

THE PARISHES OF ST ETHELBERT LEOMINSTER and ST JOSEPH BROMYARD

Websites: www.st-ethelberts.org.uk and www.catholicchurchbromyard.org.uk

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Parish Update: 26th April 2020

4th Sunday of Easter

As we begin the month of May my thoughts have gone back to May of last year. It was then that Archbishop George first suggested that I should take up a new appointment. He said: 'How would you feel about moving to Leominster and Bromyard?' My initial reaction was one of shock and I said my main concern was would I feel a sense of isolation being at the periphery of the Archdiocese. Little did I know then what we would have to face the following year!

I am sure most of us are now feeling a little weary of the isolation resulting from the coronavirus Covid 19, and long to get back to some kind of normality. It also seems so hard that our church doors are closed at a time of crisis and we are not able to spend time in prayer before the Blessed sacrament. But as Pope Francis said earlier in the week we need to pray that the Lord will grant all his people the grace of prudence and obedience to the restrictions placed upon us so that the pandemic does not return. I am hoping and praying that our church doors will be open, if only for private prayer, by the Feast of Pentecost, which is at the end of the month.

May is also the month dedicated to the Blessed Virgin Mary and I had been hoping to attend the Marian celebrations at Belmont but sadly this is not possible due to the restrictions we're all living under. We can, however, show our devotion to the Blessed Virgin Mary by praying the rosary at home. Pope Francis has written a letter to all the faithful for the month of May and has included two prayers that can be recited at the end of the rosary. The pope's letter can be found on <https://www.vaticannews.va/en/pope/news/2020-04/letter-on-the-month-of-may-full-text.html>

I have also copied it at the end of this note.

This Sunday is often referred to as Good Shepherd Sunday, taking its name from the Gospel for this week which speaks of Jesus as the Good Shepherd. It's also a day of prayer for vocations to the Priesthood and Religious Life.

Finally, I must admit that I feel a certain sadness this weekend as we should be celebrating First Holy Communion in our parishes. Hopefully we will be able to continue preparing the children for this important event in the not too distant future and hopefully celebrate the First Communion Mass later in the year.

Letter on the Month of May

*Letter of His Holiness Pope Francis
to the Faithful for the Month of May 2020*

Dear Brothers and Sisters,

The month of May is approaching, a time when the People of God express with particular intensity their love and devotion for the Blessed Virgin Mary. It is traditional in this month to pray the Rosary at home within the family. The restrictions of the pandemic have made us come to appreciate all the more this “family” aspect, also from a spiritual point of view.

For this reason, I want to encourage everyone to rediscover the beauty of praying the Rosary at home in the month of May. This can be done either as a group or individually; you can decide according to your own situations, making the most of both opportunities. The key to doing this is always simplicity, and it is easy also on the internet to find good models of prayers to follow.

I am also providing two prayers to Our Lady that you can recite at the end of the Rosary, and that I myself will pray in the month of May, in spiritual union with all of you. I include them with this letter so that they are available to everyone.

Dear brothers and sisters, contemplating the face of Christ with the heart of Mary our Mother will make us even more united as a spiritual family and will help us overcome this time of trial. I keep all of you in my prayers, especially those suffering most greatly, and I ask you, please, to pray for me. I thank you, and with great affection I send you my blessing.

Rome, Saint John Lateran, 25 April 2020
Feast of Saint Mark the Evangelist

FIRST PRAYER

O Mary,

You shine continuously on our journey
as a sign of salvation and hope.

We entrust ourselves to you, Health of the Sick,
who, at the foot of the cross,
were united with Jesus’ suffering,
and persevered in your faith.

“Protectress of the Roman people”, *(we could change this to the English/Welsh/British people)*
you know our needs,

and we know that you will provide,
so that, as at Cana in Galilee,
joy and celebration may return
after this time of trial.

Help us, Mother of Divine Love,
to conform ourselves to the will of the Father
and to do what Jesus tells us.

For he took upon himself our suffering,
and burdened himself with our sorrows
to bring us, through the cross,
to the joy of the Resurrection.

Amen.

*We fly to your protection,
O Holy Mother of God;
Do not despise our petitions
in our necessities,
but deliver us always
from every danger,
O Glorious and Blessed Virgin.*

SECOND PRAYER

"We fly to your protection, O Holy Mother of God".

In the present tragic situation, when the whole world is prey to suffering and anxiety, we fly to you, Mother of God and our Mother, and seek refuge under your protection.

Virgin Mary, turn your merciful eyes towards us amid this coronavirus pandemic. Comfort those who are distraught and mourn their loved ones who have died, and at times are buried in a way that grieves them deeply. Be close to those who are concerned for their loved ones who are sick and who, in order to prevent the spread of the disease, cannot be close to them. Fill with hope those who are troubled by the uncertainty of the future and the consequences for the economy and employment.

Mother of God and our Mother, pray for us to God, the Father of mercies, that this great suffering may end and that hope and peace may dawn anew. Plead with your divine Son, as you did at Cana, so that the families of the sick and the victims be comforted, and their hearts be opened to confidence and trust.

Protect those doctors, nurses, health workers and volunteers who are on the frontline of this emergency, and are risking their lives to save others. Support their heroic effort and grant them strength, generosity and continued health.

Be close to those who assist the sick night and day, and to priests who, in their pastoral concern and fidelity to the Gospel, are trying to help and support everyone.

Blessed Virgin, illumine the minds of men and women engaged in scientific research, that they may find effective solutions to overcome this virus.

Support national leaders, that with wisdom, solicitude and generosity they may come to the aid of those lacking the basic necessities of life and may devise social and economic solutions inspired by farsightedness and solidarity.

Mary Most Holy, stir our consciences, so that the enormous funds invested in developing and stockpiling arms will instead be spent on promoting effective research on how to prevent similar tragedies from occurring in the future.

Beloved Mother, help us realize that we are all members of one great family and to recognize the bond that unites us, so that, in a spirit of fraternity and solidarity, we can help to alleviate countless situations of poverty and need. Make us strong in faith, persevering in service, constant in prayer.

Mary, Consolation of the afflicted, embrace all your children in distress and pray that God will stretch out his all-powerful hand and free us from this terrible pandemic, so that life can serenely resume its normal course.

To you, who shine on our journey as a sign of salvation and hope, do we entrust ourselves, O Clement, O Loving, O Sweet Virgin Mary. Amen.

Some other links that you might find helpful:

Bishop's Conference website for Thursday evening Mass

<https://www.cbcew.org.uk/>

Here is a link to a website that lists lots of streamed services:

<https://www.churchservices.tv/>

This link is to services in Walsingham:

<https://www.walsingham.org.uk/live-stream/>

You can watch the Pope's daily Mass by Googling "YouTube Pope Francis Mass"

CAFOD are offering this online meeting this week:

Friday, 8 May 6:30-8:00 pm Join us for the **CAFOD Quiz on VE Day**. In this time of isolation, we want to bring people together for a time of fun, while we also help those around the world who will suffer the effects of Coronavirus without the healthcare and access to water which we are able to rely upon. We are making a suggested minimum donation of £5 per adult, which you can donate through our website. <https://register.gotowebinar.com/register/9080462319961879564>