

TO CONTACT THE PARISH/FATHER NEIL

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

Parish Website – www.catholicchurchneath.org.uk

THE RE-OPENING OF CHURCHES IN WALES

Dear Friends, as you will now be aware, the Welsh Government has given permission for churches to re-open in Wales for private prayer. **PLEASE NOTE** – St.Joseph's and St.John Kemble (and most of the churches in the Diocese) are **NOT YET OPEN** for private prayer.

We are being asked to observe very strict precautions and must receive a **Health & Safety Certificate** from the Diocese before we can re-open even for just private prayer. (I) There must be sufficient volunteers to act as stewards before a church can re-open. At least two (and preferably three) people must be present as stewards to ensure all regulations are being observed. Volunteers must be under 70 years of age, and wear PPE (personal protective equipment). We do not yet have a sufficient number of volunteers to re-open St.Joseph's or St.John Kemble. (II) We need to purchase signage (giving directions/instructions); safety tape (to close off certain pews) to ensure social distancing; marking tape – to mark the floors; entry and exit by different doors; alcohol handwash (which, thus far, we have not been able to obtain) – not just anti-bacterial handwash; paper towels, gloves and face-masks; no veneration of statues etc; toilets not to be made available; the church to be deep cleaned at least once a day – more volunteers needed (wearing PPE).

In view of all the above, and to allow time for the painters to finish painting the nave of the Church (in St.Joseph's), my intention (having consulted others) is to wait and to apply for a Health & Safety Certificate which will allow us (when the day comes) to **re-open for the Celebration of Mass** (and not just for private prayer) and will be in contact with the Diocese to make the necessary arrangements. **PLEASE KEEP OUR SITUATION IN YOUR PRAYERS.**

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

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.

The Neath Food Bank – has a request for specific food items, which can be left at Tesco Neath Abbey (the collection point is by the café) especially they need tinned fruit 400g, teabags – 80s, dried pasta 500gms, UHT milk 1L, breakfast cereals but NOT beans or sugar! Many thanks for your help and generosity.

Please remember in your prayers those in the parish who have died recently and whose funerals have been held privately due to coronavirus restrictions, Benetia Whittington (RIP), Gary Derrick (RIP), Mary Rees (RIP), Norma Hatherall (RIP), Nell O'Connell (RIP), Judith Jones (RIP). *Eternal rest grant unto them O Lord, And let perpetual light shine upon them. May they rest in peace Amen*

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 Solemnity of St. Peter and St. Paul, Apostles - 28th June 2020 - St. Matthew 16 v 13 – 19

Last Sunday we witnessed a “turning-point” in the relationship between Jesus and His Disciples, when He “turned them around” and sent them out, as “Apostles” (those who are sent). From following Jesus they now also went out ahead of Him (St. Matthew 10 v 5f), to prepare the way of the Lord in all the towns and villages He was to visit. We saw that this “apostolate” now belongs to us all - and that the recently established Diocese of Menevia School of Evangelism and Catechetics is a school to assist us and encourage us in our apostolate.

This Sunday we witness the other “turning-point” in the relationship between Jesus and the disciples – at Caesarea Philippi. Simon Peter declares his faith that Jesus is the Christ, the Messiah of Jewish longing and expectation, of Whom the prophets foretold that He will save His people, Israel. The Christ/Messiah will be a Deliverer, the Son of David, and just as in the past, God raised up Kings and Judges to deliver the people of Israel from their oppressors and conquerors, so under the occupation by the Greeks and then by the Romans, the Jewish people were eagerly awaiting the Coming of the Messiah who would finally and decisively deliver the nation.

But, following Simon Peter’s confession of faith, at Caesarea Philippi, Jesus begins to challenge this popular understanding of the Messiah and, for the first time, begins to teach the twelve that His vocation as the Christ is to suffer and to die, and that through His Suffering and Death He will deliver not only the people of Israel but the whole world, not from political oppression (which may fall as a consequence) but deliverance from the reign of sin and death. “From that time Jesus began to show His disciples that He must go to Jerusalem and suffer many things – and be killed, and on the third day be raised” (St. Matthew 10 v 21). Not what Peter was wanting or expecting! “God forbid, Lord! This shall never happen to you!” (v22). And thus Peter voices the very temptation that follows Jesus from the temptations in the wilderness to the temptations in the Garden of Gethsemane, “Lord, if it be possible, remove this Cup from me” (26 v 39). And so Jesus cries out and rebukes Peter, “Get behind me Satan! You are a hindrance to me!” (16 v 23).

From Caesarea Philippi onwards, Jesus not only indicates that He Himself will suffer, but that if the disciples are to be His true followers, they also must expect to suffer, to share His Sufferings (16 v 24f; 20 v 17f). The disciples, like us, struggle to come to terms with this vocation to (redemptive) suffering – they ran away from sharing in the sufferings of Jesus (26 v 56, “then all the disciples forsook Him and fled”). It may be that we shall find ourselves in a similar situation, when the peer pressure of friends, or the antagonism of contemporary society, will encourage us to be silent, to falter, even to deny Jesus or, perhaps, to deny His importance to us, His significance for us, His centrality in our lives – “You also are a catholic!” – “ I don’t know what you mean!” (26 v 69/70).

We know that St. Peter repented (St. Luke 22 v 62; 22 v 32) and that he learnt not to withdraw, even from death, in following Jesus in the Way of the Cross (St. John 21 v 18f). St. Paul, also, followed in the Way of the Cross. He lists his sufferings, not as complaints, but as honoured sufferings and wounds for the sake of Christ – imprisonments, countless beatings “and often near to death”, lashed thirty-nine times (not once but on five occasions), stoned and ship-wrecked - three times! (2 Corinthians 11 v 23f).

Today we celebrate their joint Ministry, which they shared for (approximately) thirty years in establishing and encouraging the Church throughout the Empire, and their joint Martyrdom in the city of Rome – St Peter crucified in Nero’s Circus to the side of Vatican Hill (AD 64) and St. Paul beheaded outside the walls of the city (AD 67). In the Propers of the Mass today we celebrate, “Peter, foremost in confessing the faith, who established the Church from the remnant of Israel” and “Paul, its most outstanding preacher, master and teacher of the Gentiles that You call” – “ so each, in a different way, gathered together the one family of Christ; and revered together throughout the world, they share one Martyr’s crown” .St. Peter and St. Paul – Pray for us!

Today would have been the occasion for our First Holy Communion Mass. Please remember our children and young people in your prayers (amongst many others!) many of whom have had their lives and education severely disrupted in recent months. Let us pray that when the churches re-open for the public celebration of Mass we may, all of us, experience healing of any wounds we may have suffered during these last few months, and a new hunger and excitement to experience and explore more deeply our faith in the Risen Jesus, continuing to pray for a New Pentecost in the life of the Church. Amen!