

ST ETHELBERT'S CHURCH, LEOMINSTER  
& ST JOSEPH'S, BROMYARD

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31st May 2020: Pentecost

A happy feast day to you all. Today we keep the great Feast of Pentecost, the feast that brings the Easter season to a close.

Today, we recall how the disciples, afraid of what might happen to them, were huddled together in an upper room with locked doors, waiting for something to happen. The Lord had promised them that the Spirit would come and so they waited. Now the room shook and the sound of the wind could be heard, and the vision of tongues of fire came upon each one of them. Each individual and the whole group together were gifted with the coming of the Spirit, their faith was renewed and they were given the courage to fulfil the Lord's command to preach the Gospel to all nations. As we celebrate this great feast, let us pray that the Holy Spirit will guide us through these difficult times and bring about a renewal and strengthening of our faith.

I am quite pleased with myself as during the past week I managed to master modern technology and joined a web conference looking at various issues that have affected the church over the past couple of months. One of the points I took from the conference was the importance of digital media in the life of the today's church not only to keep parishioners informed but also to reach people who do not normally attend church on a weekly basis (Perhaps the Holy Spirit is trying to tell us something!). Once the present restrictions placed on us begin to ease and we can begin to meet together, I intend to seek some guidance on how we can improve our parish websites and make use of opportunities available online.

### Masses

Although we cannot gather to celebrate the Mass, I will continue to pray for you all as I celebrate a private Mass each day at 12 noon. The mass intentions for this week are:

Sunday	7 <sup>th</sup> Sunday of Easter	People of our parishes
Monday	Mary, Mother of the Church	Eddie Doyle
Tuesday		Benefactors
Wednesday	St Charles Lwanga	Private Intention
Thursday	Our Lord Jesus Christ Eternal High Priest	Raymond Magee
Friday	St Boniface	John & Teresa Gough
Saturday		Holy Souls

### When will our Churches be open?

This is a question I have been asked many times and unfortunately I do not have an answer. My own hope had been that our churches would have been open for Pentecost, but that has not been realised. It looks as though we still have a long way to go before we can gather to celebrate Mass and, when our churches do eventually open there will be certain measures that will have to be put in place.

Archbishop George has issued a note on this subject which is available on the Archdiocesan website <https://rcadc.org/when-will-our-churches-be-open/> I have copied the note below for those who may not be able to access the webpage.

### **Pentecost National Rosary Rally**

A reminder that this Sunday, The Pentecost National Rosary Rally takes place across Scotland, England and Wales from 9am – 9pm. Each diocese has been allocated an hour slot when people are asked to pray the Rosary with the intention that the Holy Spirit may live in the hearts of all nations and be delivered from the global pandemic. We in the Archdiocese of Cardiff are asked to pray the rosary between 12 noon and 1pm.

### **Homily by Bishop Draine.**

I came across the following interesting and encouraging homily by Bishop Draine of Middlesbrough in which he hails care workers as the new icons of esteem.

<https://www.cbcew.org.uk/bishop-terry-hails-key-workers-as-the-new-icons-of-esteem/>

### **Pope Francis: Catechesis on Prayer**

Each Wednesday, Pope Francis holds a general audience during which he gives a catechesis or reflection. A few weeks ago he began a series of catechesis on prayer which some may find helpful as prayer is something that many of us struggle with at times. The latest reflection titled ‘the prayer of the just’ is now available on the Vatican website.

[http://www.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/audiences/2020/documents/papa-francesco\\_20200527\\_udienza-generale.html](http://www.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/audiences/2020/documents/papa-francesco_20200527_udienza-generale.html)

### **Finance**

Thank you to those parishioners who have sent a cheque in lieu of their weekly collection or put a donation through the presbytery letterbox. Your thoughtfulness is very much appreciated.

The suspension of services means that our parishes like so many other organisations, has seen a drop in income. I know that some parishioners are putting a little cash aside each week and intend to bring the accumulated contributions to the church when services resume. Again I am grateful for your continued support of the parish.

If anyone would like to make regular payments to the parish by Standing Order, please let me know and I will arrange for you to receive the necessary bank details.

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## **“When will our churches be open?”**

*by Archbishop George Stack*

With the gradual loosening of lockdown regulations and the opening of more and more amenities, the question is inevitably asked “When will our churches be open?”. As with the many other challenges facing us in this pandemic, this is not an easy question to answer. The opening of parks and beaches, of garden centres and supermarkets, car showrooms and other amenities is based on the concept of these being “open spaces” of one kind or another. Churches do not seem to be seen in the same category. I imagine this is because they are places where large groups of people come together, sit in close proximity to each other, often for one hour or more. Control of access, movement and social

distancing will be part of the conditions laid down in the gradual return to our churches whether for private prayer or public worship.

The Archbishops of England and Wales have been engaged with the relevant authorities on the necessity of opening our churches in the first instance for private prayer. Public worship will begin later. The essence of our coming together for Mass is that it is a communal gathering. We are blessed to have large congregations in many of our churches who sit very closely together. Under social distancing regulations which will undoubtedly be imposed, this will not be allowed to happen. People will need to sit apart with the consequent significant reduction in numbers being able to attend the same Mass together. Although the rate of infection has been reduced by between 60-70%, as a result of the lockdown restrictions, this does not mean it is completely eradicated. If the R number were to rise again there would likely be a second and equally dangerous wave of infection. Medical professionals are warning of this danger.

The government in Wales has devolved responsibility in matters of health and in the control of the pandemic in this country. It has not yet announced any relaxation of the many restrictions with which we have become so familiar in recent months. The Catholic Church in Wales, like other Christian bodies and members of the 'Faiths Forum', is working on a common approach to government on these matters. The next meeting of the 'Faiths Forum' is on 3rd June. If and when permission is given for our churches to open, they will be subject to strict health and safety conditions as are all public buildings. Amongst these will be the necessity to provide in churches:

1. Social distancing measures – seating arrangements, one-way systems, exits and entrances, clear signage, restricted times etc.
2. Attendance management – queuing, ticketing, online registration, stewarding etc.
3. Staggering of attendance by age or vulnerability
4. Infection control issues such as Holy Water stoops, leaflets, hymn books, missals, newsletters, candles, all of which can harbour the virus.
5. The supply of PPE materials – sanitiser, deep cleaning materials, surface cleaning materials etc.
6. Liturgical issues – distribution of Holy Communion, frequency of Mass, devotions, organisation of Memorial Masses, care of the bereaved.
7. Two or three volunteers (under the age of seventy) to implement these policies in order to keep churches open at specific times. The safeguarding of clergy over the age of 70 and those with underlying health issues will obviously be a priority.

In the first instance, large, strategically placed churches would be opened. Whether large or small, churches would need to ensure compliance with the above requisites.

The diocese is engaged with ChurchMarketPlace which is a central purchasing agency in order to acquire the necessary equipment outlined above at competitive prices. There are other agencies also able to provide PPE materials also. These include:

BCB International Ltd. a Cardiff based firm specialising in PPE materials.

Harlequin Printing Group for appropriate signage etc.