



St Joseph's Catholic Church

Arkell Avenue, Carterton, OXON OX18 3BS

Dear Friends and parishioners of St Joseph's Parish,

You will have read with a sigh of relief that the UK Government has recently published details for the potential reopening of places of worship from Monday 15 June for private prayer, after closure owing to the corona pandemic almost three months ago. St Joseph's will open for perhaps two hours daily, morning and evening, for prayer, but I have to tell you that the conditions for doing so are rigorous. Obviously, the Archdiocese of Birmingham in common with all other religious authorities does not wish to jeopardise the trust of the Government and people of the UK nor of Catholic people in particular, and therefore is intent on every church completing a formidable risk assessment before opening for private prayer, with the two meter rules applying at this time. Doing everything we can to keep people safe is a supreme priority. In certain cases, where resources are limited and especially where the church in question is small, where social distancing is a challenge, (and this applies in the case of our own beautiful small church), this **may** be adjudged to be impossible. We are in the process of compiling a risk assessment, and I would request your understanding and cooperation should we not immediately reopen.

Of course, reopening for private prayer, would hopefully be a prelude to opening for the celebration of Mass and the Sacraments, but we still do not know when that may be possible. Social distancing rules imply in our own case that it is unlikely for more than about 15 people to be present at Mass in the church. Weekday Mass attendance sometimes exceeds 15 and the attendance at Sunday morning Mass often exceeds 60. How will we cope? We do not know. It will be hard to bear and will necessitate a great degree of understanding and cooperation from you all. So, I am presenting the reality to you now in the hope that with your kind understanding we can create the conditions for the parish to survive and flourish. It will not be easy and will involve sacrifice, but I believe it will be possible.

Most Catholics have been deprived of the Sacraments, especially Holy Communion, since the end of March. I have been very fortunate in being able to offer Mass almost daily, and have been daily mindful of the people of the parish and of your deprivation in not receiving the nourishment of Holy Communion. I would ask those of you who are especially in need, to contact me by email or telephone and I will make an appointment to meet you in church individually, while keeping to the rules of social distancing. We will observe a brief penitential rite, proclaim the Gospel and I will administer Holy Communion.

With my prayers and best wishes, Andrew Foster

Update of Parish Finance: Parish Debt In the month to 3 April 2020 the overdraft decreased by £2616.89 to **£167,980.05** (from £170,596.94). In the month to 5 June the overdraft was further reduced to £167,341.88. Thank you for your generosity.