



# OUR LADY OF GRACE PRESTWICH

**'Stay with us, Lord, on our journey'**

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## 5<sup>th</sup> SUNDAY OF EASTER 10 MAY 2020

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

*Bring flowers of the rarest,  
bring blossoms the fairest,  
from garden and woodland  
and hillside and dale.  
Our full hearts are swelling,  
our glad voices telling  
the praise of the loveliest  
flower of the vale.*

This is May Procession and Crowning time! We should be doing what people all over the world are doing – or should be doing – at this time. And especially here, because only last month England was re-dedicated to Our Lady as being the 'Dowry of Mary'. But we are in lockdown.

We are not able physically to hold our procession. Nor have the first Communion children the joy of crowning in church. We can't show our love for our blessed Lady Mary as we would wish to do.

Let's take then a moment to think about what we are missing. We are missing a simple but deeply significant way of showing our devotion and love for our blessed Mother.

God the Father paid our Lady Mary the greatest possible compliment when He asked

her to be the mother of His Son. Mary is the Mother of the Son of God. He is the messianic King. As the angel Gabriel said to Mary:

*He will be great and will be called the Son of the Most High ... and of his kingdom there will be no end.*

Our Lady is the perfect follower of her Son. She agreed to God's plan. She listened to God's word and kept it in her heart. She stayed close to her Son, even to the foot of the cross. She prayed with the Church from its beginning. She won what the scriptures refer to as the 'crown of righteousness', the 'crown of life', the 'crown of glory' promised to those who faithfully follow Christ Jesus.

Now she is with her Son in heaven. She is the closest of all creatures to the Blessed Trinity. No wonder the People of God instinctively turn to her and ask her prayers in what can often be a 'vale of tears'.

Our Blessed Lady has won the 'crown of righteousness', the 'crown of life', the 'crown of glory'. But she is still the same person who nurtured Jesus after he was born and who cared for him as he

grew. We can imagine how she felt when he was lost in Jerusalem for three days, and her motherly relief when he was found. When he left home, she must have followed his progress through the Holy Land with a mother's pride but also a mother's anxiety. Her heart must have been heavy on Calvary but uplifted after Easter and Pentecost.

**All this means that she is very close to us. In fact, Jesus gave her to be our mother too.** As we sing in one of the hymns:

*Holy Mary, you were chosen,  
called to carry the Son of God.  
Joyfully responding,  
you became his mother.  
Pray now for us and show a  
mother's love.*

*Holy Mary, you were chosen.  
All God's children are  
blessed in you.  
Joyfully responding, you  
became our mother.  
Pray now for us and show a  
mother's love.*

We are blessed in this parish to have Our Lady of Grace as our very own patron. We can't have our public procession and crowning, but **we can still celebrate in our homes.** Especially if you

have children at home, why not have your own ceremony of crowning? It could be quite simple. Many homes have a statue of Our Lady. If you haven't, there's something for your shopping list when the shops re-open! Or there is always Amazon. Or you could take the figure from your Christmas crib. A simple crown can be made from coloured paper. Flowers can be placed in a vase. A hymn can be sung.

There are many websites that can help, e.g. [www.pastoralliturgy.org](http://www.pastoralliturgy.org) or <https://udayton.edu>

Let me know how you get on! The photo on the parish website was taken in the Lady chapel only this week.

This weekend was to have been a bank holiday to celebrate VE Day – victory in Europe, 8 May 1945. That day was a Tuesday. I was in primary school and I remember when the news came through we were let out into the playground. Children were chanting, 'We've won the war, we've won the war!' as children might, and skipping and dancing. Some of them of course had fathers away, fighting in the armed forces. So we have an extra celebration this week, for the 75<sup>th</sup> anniversary of VE Day.

The war in the Far East continued for another three months. Rationing continued until 1954. But we came through, as DV we will come through this present crisis. Let's hope we will come through closer to God, Our Lady and each other.

Fr Dearman and I continue to be well, thank God, and we send warmest greetings to you all, and we pray that you will continue to keep safe and well.

**Fr Allen**

PS We are just eight short of six hundred in church. If you haven't yet emailed your photo to me, please do so.

### **Pope Francis' message**

*'We have just started May, the quintessential Marian month, during which the faithful love to visit the Sanctuaries dedicated to Our Lady. This year, because of the health situation, let us visit these places of faith and devotion spiritually, to place in the heart of the Blessed Virgin our concerns, expectations and plans for the future.'*

*'And since prayer is a universal value, I have accepted the proposal of the Higher Committee for Human Fraternity that on **this coming 14 May, believers of all religions should unite spiritually for a day of prayer, fasting, and works of charity, to implore God to help humanity overcome the coronavirus pandemic.**'*

### **Bishops' message**

*'None of us would want to be in the situation in which we find ourselves. While the live-streaming of the Mass and other devotions is playing an important part in maintaining the life of faith, there is no substitute for Catholics being able to physically attend and participate in the celebration of the Mass and the other sacraments.'*

*'Our faith is expressed powerfully and beautifully though "seeing, touching, and tasting". We know that every bishop and every priest recognises the pain of Catholics who, at present, cannot pray in church or receive the sacraments. This*

*weighs heavily on our hearts.'*

### **Planning is underway for the re-opening of Catholic churches when restrictions are eased.**

*'As the Government's restrictions are relaxed step by step, we look forward to opening our churches and resuming our liturgical, spiritual, catechetical and pastoral life step by step. This will also be of service to those beyond the Catholic Church who depend on our charitable activity and outreach through which much goodness is shared by so many volunteers from our communities ...'*

### **Pray before clapping**

**Thursday at 7 o'clock, 14 May,** Bishop Robert Byrne, Mass in Hexham & Newcastle Cathedral. Access via the H&N Cathedral website.

### **Sister Joan says 'Thanks'**

*'Thank you so much for your tremendous generosity in continuing to support our **Food Bank** since the lock down of our churches. Thank you for your food donations which, as always, are so well thought out and also for your very generous cash donations for me to purchase food.'*

*'Our Food Bank has grown and to safeguard the volunteers we have moved into a bigger space within the ROC Community Centre. We are getting over a hundred referrals each week from social workers, care workers, the police and health professionals - for help for vulnerable people in Bury, Radcliffe and Prestwich.'*