord's Prayer. Part Eight: Give us today our daily bread (2)**

During the lockdown period many people were very distressed at their inability to attend church services, and in particular to take part in the Eucharist. In normal times many of them attend Sunday Mass every week and some enjoy the privilege of daily attendance. When their church was shut they would "hear" Mass electronically from many parts of the world, and though they could not receive the Bread of Life sacramentally they were urged to make a "spiritual Communion". They did this by asking the Lord Jesus to come into their hearts.

Jesus said that he was the food of life, and those who refused to eat his flesh could not have life in them. At the time many people turned away, but over the centuries many have joyfully accepted his loving invitation to "take and eat".

Without food we would soon be weakened. Without our spiritual food we would be spiritually deprived. So as we ask the Father for our daily bread, we are asking for something far more important than bodily nourishment. And for that as well, of course!

