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Saint Mary's Roman Catholic Church
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DIOCESE OF  SALFORD

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Friday 22nd May 2020

Dear Brothers and Sisters,

Now that we have celebrated the Solemnity of the Ascension, the next great Feast that brings the Easter season to a close is Pentecost which will be on Sunday 31st May. It was at Pentecost that the disciples received God the Holy Spirit who took them from the closed and isolated upper room into the streets to publicly witness to the Risen Lord. St. Peter, so enlivened with joy and zeal by the Holy Spirit, addressed the crowds with astonishing results. The fisherman from Galilee, transformed by the Spirit, had the eloquence and gift of speech that would rival any classical orator.

***'He spoke to them for a very long time using many arguments, and he urged them, 'Save yourselves from this perverse generation.' They were convinced by his arguments, and they accepted what he had said and were baptised. That very day about three thousand were added to their number.'* (Acts 2:40-41)**

From the moment we are baptised and become part of the Church, we are all called to witness to Jesus Christ our Lord. This is not a task we are left to on our own. No. As always God supports us with the third Person of the Trinity, the Holy Spirit. Just as the Spirit empowered St. Peter and the disciples to go out and witness and build up the Church, so too, does he inspire, support and encourage us.

As we continue to live through this Pandemic and look to the future we need help. We need help as families, as a community and as a parish which is part of the One Church. This help will not come in the shape of an instruction manual, a pill or potion but through the Holy Spirit. We have not been abandoned because as Jesus said in the Gospel '***I will not leave you orphans***' (Jn 14:18). Instead we have been given the gift of the Holy Spirit.

***'I still have many things to say to you but they would be too much for you now. But when the Spirit of truth comes he will lead you to the complete truth, since he will not be speaking from himself but will say only what he has learnt; and he will tell you of the things to come.'* (Jn 16:13)**

Tomorrow, Saturday 23rd May, we will begin a parish Novena to the Holy Spirit. I will, as always with the computer skills of John, post a reflection and prayer to the Holy Spirit for nine days consecutively, ending on the Solemnity of Pentecost. If you have never said a novena before then join us in this 'virtual' time. If you are not sure of who the Holy Spirit is and the role he plays in your life then join us. If you feel you want to live out your faith in a renewed and fresh way then join us. If you want to help with the future of our parish and the mission it plays in the Church then join us.

Sacramental Celebrations during Lockdown

We have been asked to circulate the following on behalf of Fr Paul Daly and the Department for Formation.

The Department for Formation has received some enquiries about sacramental celebrations which should have taken place during Lockdown. It may be useful to bear in mind the following points:

We do not know yet the date on which public worship will be allowed to recommence nor

the social distancing conditions that will be required. Until we do it is impossible to arrange dates or, indeed, make plans about the kinds of celebrations and the numbers involved. As soon as we know when and how services will resume, guidance will be issued.

Pentecost Sunday - Rosary Rally

Pope Francis is encouraging Catholics to pray the Rosary in their family homes during the month of May, especially when the Pandemic is making us aware of the value of our families and making it possible for us to pray together in lockdown at home. He encourages simple Rosaries and joining online Rosary initiatives to pray to Our Lady for deliverance from Covid-19 and he has composed two prayers for this intention. You are invited to join in an initiative that follows on the Pope's request, the Pentecost Sunday National Rosary Rally, from 9.00am to 9.00pm across Scotland England and Wales. Our Diocese has been asked to pray a Rosary Hour at 1pm and you are invited to take part.

Volunteers for Church re-opening

Though we have no information yet we continue to pray earnestly that we can begin to open churches, visit our Blessed Lord and gather for the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass. When that happens it will probably be a gradual process. It will involve social distancing and other precautions such as those we see at supermarkets.

We will need people to help as marshals and ushers encouraging people to observe social distancing and ensuring that safeguards are followed. Though nothing is certain yet I would be grateful if you could let me know (sean.obrien@dioceseofsalford.org.uk) if you might be able to help when the time comes.

For your own safety you must not have any underlying health problems or be of an age where self isolation is recommended. The diocese has stated that all volunteers will need to be safely recruited following diocesan safeguarding procedures.

Online Donations Reminder

You can access the diocesan website via this link: <https://www.dioceseofsalford.org.uk/>
The donate button is found in the right-hand corner of the main page when on a desktop. On a mobile device the donate button is listed in the main menu. Visitors to the donations page will find two options: 1. Setting up a standing order 2. Make a donation. Each online transaction will have a small fee attached (set by the provider) and there is also an opportunity to gift aid every donation.

I hope you are able to join in with the parish virtual Novena to the Holy Spirit. If you know people who would benefit from this prayer but have no access to the internet then please do safely print and pass on copies of it.

My thanks to all the children at St. Mary's School who sent me some very colourful cards! The best message was 'Plz do not catch it and keep safe. We love u'. I look forward to seeing you all again soon and make sure that you don't catch it!

God Bless and Keep praying
Fr. O'Brien