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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

Saturday 4th July 2020

Dear Brothers and Sisters,

In the Gospel this weekend Jesus says:

***'Come to me, all you who labour and are overburdened, and I will give you rest. Shoulder my yoke and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. Yes, my yoke is easy and my burden light.'* (Mt 11:28-30)**

This coming week the good news is we are now able to respond to the Lord's invitation, not only in prayer at home, but also in silent individual prayer before the Tabernacle at church. Amen! Amen! Before I give more information I would like us as a family to thank those parishioners who have stepped forward and offered their time and services to make the re-opening of St. Mary's a reality. As you will be aware many churches in the diocese are still closed and will continue to be so for many reasons, one being a lack of volunteers. Thank you to all those who came on Thursday for the first session in tackling the church grounds. Thank you to those who came on Friday to install and set up the PPE. Thank you to those two teams who came throughout Saturday to deep clean the church. Thank you to all those who have been preparing rotas. Thank you to all those who have stepped forward as stewards and have filled in the numerous safeguarding forms and watched the diocesan online training video to receive their certificate. Thank you all and may God Bless you for what you have done and continue to do for our church.

Bishop John in his homily for St. Peter and St. Paul made this statement about the re-opening of churches and restrictions on public worship from this weekend onwards.

In this diocese it will mean that: "that very few churches in this Diocese will open for Mass next Sunday. That is because there are numerous rules and regulations and conditions that need to be in place to do with social distancing, cleansing, the stewarding of people and indeed the Church must be deep cleaned after every service. That is going to rely on any number of volunteers and not all churches will be able to meet those conditions by next weekend. And let us be clear about this too, even those few churches, and others will follow on as quickly as possible, even those few churches will have a much reduced capacity."

In addition Bishop John reminded us that there is no obligation to attend Sunday Mass at this time.

Initially St. Mary's will be open this week for private silent individual prayer thanks to our volunteer stewards. The times of opening will be:

**Wednesday 8th July 2020 9:30am -11am
Friday 10th July 2020 5pm – 6:30pm
Saturday 11th July 9:30am – 11am**

If more people step forward to be stewards we can have more opening times and hopefully public Mass. Please contact Jennifer Pickles for more details about being a steward.
jennifer.pickles@virginmedia.com

In line with government directives and diocesan requirements I am obliged to draw your notice to important information about the use of the church building during the current Covid-19 restrictions.

- All the doors of church will be open for ventilation requirements. However, because we have to abide by a one way system the official entrance will be the right front door of church. The small side door of church (Hawthorn Ave) is only to be used for those who are disabled, those who cannot manage the front door steps and for emergencies. The official designated exit will be the left front door of church, again this is signposted.
- As you come into church you will be welcomed by a steward (wearing a blue identification lanyard). They will direct you to the hand sanitising station and guide you to a specific area of church where you can spend time in silent prayer. Normally we sit where we like in church, but these are not normal times and we do have official directives to follow in the interest of public safety and hygiene.
- When you leave church we ask you to follow the one way system, which is signposted, to the official exit where you will find another hand sanitising station.
- There will be a steward at each entrance and one designated cleaner for each time church is opened. The stewards will be wearing masks and gloves but people visiting are not required to do so.
- The 2 meter social distancing rule still applies in the church.
- Stewards are not allowed to manually assist a visitor. We would kindly ask, at this present moment, those who have mobility issues do not visit St. Mary's for the time being.
- There will be no votive candles at present.
- The piety stall is temporarily suspended.
- There will be a donation basket at the foot of the sanctuary if you wish to make a gift for the upkeep of the church.
- Please be respectful of the Lord's House. The pubs are re-opening for socialising, people's gardens are free for chatting, St. Mary's is open for praying. He is truly present in the Tabernacle. Talk to Him, Our Lord, because he is waiting to listen.

Many of our normal routines, regular practices and everyday customs in regards to church have changed. Change is never nice and always a little unsettling. Thank goodness the Lord is unchanging because He, and He alone, is the one certainty we have in life. I would ask that people be respectful to the stewards, who are all volunteers giving up their time, and abide by the health and safety requirements put in place by the diocese. One of the Vicar's General, Mgr. Daly and the former PP here at St. Mary's, has communicated recently to all Salford diocesan priests the following:

Message from Mgr John Daly VG

Clergy are reminded that churches may only open for private prayer and public worship with a Covid-19 risk assessment having been carried out. Failing to observe this government directive, which is now law, could mean serious consequences involving fines and even the possibility of imprisonment.

As you can see, failure to abide by official directives will have consequences. It would be a shame to have to ask somebody to leave who was putting others at risk because of selfish actions and behaviour. Let's work together so that returning to some kind of normality may be a possibility in the future.

Over the next two weeks St. Mary's will be open for private silent prayer. During this time hopefully more volunteers will come forward as stewards and then we can begin to look at re-introducing public weekday Masses.

God Bless and keep praying
Fr. O'Brien