

Catholic Parish of Our Lady of Victories, Southwell, and Saint Anthony, Calverton

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Corpus Christi 2021

Dear Parishioners and Friends,

It's lovely to have this opportunity to write to you as we celebrate this Sunday the solemnity of Jesus' Body and Blood, Corpus Christi, the most precious gift He left us on the night of the Last Supper. Every time we come to Mass we are invited, in a state of grace, to receive this gift afresh. The Eucharist, as Pope Francis has said, "is not a prize for the perfect but a powerful medicine and nourishment for the weak" (Evangelii Gaudium 47), and he likens the Church to a field-hospital where all can find comfort and healing.

Although the field-hospital is close to those who are wounded, still those in need have to journey there to find healing. In the same way we find that healing from Jesus most of all when we come to church, when we celebrate Mass together. Over the past 15 months we have become used to participating in Mass on-line, from our own homes, and this has allowed us to remain connected to the Church during such an unprecedented time of pandemic. As we are receiving our vaccines now, and we see the infection rate (especially in our parish) becoming more manageable, as more restrictions are eased across our country, now is the time to return to Church and come back to Mass. In this mailing you'll find encouragement from the Bishops of England and Wales to return to the active practice of our faith. Please do come back to church, in Calverton or in Southwell, to the celebration of Mass. All the details of how to book for Sunday Mass are in the newsletter, and both churches have plenty of covid-19 secure protocols in place. If you still feel uneasy about coming to Mass when others will be present, come along to Our Lady of Victories church simply for a time of private prayer, for a moment of stillness before Jesus, present in the tabernacle, to light a candle before the statue of Our Lady or (in this month of June) before the Sacred Heart. Although Saint Anthony's church is open only at the times of Mass, Our Lady of Victories church is open from about 9am until about 6pm each day. Coming for private prayer might be an easier first step towards resuming participation at Mass: please seriously consider when you will return to church. Our parish community depends on each one of us coming together, to support each other in our faith and in our worship of God, who said at the beginning of time "It is not good for man to be alone" (Genesis 2:18).

Having exhorted all our parishioners and friends to return to Mass, a note of apology now: I have to leave the parish after Mass on Sunday 6th June for a fortnight's canon law exams in Leuven, Belgium. During that time Father Frank Carvill has kindly agreed to celebrate the Sunday Masses in our parish (Saturday, 6pm in Southwell, and Sunday, 10.45am in Calverton) with the usual booking system in place. Unfortunately there won't be daily Masses in the parish during this time, although I'll be offering Mass each day in Leuven and remembering all our parishioners in my prayers each day. Please keep me in my prayers, too, as I sit the forthcoming exams and write a 24,000 word thesis.

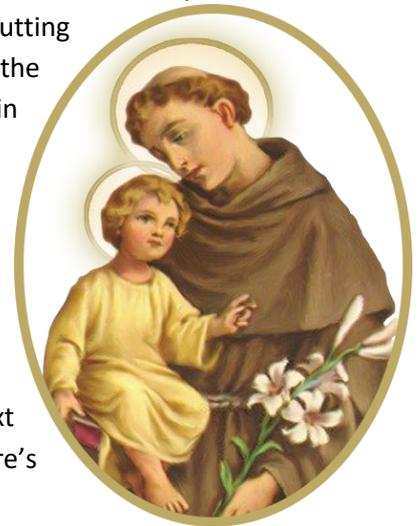
This week's newsletter is a double edition covering all the time I'll be away. I've included a reflection on the Eucharist, as we celebrate the solemnity of Corpus Christi this Sunday, and it's an opportunity to thank all the Extraordinary Ministers of the Eucharist who minister (at



least, before the pandemic) both at Mass and by taking the Blessed Sacrament to those in our parish who can't easily come to Mass. May they receive spiritual rewards for their fidelity to the Lord!

The newsletter also contains the annual parish financial report to the parish. I hope this is more or less self-explanatory, showing what money has come into the parish and how it has been spent. You'll see that we continue to spend more than we receive, despite some cost-cutting measures being implemented and some efficiencies being put in place. As the annual deficit has reduced over the past three years from about £21,000 in 2019, to £14,500 last year, to a budgeted shortfall of £7,500 this year, I'm very hopeful that we might be in a position to break-even during next financial year (2022-23). Sincere thanks to so many in our parish who are generous in what they give financially: long may that continue.

Note, too, that next Sunday, 13th June, is the Patronal Solemnity of Saint Anthony, patron of our church in Calverton and joint patron of our parish. Father Frank will celebrate Mass in honour of Saint Anthony next Sunday, in place of the usual Sunday Mass texts, and in the newsletter there's an article about his life so that we might know something more of him.



A final word of request: as well as coming back to Mass yourself, if you're not already doing so, please consider inviting others to come back to Mass too. Our parish census, undertaken in light of the legal changes to data protection in 2018, has many parishioners missing, and so I have no means of keeping in touch with them or contacting them. If you are in contact with parishioners encourage them to come back to Mass too, or even better, invite them to come to Mass with you. Ask whether they've received this newsletter through the post, and if not encourage them to contact me, or complete a census form (on the parish website). Consider ways in which we might celebrate together when we are able to do so publicly, and let's have a conversation about what we might do, as a parish community, over the summer to celebrate our faith. Tea and coffee in church or in the hall after Mass might be a way off, but could we do something outside? Could parishioners bring their own drinks and linger outside church a little? Perhaps a social event in August might be feasible, around the time of the solemnity of the Assumption? Even if we don't know quite what will be permitted it's always good to have dreams (as Saint Joseph did, whose year we celebrate presently, when he heard the voice of God speaking to him) and something to hope for.

So, as we continue through this time of partial lockdown, let's encourage each other in our faith. Let's bring one another back to Mass each Sunday. Let's support our church financially. Let's think of ways to practically celebrate our community in faith together. And above all let's hold each other in prayer before God, for whom nothing is impossible (Luke 1:37).

With my prayers for you and all your family and loved ones,