



St Theresa's Presbytery
High Lane
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Monday of Fourth Week of Easter 2020

Feast of the English Martyrs

Dear Friends

Christ Is Risen! Alleluia!

Firstly, my apologies for the quality of live streaming last week. There doesn't seem to be any reason for it, but it does seem to have been corrected. I switched the router off and on again - this really does seem to work!

In following the press releases from the English and Welsh Bishops' Conference it seems that they are negotiating with government officials on how we might begin to open up the churches again following the loosening of the lockdown. I don't think we should get too excited about this, as I'm sure that for many people, especially those with underlying medical conditions, that lockdown will have to be in place for some time to come. My hope is that we can at least open the Church for periods of private prayer in the very near future, and then eventually a slow return to be able to access the Mass and the Sacraments. Do please continue to pray for our candidates that were to be received into the Church at the Easter Vigil; our First Holy Communion children; and our Confirmandi preparing to be confirmed by Bishop Alan this month, all of these are to be delayed until we can safely celebrate them together.

This virus has clearly changed the way we think and act, there is a great deal of fear about how we move forward and stay healthy. It may be a long time before we feel comfortable celebrating our faith as part of a large group of people. The same could be said for attending music concerts, or great sporting events, anything that involves large groups of people in close proximity to one another may never happen again as they did in the past. Some teachers are currently giving a lot of thought on how to open up schools to continue the education of children, it looks logistically impossible to have even a standard number of children in a classroom and maintain a two metre distance between them and to maintain this distance throughout a school day, yet education must be resumed as soon as possible.

Likewise, I have been looking at our Church building and thinking of ways that we can resume our worship after the lockdown is ended, and to do so whilst keeping everyone as safe as humanly possible. Our Church building does lend itself to the possibility of maintaining a two-metre distance from one another during worship. We don't have a huge congregation so with an increase in the number of weekend Masses, the rearranging of our benches, and the addition of distanced chairs, we will probably be able to accommodate everyone at a 'Sunday' Mass and maintain strict social distancing to keep everyone safe and sound.

I feel sure that the Bishops would keep in place the relaxation of the Sunday obligation, so that those who would need to continue to be shielded due to underlying medical conditions and/or those who fall within the age profile set by the government scientists do not feel they have to attend the Sunday Mass. The live streaming of the Mass will probably be here to stay, the temporary set up we have in Church will have to give way to a more permanent solution so that those who have to remain at home can still access the Mass in some way. As someone who has a face for radio, this fills me with dread. I may have to ask the Bishop for permission to employ a professional makeup artist for Deacon Des and myself before going on camera in the future, we will also have to do something about the lighting in Church too as it does nothing for our complexions! It is important to try and keep our sense of humour in these dark times. Some say that this disease is no laughing matter, and I agree, but laughter is a great medicine no matter what the disease, if we can't laugh then at least let us smile because God is good and Christ is Risen! Alleluia!

With my love and blessing

Fr Lee