



±  
Saint Mary's Roman Catholic Church  
Catlow Hall Street, Oswaldtwistle  
Lancashire  
BB5 3EZ

DIOCESE OF  SALFORD

Parish Priest: Rev. Fr. S D O'Brien  
Tel: 01254-232433

Wednesday 25<sup>th</sup> August 2020  
Blessed Dominic Barberi

Dear Brothers and Sisters,

Recently I've been reading about giant sequoias. These trees are usually found in California, they have a life span of between 1,800 to 2,700 years and they can reach incredible heights! A Victorian Scottish naturalist called John Muir was so taken back by these ancient trees that he began a conservation campaign to preserve them from the mass destruction they were facing by the logging industry. After Muir, the sequoias new defender was the American Forest Commission who tirelessly worked not only to preserve these trees from being needlessly felled but also to protect them from wild fires. Forest fires were seen as a major threat to the future of the giant sequoias, however, after further study and research it became apparent that though fire could be the enemy of the sequoia it could also be it's friend. The sequoia was not as fragile and delicate as first thought. It's bark is fire resistant and can withstand high temperatures unlike other so called '*hardy*' trees and shrubs around it. The heat generated from natural fires allows the cones of the sequoias to open up and hence continue their life productive cycle ensuring the future of the species.

The image of the giant sequoia could be applied to our own lives of faith. That seed first planted within our souls by God the Father has been nurtured by the Holy Spirit, watered and tended by Christ the Son in the Sacraments and fostered by our families and the Church. Our ancient Faith has faced Schisms, survived reformations, confronted persecutions and now it engages with the latest challenge, Covid-19! As the sequoia does not burn and turn to ash because of the unpredictable wildfire so our faith remains strong and ever life giving despite the environment around it. As Our Lord said:

***'I tell you solemnly, if your faith were the size of a mustard seed you could say to this mountain, "Move from here to there", and it would move; nothing would be impossible for you.'* (Mt 17:20)**  
At St. Mary's, over these last two months, it is quite apparent that our family does have faith that can move mountains and is not daunted. We are not a business or a corporate body but a family who, from our own resources and time, have re-opened up our church. On behalf of the parish, I again would like to thank all those who have come forward and given their time and services to cleaning, gardening, stewarding, befriending isolated parishioners, assisting with the shopping of vulnerable members of our parish family as well as facilitating both online and telephone bookings.

THANK YOU FROM ALL OF US AT ST. MARY'S FOR WHAT YOU HAVE DONE!

If you would like to come forward and volunteer then please contact the following:  
Karen Beard, the parish housekeeper who is overseeing the weekly cleaning at St. Mary's:  
[jakey9998@aol.com](mailto:jakey9998@aol.com)  
Navada Keenan, who helps to facilitate volunteers for the church grounds and gardens:  
[keenannavada@gmail.com](mailto:keenannavada@gmail.com)  
And Jennifer Pickles, who helps to organise volunteer stewards so that the church can be open:  
[jennifer.pickles@virginmedia.com](mailto:jennifer.pickles@virginmedia.com)  
Many hands make light work!

The Bishop rang recently and was very impressed by what our parish has been able to achieve. As many of you will know there are still churches in the diocese that have not even opened for private prayer let alone Mass! During the phone conversation the Bishop asked that we continue to be safe and cautious in what we are doing, adhere to diocesan policies and be sensible in what we can practically and safely do. He also reminded me that I was to have some time off from the parish before September and so it has been agreed that I will do this next week. I have included a two-week timetable for the times church will be open for prayer and Mass.

### **Future Masses at St. Mary's**

Though any form of booking for attending the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass, whether online or by telephone, is never ideal you the parishioners have made it work by organising and using it. The result of this is that there will be an increase in opportunities for coming to Mass starting in September. However, it must be stressed that people will be sadly turned away if they do not book. Please remember that we are only allowed 30 people at our church. The Bishop has stated that the Sunday obligation is still on hold for Roman Catholics in the diocese of Salford and people are encouraged to attend a weekday Mass if they can as the numbers for weekend Masses will be limited. You can book with Ursula over the telephone on Wednesdays and Fridays between 5pm - 6pm calling 232 433 or alternatively visit the parish website [www.saintmarysoswaldtwistle.co.uk](http://www.saintmarysoswaldtwistle.co.uk) and book online.

### **Requiem Masses**

From 9<sup>th</sup> September 2020 Requiem Masses will be allowed at St. Mary's but only on a Wednesday or Thursday at 10am where they can be stewarded. Mgr John Daly, the Vicar General facilitating the diocesan response to the Covid-19 pandemic, has emailed the clergy to say:

***'Re requiems/funerals, I have been asked to clarify by a number of priests what the rules are. Basically, no more than 30 people can be present (this includes stewards), no singing and no incense. If holy water is to be used it should be freshly blessed and not sprinkled on people (so wait until pall-bearers have moved away) and no symbols should be placed on the coffin. If a requiem, then the number is still limited to 30 and "family bubbles" do not apply, you can't increase the numbers present. This is because family gatherings are still seen as one of the main areas of the virus spreading. There are also to be no concelebrations.'***

Parishioners can still opt for having a funeral service at the graveside or crematorium and then a Requiem Mass at St. Mary's at a later stage when singing and an increase in congregation capacity is allowed. From September only 25 mourners will be allowed to attend a Requiem Mass at St. Mary's (four stewards and a priest brings the total to 30). People will not be allowed to congregate outside on church property even if they do socially distance.

### **Parish Feast**

This time last year we were preparing for that successful weekend in honour of Our Lady of Oswaldtwistle. From the Friday evening Rosary Retreat to the procession of Our Lady's statue around church and then finally the BBQ on the Sunday afternoon - it was a real wonderful and joyous weekend. The 8<sup>th</sup> September, Our Lady's birthday and the date which St. Mary's was finally consecrated, is coming up soon. Though the celebrations will be different this year we should still mark this special parish Feast. On Tuesday 8<sup>th</sup> September there will be two Masses 10am and 6pm so that parishioners have opportunity to honour Our Lady and receive her Son, Our Lord, in the Blessed Sacrament.

Like the ancient Californian sequoia our Catholic faith in Oswaldtwistle continues to stand firm against adversity. Let's continue to pray for each other, support each other and look out for each other.

God Bless and keep praying  
Fr. O'Brien