



Dear friends, in recent weeks some parishioners have expressed to me their disappointment on the low numbers of people at Mass especially when they have seen fellow parishioners in shops, pubs and restaurants.

We have been through a huge crisis and the news on the TV and in the newspapers is both bad and reported with negativity. Last year, during an interview, Pope Francis gave an important insight, he said: It's how we emerge from the crisis of the coronavirus pandemic. We have a choice. We can either emerge better or worse than we were before the crisis hit.

Friends, I encourage you, please don't worry about the number of people in church and please don't compare our parish to others where you may have seen larger congregations or different levels of mitigation to the virus. I know that the temptation to do this is great, but, please, don't give in to it. It is a more positive action to compare oneself or our parish to who we were yesterday and move forward with confidence. In this way we identify and name where we need to improve. Every day we can improve a little more. If we move forward in this way, after a week we will notice the improvement, after two weeks it will be a greater improvement, after a month, several months the improvement will be even more noticeable.

I know that some people have chosen to go to Mass elsewhere or not go to Mass because something is not as it used to be before the pandemic. Our parish is part of a Registered Charity: it is a business and we have to adhere to professional and business regulations to fulfil our duty of care to each other especially in regard to finance, health and safety, and safeguarding. As the Parish Priest, I am obliged to undertake regular health and safety training as well as keeping my safeguarding training up to date: if I fall behind on these I receive a formal warning.

Friends, let's keep focused on our vision to be a Catholic Parish where we Love one another as Christ has loved us. Let's keep Christ's enthusiasm and loving concern for us at the forefront of our hearts and minds as we share his loving concern with our homes, families, neighbours and friends. Let's remain enthusiastic for our Catholic faith and show Christ's love.

- Let's return to Sunday Mass: From Saturday 16 July there will be a Vigil Mass for Sunday at 6pm; Sunday Mass at 10am; most weekdays at 10am.
- Let's return to Confession, the sacrament of God's gentle mercy
- Let's commit to 5 minutes of prayer every day. This month, let's pray for an increase in Vocations to the Priesthood.
- Let's be generous in sharing our time, talent and treasure.

This is the next extract from the article on the Mass and the Blessed Sacrament

Why is the Eucharist the Paschal Banquet of the Church? "The Eucharist is the Paschal Banquet in as much as Christ sacramentally makes present his Passover [his 'passing' from this world to the Father through his passion, death, resurrection and glorious ascension and gives us his Body and Blood, offered as food and drink, uniting us to himself and to each other in his sacrifice" (*Compendium* 287)

Celebration of the Eucharist and Communion with Christ: "The Mass is at the same time, and inseparably, the sacrificial memorial in which the sacrifice of the Cross is perpetuated and the sacred banquet of communion with the Lord's Body and Blood. But the celebration of the Eucharistic sacrifice is wholly directed towards the intimate union of the faithful with Christ through communion. To receive communion is to receive Christ himself who has offered himself for us" (CCC,1382). Holy Communion, ordained by Christ (*Take, eat ... drink of it, all of you ...* (Mt 26:26-28. Cf. also Mk 14:22-24; Lk 22:14-20; 1 Cor. 11:23-26) forms part of the basic structure of the Eucharistic celebration. Only when Christ is received by the faithful as the food of eternal life does his making himself food for us achieve its deepest meaning, and the memorial He instituted is carried out. This is why the Church so ardently recommends sacramental Communion to all who take part in the Eucharistic celebration, when they fulfil the necessary conditions to receive the Blessed Sacrament worthily.

Necessity of Holy Communion: When promising us the Eucharist, Jesus stated that this food is not only useful, but that it is necessary if his disciples are to have life. *Truly, truly I say to you, unless you eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink his blood, you have no life in you* (Jn 6:53).

Just as natural food keeps us alive and gives us strength in this world, similarly the Eucharist strengthens in us the life in Christ received at Baptism, and gives us strength to be faithful to our Lord on this earth until we reach the Father's house. The Fathers of the Church saw in the bread and water that the angel gave Elias a "type" or foreshadowing of the Eucharist (1 Kg 19:1-8). After receiving these gifts, Elias recovered his strength and was able to fulfil God's mission. Holy Communion, then, is not just a necessity for some of the faithful more especially involved in the Church's mission, but rather it is a vital necessity for everyone. Only those who nourish themselves on Christ's own life can live in Christ and spread his Gospel. Christians should always have the desire to receive Holy Communion, just as the desire to achieve our last end should always be present in our life. This desire to receive Communion, explicit or at least implicit, is necessary for attaining salvation. Moreover, the actual reception of Holy Communion is necessary, with the necessity stemming from Church law, for all who have reached the age of reason "The Church obliges the faithful to take part in the Divine Liturgy on Sundays and feast days and, prepared by the sacrament of Reconciliation, to receive the Eucharist at least once a year, if possible during the Easter season" (CCC,1389). This Church law is just a minimum, which will seldom be enough to develop a genuine Christian life. That is why "the Church strongly encourages the faithful to receive the holy Eucharist on Sundays and feast days, or more often still, even daily"

Being safe in church While there are no legal restrictions in place, we want to ensure that everyone is as safe as possible. So we ask that:

- Use the hand sanitizer as you arrive at and leave the church.
- Please consider wearing a face covering while in church, as an act of charity to those who remain vulnerable or return home to vulnerable relatives.
- A number of benches still have cordons for those who wish to keep a physical distance and the church will be ventilated.

A Synodal Parish in a Synodal Church One of the priorities which you highlighted the need to address the shortage of clergy. The best way we can do this is praying for Vocations to the Priesthood. At the back of the church there is a sign-up monthly prayer calendar: if one person in our parish can pray for vocations to the priesthood each day of every month it will be a testimony to our belief in the power of prayer and our need for priests. If each of the 240 parishes of our diocese supported and encouraged one man to go to the seminary there would be no shortage of priests for parishes. It is important for all of us to support and encourage vocations: the vocation to marriage is good! Married life is a witness of the love that God has for his people. The vocation to single life is good! Single people give a positive and credible witness to their Baptism and Confirmation. The vocation to priesthood is good! I thank God every day that I can serve him in this way.

We share the universal call to be holy and become the best version of ourselves because we want God in our lives. Let's give real encouragement to one another in the different ways that we live the Christian life. When we are at Mass, we see and speak to one another and give a bold witness to our shared communion with each other and all our brothers and sisters around the world. To the married couples, to the single people, to you if you are considering a religious vocation: you are doing great! Keep up the good work! Let's remember our mission: "Love one another."

During August, we shall have a day of prayer for Vocations. There will be Exposition of the Blessed Sacrament for a day and you are invited to come to church to pray for an increase in vocations to the priesthood and religious life.

It is more and more important that we, together as a parish, support the life and mission of our Catholic Schools. Catholic Schools exist to make Christ known. Let's continue to encourage families to come to Mass in church especially those who don't come often. Please "like" and "follow" both St Mary's Catholic Academy and Painsley Catholic College on Facebook. Send a message assuring the schools of your prayers.

Can you help?? **Cleaning the church on Sundays after Mass** – if you can help with cleaning the church after Mass on Sunday, I will be most grateful for your help. **Altar Serving** – the ministry of altar server is very important for young people and helps their spiritual development. If you want to start altar serving, working as a member of a team, having an important role in our parish, being a leader of the people, please see Fr Martin.

Painting and decorating – the toilet at the back of the church requires decorating; the external walls of the garage; and the statue of St Therese in the avenue. Could you and a group of friends look after the sanctuary and two side chapels – with dusting and vacuuming?

Could you clean the sanctuary and the two side chapels in the church? - Could you and a friend vacuum and dust the sanctuary and side chapels to keep them in good order for our worship of God.

Sweep and Clean on Saturday 23 July Could you help for an hour to tidy the car park and avenue?

Dates for your diary
Monday 11 July 630pm Bible Book Club on Zoom
Saturday 16 July 6pm Mass restarts
Sunday 10 July & 14 August Monthly Parish Social after Mass

Holy Days of Obligation Sat – Sun 13 – 14 August: The Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary Tues 1 Nov All Saints' Day

Second Collection This weekend for the Apostleship of the Sea

Collection Gift Aid £120.00 Non Gift Aid £90.63 Total £219.63 June Standing Orders £1181.50

With prayers and best wishes for you and your family. Fr Martin