



# OUR LADY OF GRACE PRESTWICH

**‘Stay with us, Lord, on our journey’**

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## 4<sup>th</sup> SUNDAY OF EASTER 3 MAY 2020

### ‘GOOD SHEPHERD SUNDAY’

#### **My dear Parishioners and Friends,**

Over the years, I have known several priests who have left the diocese to join a religious Order. Some of them have stayed. Others have returned to the diocese.

Those who returned seem to have had a common experience. They said that, in the monastery, Sunday seemed the same as the rest of the week. They sang the Divine Office with the community; they concelebrated Mass; they carried out their various duties.

What they missed was their involvement with their people. They missed the ‘buzz’ of Sunday. They missed saying Mass for the people of the parish, as every parish priest is bound to on a Sunday and Holy Day of Obligation. They missed the chat and the banter and the passing of the time of day when seeing their parishioners outside church.

This present time of lockdown is something like that. Life in the presbytery has become more ordered. There is the Divine Office to

say, now in more regular hours of prayer, without the unexpected calls at the door or the myriad meetings; there is of course Mass to celebrate; there is even something of the Benedictine life of ‘Prayer and Work’ – a bit of gardening, a bit of writing. But what is missing is YOU!

Nearly six hundred of you are virtually present in church by your photographs BluTacked to the benches. You make an impressive sight as I look from the altar! But it isn’t the same as having you here in person. You are the family of the parish, and a parish priest grieves if family members are absent.

Perhaps you have had a similar experience in these days of lockdown. You can’t visit your parents. You can’t see your children or hug your grandchildren. You can’t meet up with friends. It’s something similar with a parish priest and his parish family.

Please God it will soon end and we will be together again. As Pope St John Paul II said in Heaton Park on 31 May 1982: *The partnership between priests and people*

*is built upon prayer, collaboration and mutual respect and love. That has always been the tradition of these islands. May it never be lost.*

We do well to recall Pope John Paul’s words today. Today, the fourth Sunday of Easter, is known as ‘Good Shepherd Sunday’. The Gospel reading on this day is always about Jesus, the Good Shepherd. In our diocese of Salford, it was the custom for the Bishop to write a pastoral letter about the priesthood. A collection for the Priests’ Training Fund is normally taken up. I’ve just heard that this year the collection has been postponed until the autumn.

These are abnormal times. Not only are you, the parish family, absent physically from holy Mass. Priests too are becoming fewer. Only twenty-nine priests have been ordained for this diocese since the year 2000. Far more than that have died or retired, leaving large gaps in our parochial provision.

We priests miss being physically close to you these days, though we are still spiritually very near. On your

part, you have to ensure that the parish families will continue to have pastors to be with them, with the heart of the Good Shepherd.

It is well said, 'Your priest is someone else's son. Why should your son not be someone else's priest?'

Good Shepherd Sunday is a good time for mothers and fathers to pray for priestly vocations in their own family. A good time too for young men and women to seriously consider if God is calling them to the priesthood or religious life. A good time also to look forward to when we can enjoy the 'buzz' of Sunday together again.

Fr Dearman and I continue to be well, thank God. We both send warmest greetings to you all, and we pray that you will continue to keep safe and well. As we begin the month of May, we commend you to the protection of our patron, Our Lady of Grace.

I was also speaking with Bishop Christopher Budd the other day. He has very fond memories of his stay here and sends his greetings to all. He is now in the presbytery in Lyme Regis.

If possible, you might like to join in from home as I pray in church for the parish and community each day between 7.00 and 8.00 pm.

**Fr Allen**

PS If you haven't yet emailed your photo to me, please do so. The latest count showed 578 in church. Let's top the six hundred mark this week!

### **Pray before clapping**

*To show spiritual solidarity with all those who have care of the sick, Catholic Bishops will celebrate Mass live-*

*streamed from their Cathedral.*

**Every Thursday at 7 o'clock**, a bishop will celebrate Mass in one of the cathedrals for the care workers. Please do join in, if you can, on the live streaming.

*Cardinal Nichols said, 'And even more importantly, use that time before 8 o'clock on a Thursday to offer your prayers of thanksgiving for these generous, courageous people, for their support – their encouragement – that God will sustain them in this great work that they're doing. We applaud, but we pray and we pray fervently for them. May God bless them all.'*

**7 May**, Bishop Marcus Stock, Leeds

**14 May**, Bishop Robert Byrne, Hexham & Newcastle

**21 May**, Bishop Mark Davies, Shrewsbury

**28 May**, Bishop Terence Draney, Middlesbrough

*To access, go to each Cathedral website.*

### **Message from Mrs Casey, Headteacher of Our Lady of Grace School**

Many thanks to our families for all the kind words of appreciation throughout the school care calls. The school team are working hard to support members of our school family who feel vulnerable during this difficult time. We continue to keep the school and parish family in our prayers. I very much look forward to us all being together again to celebrate our faith in Holy Mass.

Whilst school is closed to many, all-important information is currently posted on the school website

<https://www.ourladyofgracerprimaryschool.co.uk/latest-news/>

### **Mass on the Net**

**<https://www.churchservices.tv/whats-on-now>**

**[www.walsingham.org.uk](http://www.walsingham.org.uk)**

**EWTN from the internet and by satellite TV. On Sky, 588.**

**vatican.va** then 'Vatican News', then the YouTube symbol on the right, then 'Mass at Santa Marta'.

**[www.lourdes-france.org](http://www.lourdes-france.org)**

Locally, **Salford Cathedral, St Clare's, Blackley Facebook page**, and others.

### **Caring for Our Common Home**

#### **A few thoughts for May**

Many people are finding it a good time to sort out cupboards. Don't forget to save things for the charity shop and for taking to recycling spots when we can get out again.

There has been some disruption to refuse collection. Gardeners might find it a good time to think about starting to compost in their own gardens. <https://www.lancswt.org.uk/actions/how-compost-your-waste>

When you're at home during the day, it's easier to dry washing outside instead of using energy in a tumble drier. You can bring it in if it starts to rain and you don't run the risk of coming home to a lot of wet washing.

As shopping for food becomes trickier, there is more incentive to use up any leftovers and be more creative with what we have in.