

TO CONTACT THE PARISH/FATHER NEIL

The Presbytery, Hillside Lane, Neath, SA11 1TG. Phone – 01639 643323

Parish Website – www.catholicchurchneath.org.uk

The Mass is being live-streamed on www.churchservices.tv www.mcnmedia.tv www.ewtn.com www.youtube.com/standardstpatrickhaverfordwest www.walsingham.org and from St Joseph's Cathedral on their facepage, and from the Sacred Heart, Morriston.

The St. Joseph's Community Support Group. If you need help with shopping, collecting prescriptions etc please contact Fr. Neil or Siobhan (07811931971) **YOU ARE NOT ALONE!** We hope to keep in contact with all parishioners over seventy by post – provided that stamps (and envelopes) are still available and the postal service continues to function. Otherwise, the Newsletter will continue to appear (God willing and health permitting) on the Parish Website each week. If you are aware of other parishioners who may not otherwise be aware of the help being offered by the St. Joseph's Support Group, please pass this information on to them. **MANY THANKS** to all our volunteers for helping those in need at this difficult and challenging time. Thank you to Siobhan for co-ordinating the Community Support Group, and to our SVP Group and Legion of Mary for keeping in contact with parishioners by phone

Those on the Frontline – Please remember in your prayers those in our congregation working in our local Surgeries and Hospitals, including Arnel & Bridget Zambrano, Maria Beesley, Maureen McAteer, Joan Grabczewski, Stacey Palmer, Tomy & Deepa Joseph, Mary, and all those working (and living) in our local nursing and residential homes. We pray for God's special blessing and protection for them and pleased to report that, at present, all are doing well despite some having tested positive for coronavirus. Please keep praying!

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.

Norma Joan Hatherall (RIP). Please remember Norma Joan in your prayers and the family at this time. Joan's funeral will take place at Llantwit Cemetery this Wednesday 27th May. *Eternal rest grant unto her O Lord, and let perpetual light shine upon her. May she rest in peace. Amen.*

OUR NOVENA OF PRAYER – from Ascension Day to Pentecost Sunday. After forty glorious days of Resurrection appearances the Risen Jesus is taken up into heaven and the Apostles “together with the women and Mary the Mother of Jesus, and with the brethren” (Acts 1 v 14) devote themselves to prayer – for how long? For nine days – the first novena of prayer in the history of the Church – praying and waiting for the promised Holy Spirit, “before many days you shall be baptised in the Holy Spirit” (Acts 1 v 5). Then, on the tenth day, on the new (Sunday) Christian Sabbath fifty days after the first Christian Sabbath – the Day of Resurrection, “they were all gathered together in one place” (Acts 2 v 1) – and the Holy Spirit came down! I invite you all to join with me in the novena of prayer to the Holy Spirit – which was sent out in the last posting (and can still be accessed on the parish website) – as we pray for a New Pentecost. Remember(!) – from the Day of the Ascension, **Mary and the Apostles were in lockdown** in the Upper Room! Let us therefore follow their example, at this unprecedented time in the history of the Church, and pray that, in the hidden providence of God, He may bring great blessings and showers of heavenly grace upon us, demonstrating that we shall be changed “not by might, nor by power, but by my Spirit says the Lord”(Zech.4 v 6). Please pray with me (and with your family) the Novena to the Holy Spirit from Ascension Day to the Day of Pentecost. “Come, Holy Spirit! And renew the face of the earth!”

Faith and Fellowship - those attending the DOMSEC meetings (and others) may be interested to know that the recommended Sycamore DVD presentation of the gospel is available for viewing on Youtube and is being live-streamed from Walsingham at 10-30 a.m. and at 4-00 p.m. Please also see other items of interest on Fr. Michael's website www.ourladystaroftheseamumbles.org.uk or on YouTube.

Parish Collections. **MANY THANKS** to all who have continued to donate to the Church over recent weeks through cash gifts, cheques, parish envelopes and standing orders with the bank. **WE ARE VERY GRATEFUL.** For those who have asked – for donations and Standing Orders – the details of our (St. Joseph's) bank account are – Branch Code 54-10-19 – Account Number 01520296 – (Diocese of Menevia Neath Parish) Nat West, 35 Green Street, Neath, SA11 1DB.

The Seventh Sunday of Easter – 24th May – The Acts of the Apostles 1 v 12-14

Our First Reading today (Acts 1 v12-14) recalls the first novena of prayer in the history of the Church as the Apostles, with Mary the Mother of Jesus, gather together in the Upper Room - (the same Upper Room of the Last Supper) - and pray for the promised Gift of the Holy Spirit, for they were, “not to depart from Jerusalem but to wait (“in lockdown” !) for the Promise of the Father - for John baptised with water but, before many days, you will be baptised with the Holy Spirit” (Acts 1 v 4 & 5).

Whereas, in the Old Testament, we read that the Holy Spirit came “upon” individuals or is working “in” them, we do not read of any individual or group being “baptised” in the Holy Spirit. It would seem therefore that this “baptism” indicates a new relationship, and that this new relationship was precisely dependent upon the Death and Resurrection of Jesus and His Ascension into Heaven. The outward sign (of this invisible and interior grace) in the New Testament is the laying on of hands (Acts 8 v 17; 9 v 6) which continues in the life of the Church through the Sacrament of Confirmation.

However, just as it is possible to experience conversion/new birth prior to the Sacrament of Baptism (so that one then seeks to be baptised), so also the coming down of the Holy Spirit can be experienced before the laying on of hands – and even before Baptism (Acts 10 v 44 – 48), but new birth/conversion and Baptism in the Holy Spirit are orientated toward, and “sealed” by, their respective sacramental expressions in Baptism and Confirmation.

Sadly, it is also true that, in the life of an adult who, perhaps, pretends to faith, or simply lacks the faith, then the interior grace (the inner reality) of the Sacrament of Baptism and of Confirmation may not “accompany” its outward and visible sign until the Sacrament is “completed” by a later commitment to Christ, or a greater hunger for the Spirit-filled life. We may have **received** the Gift of the Holy Spirit at our Confirmation but have we **opened** that Gift? We may have received the divine life of grace in the Sacrament of Baptism but are we – right now – walking in, and growing in, the life of grace?

It should be our constant prayer to be filled with the Holy Spirit – after all, this is precisely the precious Gift obtained for us through the Death and Resurrection of Jesus and His Ascension into Heaven. “When He ascended on high, He led captivity captive, and He gave gifts to men” (Ephesians 4 v 8). “Being therefore exalted at the right hand of God, and having received from the Father the promise of the Holy Spirit, He has poured out that which you see and hear” (Acts 2 v 33).

Our constant prayer should be, “Lord, make real to me the gift of the Holy Spirit” – and not to grieve the Holy Spirit. “Do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God in Whom you were sealed for the day of redemption” (Ephesians 4 v 30). “Return! O Holy Dove return! Sweet Messenger of rest. I hate the sins that made Thee mourn, And drove Thee from my breast”. It is possible to grieve and offend the Holy Spirit so that He withdraws from us. “Take not Thy Holy Spirit from us!”. I trust that many of us, during this time between Ascension Day and Pentecost Sunday, are offering our parish Novena of Prayer to the Holy Spirit and also the prayer of Pope Saint John XXXIII, “Renew Your wonders in our day, as by a New Pentecost”. In offering these prayers we are acknowledging that only the Holy Spirit can effect those supernatural influences upon our souls for which we all long – “Come down, O Love Divine! Seek Thou this soul of mine, And visit it with Thine own ardour glowing! O Comforter draw near, Within my heart appear, And kindle it, Thy Holy Flame bestowing!”

After this long extended “Good Friday” of the Church, may God grant to us a glorious Resurrection and the outpouring of the Holy Spirit in a New Pentecost – “Come Holy Spirit! And renew the face of the earth!” Come Lord Jesus! Amen.