

## The Solemnity of St. Joseph – 19<sup>th</sup> March 2020

As most of you will be aware, the Bishops of England and Wales have announced that all public celebrations of Mass are to be suspended from tomorrow evening – Friday 20<sup>th</sup> March. This means that, apart from our celebration of Mass tomorrow morning ( and the Stations of the Cross tomorrow evening ) our Patronal Festival today is our last public Mass until further notice.

In the next few days we shall be setting up a St. Joseph's Community Support Group to support those who are self-isolating, and who may need help with shopping and other requirements, and we hope to keep everyone up-to-date with information on the Parish Website, including details of when the church will be open for private prayer and devotions.

It will be important in the days ahead to build upon our daily prayers and especially to pray that this "famine" in the life of the Church, the cessation of public worship, the slumber of the Body of Christ (as we are no longer able to express and strengthen our unity in the public celebration of the Holy Eucharist) – that this strange sleep, this dislocation of our worship, this prolonged "Good Friday" in the life of the Church, may ( in God's providence ) be a purging of the Church from which, having been closed down, we may be raised up!

From this "hibernation" of the Body of Christ, from this sleep of the Church, may we not see hidden a deeper providence? – that from this sleep, this dislocation, this hibernation, the Lord will send the blessings of restoration, of renewal, of new life – and a new Pentecost?

On this Solemnity of St. Joseph, the Guardian of the Church, let us entrust these hopes and prayers to his powerful intercession, so that entering these darker days, our hearts may be quickened and even excited that God is precisely working through these disturbances to bring us to Resurrection in the life of the Church.

All these hopes and prayers we entrust tonight to St. Joseph that he may fulfil ( in *our* day ) his vocation to guard the Church, and bring us safely through the days ahead to renewal, to a deeper consecration, to a deeper repentance, to a deeper experience of the Resurrection.

Through the prayers of St. Joseph, Guardian of the Holy Family, through the maternal prayers and intercessions of Our Blessed Lady, may the Risen Jesus raise us from the dead, baptise us in the Holy Spirit and prepare us for the fulfilment of those prophecies and promises which still lie ahead of us in the life of the Church, to Whom be glory now and forever. Amen.