

Extraordinary Parish Newsletter for the Catholic Parishes of St John Vianney & St Monica and St Cuthbert, Blackpool

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Thursday 19th March 2020, The Solemnity of St Joseph

Dear Parishioners of St John Vianney & St Monica, Blackpool and St Cuthbert's, Blackpool,

Re: Coronavirus (COVID – 19)

We live in extraordinary times, when the pandemic Coronavirus (COVID-19) is at a stage when regular transmissions of the virus continue to soar. Every sphere of public life is being affected by the crisis and our struggle to beat it: education, travel, sports, employment and the economy. Inevitably, the Catholic Church in England and Wales is having to take its lead from the government's new directives governing the social gathering of people. There are direct ramifications of this cooperation for all Catholic parishes as well as other communities of World Faiths and ecclesial traditions in these lands and for many all across the globe. At all times, but especially in the midst of our anxiety and fear, we are never alone as Christians. We remember the words of Our Lord: "Behold I am with you always" (*Matthew 28: 20*).

The major decision affecting our Parishes, at this time, concerns the sad announcement made by the Catholic Bishops' Conference of England and Wales on Wednesday 18th March: <https://www.cbcew.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/sites/3/2020/03/CBCEW-Letter-Public-Worship-COVID19-180320.pdf> that is concerning: **the immediate suspension of all public celebrations and services, including Mass (on Sundays, Holydays and weekdays), until further notice;** mindful of our obligation to protect the most vulnerable and the public good. At the same time, the Bishops are dispensing all the faithful from the obligation to attend Mass on Sundays and Holy Days of Obligation for the same period of time. The Scottish bishops have introduced similar measures for parishes in Scotland.

Moreover, the public celebration of Benediction, Stations of the Cross and the Rosary is also suspended. The Lenten morning prayer at St Cuthbert's is now cancelled. The public Triduum of Prayer and Dowry Re-Consecration and Rededication we had planned for our two parishes is also cancelled – but can still be prayed at home for those online following: <https://www.behold2020.com/> 'The God Who Speaks' course will now pause meeting at this time. The remaining two Lenten Blackpool Deanery Station Masses are now cancelled.

The celebration of previously-arranged baptisms, may be celebrated, if they cannot be at all delayed, but only with the parents and godparents present. Funerals in our two parishes may also be celebrated, but, again, only with a very small group of close relatives in attendance and going straight to the cemetery or crematorium for the funeral with the option of a memorial Mass to follow when the crisis is over. Our Children's Liturgy, the Pre-Baptism sessions and our First Holy Communion programmes are all now suspended and the celebrations of First Holy Communion will not now take place at all this May. Parents will be notified of this and new sessions and celebration dates only proposed by the Parishes once we have a situation that allows for people to gather safely within our churches. Finally, all gatherings and meetings of people under the auspices of our Parishes – including refreshments after Mass - are now to be cancelled until further notice.

Thankfully, Mass will continue to be celebrated each day in our two Parishes by your priests - but without a congregation. Nonetheless, **St John Vianney's church on Park Road remains open each day for private prayer** – using the full space of the main Church – given that the day chapel (as a small confined space) is now closed until further notice. The usual Confession times are cancelled. Instead, a period of Confessions and Silent Eucharistic Adoration (using the full space of the main church for 'social distance') will be provided for each Monday during the crisis from 6.00pm to 7.00pm. All confessions will be in the confessional with a cellophane screen and the curtain kept drawn and observing the hygiene and 'social distancing' requirements. Silent Adoration of the Blessed Sacrament will also take place at St John Vianney's church each Friday morning from 9.00am to 11.00am and every Sunday from 10.00am to 3.00pm at this time.

St Cuthbert's church on Lytham Road will be open for private prayer from Tuesday to Sunday (inclusive) for the duration of the current pandemic from 6.00pm to 7.30pm these evenings.

We will continue to sanitize the door handles and services of both our churches on a regular basis so please do 'pop in' regularly to pray before the Lord – this will provide the best security for our churches.

Whilst Social Services will have a list of vulnerable persons already known to them, as Christians, we will want to be vigilant and concerned for those in need among our own neighbourhood, who will struggle with illness or a period of self-isolation, including those on low incomes who might not be able to go out to the shops, and those who have no relatives in the area to care for them. We know that those in need will experience a real *Faith in Action* from our parishioners in these times whilst also being careful to keep safe and well (see the notice overleaf: 'Wishing to Help').

Given that we will not be gathering for public Masses until further notice, our Parishes are likely to see a significant reduction of income should the current crisis continue for a protracted period. The ramifications will be serious. Consequently, we are now asking our parishioners to immediately consider and arrange keeping-up their weekly offertory donation, either by setting up a standing-order, or by putting your weekly donation into a marked envelope and posting it through the presbytery door or by bringing the total amount to church after the situation is resolved. You could also

alternatively send us what you would normally put in the collection via bank transfer. Email us if you wish to take up this option.

Even in these unprecedented times, we are mindful that the life and mission of the Church goes on, as does the Season of Lent, albeit in a radically modified form. Much of our prayer life in the weeks and months to come will have to be at home. Again, be assured that the Church's Liturgy will continue to be celebrated for you (but in private) and for your intentions and especially for those who are sick, the vulnerable and those suffering from the Coronavirus. We are also praying for those on the 'front line' caring for those affected by this current international health crisis especially in our own National Health Service. Ultimately, all our prayers and Masses at this time are for an end to this scourge!

In these times you are encouraged to make *An Act of Spiritual Communion* using our Parish Prayer Card: shorturl.at/sGUX1 which is also made available at the back of our churches for you to pick up when you 'pop in'.

Many will make *Mass streamed over the internet* a priority. Some Links for this facility include:

- Mass with Pope Francis at Santa Marta: <https://www.youtube.com/c/VaticanNewsEN>
- Shrine of Our Lady of Walsingham: <http://www.walsingham.org.uk/live-stream>
- Catholic TV: <http://www.catholicTV.org/>
- Church Services TV: <https://www.churchservices.tv/churches/>
- Extraordinary Form Masses from the Institute of Christ the King, Preston can be accessed on their Facebook account

There are already plenty of options for following *the Texts of the Mass* - some of which include:

- Universalis: <http://universalis.com/mass.htm>
- EWTN: <https://www.ewtn.com/catholicism/daily-readings>
- iMissal App: <http://www.imissal.com/>

For the Texts for the Liturgy of the Hours:

- Universalis: <https://universalis.com/>
- iBreviary App: <https://www.ibreviary.org/en/>

For Private Prayer & Meditation:

- Dominican Rosary Meditations: <https://www.marburydominicannuns.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/12/dominican-jubilee-rosary-meditations.pdf>
- Stations of the Cross (Bishop Robert Barron): <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pJNjtA-Awb4>

You will appreciate that although your priests will not be allowed to visit people who are 'self-isolating' at home at this time parishioners can still telephone their priests for prayers or email them at: catholicsinsouthblackpool@gmail.com

In the meantime, do please keep connected via our own Parish websites. The St John Vianney & St Monica's website and its Facebook and Twitter accounts are updated each day, through the day and the *Latest News* section of this popular website: <http://stjohnvianneyblackpool.com/news/> is already a most valuable resource for keeping close to our Catholic Faith this Lent and especially during this Coronavirus crisis.

Let us stay steadfast in prayer and rich in faith, hope and charity during this crisis – thank you for your support,

As ever in Christ,

Your Priests

NOTICES:

An adapted and abbreviated PARISH NEWSLETTER will be issued online (on the Parish websites) at regular intervals - but not every Sunday - during the Coronavirus crisis. Feel free to print these off at home and give to those fellow parishioners, family and friends you know who are not online. Some will be printed off and left at the back of our churches as usual.

WISHING TO HELP: If you are able to volunteer to do doorstep deliveries to those vulnerable and isolated at this time Blackpool, Adult Social Care would like to hear from you. Please telephone: 01253 477800 to find out more.

OUR STATISTICS FOR 14th/15th March 2020: Thank you for your continuing generosity in support of our parishes:
St John Vianney & St Monica - Attendance: 198 Collection: £ 530.59 **St Cuthbert** - Attendance: 66 Collection: £ 216.95

MASS INTENTIONS: The following Mass intentions will be applied to the (private) celebration of Mass by our priests, across our two linked parishes this weekend and in the week ahead: For the People of the Parish, Joan Edge (Health), Delivery from the Coronavirus, Byrne Family, Vincent & Mary Westhead, Mary Kearney RIP, Mary Carthy RIP (2), Frank McCave RIP, Kathleen Rice, Bernard Brady, William Cusack RIP (Anniv), Clarence White (Anniv), Eileen Cowsill.

OUR SICK AND LATELY DECEASED LISTS: are currently posted on both church porch noticeboards.

WARNING - CANDLES AND HAND SANITISER: Some hand sanitisers are highly flammable. Please do not light candles until your hands have properly dried.