

TO CONTACT THE PARISH/FATHER NEIL

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Parish Website – [www.catholicchurchneath.org.uk](http://www.catholicchurchneath.org.uk)

**Sunday 17<sup>th</sup> January 2021 – Second Sunday in Ordinary Time**

**RESUMPTION OF PARISH MASS FROM SATURDAY 23<sup>rd</sup>/SUNDAY 24<sup>th</sup> JANUARY**

As you will be aware, shortly before Christmas the Coronavirus infection rate in Neath Port Talbot rose sharply from the 300s/100,000 at the beginning of December to just over 1,000/100,000 in the week before Christmas, exceeding the infection rate in Swansea and, for a while, the highest infection rate in Wales ( and the U.K.). If the number of infections had continued to rise at the same rate through January there was the possibility that we could have seen the numbers approaching 1,500/100,000 in the Neath Port Talbot area.

We greatly appreciate that, unlike during the first lockdown, the Welsh Government ( and Westminster Government - but not the Scottish Government ) have now acknowledged that the freedom to worship is not a gift of government but that the Church ( in the words of Pope Pius XI when instituting the Feast of Christ the King ) “ has a natural and inalienable right to perfect freedom and immunity from the power of the state” (Encyclical “*Quas Primas*” 1925 ). Nevertheless, this means that the Church also has the freedom ( and the responsibility ) for the sake of “the Common Good” to share in the legitimate restrictions imposed on society when communal gatherings represent a threat to public health and safety ( during pandemics or, perhaps, in times of social unrest ). Thus in Northern Ireland the Catholic Church has **voluntarily** suspended all public celebrations of Mass. In Wales we are allowed to take into account particular local circumstances so that some Catholic churches remain open whilst others have closed.

As you will know, on the Feast of the Holy Family ( Sunday 27<sup>th</sup> December ) I blessed our two parishes and the County Borough of Neath Port Talbot with Benediction of the Blessed Sacrament, following which - ( as a “co-incidence” - or is that a “God-incidence”? ) - the infection rate in Neath Port Talbot has dropped dramatically from just over 1,000/100,000 to 334/100,000. Whether our improved situation is a matter of nature or of grace, we thank God - ( are we thanking God? ) - for such a dramatic change and I trust that many of you are continuing to use the “January Prayers” to give ourselves, at the beginning of this new year a firm foundation, in strengthening our daily prayer lives, so that from the “scourging” we have endured the Lord, having “pruned” us ( St. John 15 v 1f) and “refined us through fire” (1Peter 1 v 6f), will greatly bless us in and through whatever may be the continuing trials and challenges of the year ahead.

Our two churches of St. Joseph and St. John Kemble will reopen for Mass next weekend ( Saturday 23<sup>rd</sup> /Sunday 24<sup>th</sup> January). We shall continue to observe all the necessary precautions to make attendance at Mass as safe as possible. **There is no obligation to attend Mass during the pandemic.** It is entirely understandable that many will decide that it is still too early to meet with others in large groups ( even if social distancing). Of course there remains the risk that, despite all the precautions, a person may contract the virus, even in church, when meeting with other people. There will be notices on the door of the church reminding everyone that the Government advice is to stay at home and not to mix with other households. Nevertheless, we must pray that having (together) come through the difficulties and challenges of the last year, we may emerge into the sunlit uplands of further outpourings of God’s grace and mercy and open ourselves to the full power of the Holy Spirit at work in our lives through a New Pentecost.

In 1870, Pope Pius IX proclaimed St. Joseph, to be Patron of the Universal Church. To mark the 150<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of this proclamation, Pope Francis has announced the “**Year of St. Joseph**” ( from the 8<sup>th</sup> December 2020 to the 8<sup>th</sup> December 2021). As would be appropriate, we hope to mark this year in special ways in St. Joseph’s, here in Neath, during the coming year and we therefore commend ourselves to, and solicit, the powerful intercession of St. Joseph that under his patronage the prayers of the Holy Family may bring down upon our two churches the blessings of heaven in a New Pentecost. Come, Holy Spirit! Come, Lord Jesus!



Please continue to pray for the good health and the safety of everyone at St. Joseph's and at St. John Kemble. Please pray for those parishioners with the virus or having to self-isolate and those families who have lost loved ones in this pandemic. We continue to pray that through these sufferings and trials the Lord will bring us through to Resurrection and a New Pentecost

For online, streamed, Mass in the Diocese, please see the websites of the Cathedral, Mumbles, Town Hill, Dunvant, Haverfordwest, amongst others.

A Coronavirus Prayer. " Lord Jesus Christ, You travelled through towns and villages ' curing every disease and illness'. At Your command, the sick were made well. Come now to our aid, in the midst of this global pandemic, and send down Your blessing and healing upon us and protect our healthcare workers. Bring us through to Resurrection and a New Pentecost. For Thy Name's sake. Amen".

Next Sunday (24<sup>th</sup> January ) St. John Kemble: **Saturday** 4-00p.m. Deceased friends of the Nedza Family (Nancy); 6-00p.m Mary Woolcock (RIP) ( Pat, Donie & family ); **Sunday** 8-00a.m. Parish & People; 10-30a.m. Ann Moruzzi (RIP) ( Elias Family);

Readers: **Next Sunday** ( 24<sup>th</sup> ) 6-00p.m. Volunteer please; 8-00a.m. Adrian/Paula Macpherson-Jones; 10-30a.m. Volunteer please.

Stewarding Next Sunday ( 24<sup>th</sup> ) 6-00 p.m. Angela & Geraint. 8-00 a.m. Christopher & Gregory. 10-30 a.m. Luke & Lena.

Cleaning Teams. Next Sunday – 6-00p.m. Sian & Mary. 8-00a.m. Martin & Nuala. 10-30 a.m. VOLUNTEERS PLEASE.

Anniversaries: Fr. Eugene Monaghan (2011); Valerie Ress (2010); Rose Tristram (2019); Joan Worth (2003); Olive Davies (2017); Eileen Greg (2018); Mary Newbury (2015).

Mass Intentions (Private Masses) Sunday 17<sup>th</sup> Fr. Eugene Monaghan (RIP. 10<sup>TH</sup> Anniversary); Monday 18<sup>th</sup> Tess and Ralph Court ( Sp.Int.); Tuesday 19<sup>th</sup> For Christian Unity ( Beginning of the Octave of Prayer for Christian Unity); Wednesday 20<sup>TH</sup> Maureen & Jack Lewis (RIP) (Mary Addis); Thursday 21<sup>st</sup> Fr. Michael Dyson (RIP) (SPCD); Friday 22<sup>nd</sup> Geoff and Camelia Slee (RIP).

OCTAVE OF PRAYER FOR CHRISTIAN UNITY (19<sup>th</sup> – 25<sup>th</sup> January) We continue to pray for Christian Unity and that we may come to know that unity in Spirit and in Truth for which Jesus prayed on the night of the Last Supper. If we have contributed in any way to disharmony in the life of the Church we pray for forgiveness and ask that the Lord will in the days ahead use us as instruments of His peace and reconciliation in our families, between fellow believers, in the Church and in society, for the praise and glory of His Name, for our good and the good of all His Holy Church.

The Parish S.V.P Group/St. Joseph's Community Support Group/Legion of Mary (and others). We are very grateful to all those who have kept in contact by phone and helped out with shopping and in other ways, often behind the scene and unknown to others, since the beginning of the first lockdown in March. **THANK YOU TO YOU ALL! N.B. If you are still self-isolating – this help is still available.**

Pastoral Visits Please note that Fr. Neil is happy to call if you are continuing to self-isolate at home but would appreciate a visit. However - wearing masks and observing social distancing - this must be at your own risk (!). Except for emergencies, Fr. Neil will not call uninvited during the pandemic. **Please note: At present, the Sacrament of Reconciliation – by arrangement**

Thank you "Paula and Adrian thank our fellow parishioners for the many kindnesses shown to us following the death of Laurence. The Holy Sacrifice of the Mass will be offered for your intentions in the coming weeks".

APF RED BOXES (MISSIO). Thanks to all the promoters who emptied and collected money from the Mission boxes during this very unusual year. The total collected from the boxes this year is £609-69. Happy New Year everyone! (Local secretary – Angela Brennan)

Driveway Appeal Many thanks for the further donation to the Parish Funds/Driveway Appeal of £500. All donations gratefully received. We now have **£4,625** in the Driveway Fund. Many thanks.