



St Theresa's Presbytery
High Lane
Stansted Mountfitchet
CM24 8LQ

The Blessed Virgin Mary, Mother of the Church 2020

Dear Friends

Today we start back in Ordinary Time, because the term 'ordinary' in English means something that's not special or distinctive, many people think that Ordinary Time refers to parts of the calendar of the Catholic Church that are unimportant. Even though the season of Ordinary Time makes up most of the liturgical year in the Catholic Church, the fact that Ordinary Time refers to those periods that fall outside of the major liturgical seasons reinforces this impression. Yet Ordinary Time is far from unimportant or uninteresting. In reality Ordinary Time is called "ordinary" not because it is common, but simply because the weeks of Ordinary Time are numbered. The Latin word *ordinalis*, which refers to numbers in a series, stems from the Latin word *ordo*, from which we get the English word order. Thus, the numbered weeks of Ordinary Time, in fact, represent the ordered life of the Church—the period in which we live our lives neither in feasting (as in the Christmas and Easter seasons) or in more severe penance (as in Advent and Lent), but in watchfulness and expectation of the Second Coming of Christ.

The start of Ordinary Time reminds us of the fact that we have been away from Church for the entire Easter Season, and I'm afraid to say we still do not have a definite date for opening the church. Cardinal Nichols, the Cardinal Archbishop of Westminster gave an impassioned plea to the government this weekend to allow church buildings to open for private worship, as they have allowed non-essential shops to open. The Archbishop of Southwark has written an open letter to the government to ask the same thing. So we hope and pray that the government start to listen and grant permission.

When permission is granted, we at St Theresa's will be ready to open our doors. Yesterday Deacon Des, Jane, Helen and I, whilst maintaining strict social distancing, moved the benches in Church to provide a safe environment for people to return. Every seat is now precisely 2 metres away from the next seat. This has, of course, reduced the number of people that can worship at a single Mass to 50 people. It is highly likely that when worship is allowed to be attended again, we will be asked to limit a congregation at each Mass to a maximum of 50 people (this has happened in many countries that have already eased the lockdown in Churches). To accommodate everyone, we would need an additional one or maybe two Masses to take place on a Sunday (including our Saturday evening Mass). I will write and ask Bishop Alan if this might be possible when lockdown is eased further for places of worship. We will probably also need to implement a system where people choose the Mass they will attend, which will be limited to 50 people. This will be a very strange thing to do, so we will have to think about how this can be implemented with the least disruption.

A huge thank you again to those who volunteered their services, we have a list of 14 people who are able to help. I hope this will be enough to allow us to open.

I know the talk of opening Church will be a cause of heightened anxiety to some, especially those who are continuing to shield. As I have said previously, we will continue to livestream all of our Masses via YouTube for those who will not be able to join us in person. The technology is proving a bit tricky and we are trying to do this at the minimum of cost to the parish using the expertise of parishioners rather than bringing in experts.

Do please continue to pray for each other, be assured of my prayers for all of you, and please pray for me and for Deacon Des too.

With my love and blessing

Fr Lee