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Saint Mary's Roman Catholic Church  
Catlow Hall Street, Oswaldtwistle  
Lancashire  
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DIOCESE OF  SALFORD

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

Friday 31<sup>st</sup> July 2020  
Saint Ignatius of Loyola

Dear Brothers and Sisters,

You will have noticed that over the last two years this image (see below) has appeared on many of our parish documents, newsletters and the parish website.



It is the circular stain glass window found above the Chapel of Our Lady of Oswaldtwistle and depicts the Immaculate Heart of Mary. As many of you will know the month of August is dedicated to the Immaculate Heart of Mary. When we see a statue or picture of the Sacred Heart of Jesus we automatically recall the Lord's love and mercy for all humankind. Images of the Immaculate Heart of Mary remind us of Our Lady's desire to bring all people to her Son. Mothers want the best for their children and our heavenly mother is no exception. Her Immaculate Heart wants us to find real happiness, true joy and eternal peace and she knows that these things can only be found in Jesus Christ her Son.

The Latin inscription at the bottom of our stain glass window of the Immaculate Heart of Mary reads, '**ECCE MATER TUA**', which simply translates, '**Behold your Mother**'. These words were spoken by Jesus on the way to calvary in John's Gospel.

*'Seeing his mother and the disciple he loved standing near her, Jesus said to his mother, 'Woman, this is your son.' Then to the disciple he said, 'This is your mother.' And from that moment the disciple made a place for her in his home.'* (Jn 19:26-27)

Our Lord himself entrusts us, his people the flock of his pasture, to Mary his Mother. He knows that she will love and protect us through thick and thin. He knows the power of her prayers on our behalf. He knows that those who embrace her will be led to him who is The Way, The Truth and The Life.

At some point during the month of August I will do another online parish rosary similar to the one in May. I invite you to join me as we petition the Immaculate Heart of Mary to bring us, as a parish family, ever closer to her Son who wants to heal, transform and strengthen us as his missionary disciples.

### **Thank You**

After hearing, reading and witnessing how other parishes have attempted to re-open their church doors I am in no doubt that St. Mary's should be used as an example by the Bishop of good practice. The gardens and church grounds are immaculate and carefully tended to each week by a dedicated army of volunteers. Church is cleansed, disinfected and bleached every Tuesday by a committed team of cleaners who are helping us to meet the Covid-19 health and safety conditions. Public Masses are obviously a new experience for both priest and people, especially in regards to official requirements and practices. Those parishioners who have freely stepped forward and volunteered to act as stewards have not only made St. Mary's a safe and pleasant environment to worship in but they have helped to maintain its silent prayerful and reflective atmosphere. The booking system, which as you know I find difficult, has been facilitated wonderfully both on the phone and online by volunteers again. Thank you. My final thanks goes to those who have attended the Holy Mass over the last two weeks. Normal practices and routines of coming to Mass have changed which can be disconcerting yet people have been so accommodating and thoughtful towards stewards and fellow parishioners. We maybe on the verge of a second viral spike with an uncertain future but it's quite clear that the devotion and faith of this parish is unflinching! Alleluia and thank you for your witness.

### **The Sacrament of Confession**

Many people have taken the opportunity to come to Confession over these last two weeks and actually receive God's mercy. If you would like to take advantage of this Sacrament then please email, write or leave a voice mail at the presbytery to make an appointment. Confession, because of the Covid-19 conditions and requirements, is now being temporarily celebrated outside in the presbytery garden. There is also a good examination of conscience on the parish website by Fr. Stephen Wang which you may find helpful.

### **Public Mass Times**

This week all Salford diocesan clergy received an email from one of the Vicar's General, Mgr John Daly in regards to public worship.

**'We are now hearing of reports of the increase of cases of coronavirus in various parts of the diocese. As a result local councils are making statements such as reverting back to lockdown. Some of the statements are asking people not to break guidelines re social distancing. Re public worship, our guidance is that we maintain the 2 metre rule, keep services to a minimum, no singing, observe sanitising and steward people arriving and leaving church. At present these measures enable us to keep our people safe. You will be aware that Bishop John does not want any priest to be under undue pressure to open churches where people are unsafe....'**

In the light of this email with the new lockdown restrictions in East Lancashire and with the Sunday obligation still temporarily on hold, I am very happy and confident for us to continue to celebrate Mass publicly here at St. Mary's. It is those parishioners who are volunteer stewards, cleaners and gardeners that have enabled us to do this safely and effectively. Throughout August Mass will continue to be on Tuesdays, Wednesdays, Thursdays and Fridays when possible. Let's pray that by September we will be able to increase the number of liturgies and the congregation capacity in church. All future Mass times will appear on the parish website. The diocese have continued to emphasise the next two points:

**Social Distancing - IMPORTANT**

Worshippers should limit their interactions with anyone they are not attending church with, i.e. if they are attending corporate worship with one other household, wherever possible they should maintain social distancing with anyone outside of this group.

**Face Coverings**

Face coverings are currently mandatory on public transport and will be mandatory in shops and in supermarkets from 24th July 2020. People are also strongly encouraged to wear face coverings in enclosed public spaces where there are people they do not normally meet, such as a church.

God Bless and keep praying  
Immaculate Heart of Mary, pray for us.  
Fr. O'Brien