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June 2020

Dear Friends

*We love the place, O God, wherein thine honour dwells*

It is with great thanksgiving that we are able to open our church building for private prayer and devotions from June 15. Though our building has been closed since March the church in the parish has been alive and active throughout this period. In prayer, worship and community action the work of the gospel has continued throughout the lockdown period.

This same week contains within it two great solemnities of the church's year; Corpus et Sanguis Christi (the Body and Blood of Christ) which is observed on Sunday and the Sacred Heart on Friday. The Sacred Heart is a feast of the love of God; observed on a Friday as the greatest sign of that love is the self-offering of Jesus on the cross on Good Friday. From that act of self-giving love all the sacramental life of the Church flows. On the feast of Corpus Christi we give thanks that we are fed by that love in the sacrament of the altar. The mystery of God's self-giving love is set forth every time the mass is celebrated and in our Communion we are fed with the grace that overflows from the pierced heart of Jesus.

I am immensely grateful to those who have volunteered to open the church for times of prayer. If you would like to add your name to those giving a couple of hours to enable the church to be open then please do get in touch.

I would invite as many of you as are able to take some time in the coming weeks to come and offer prayer in church. Prayer resources are available in church for many different devotions which can be used there or at home.

Several members of our church family are of course shielding and cannot as yet leave their homes, please keep them in your prayers and contact them by 'phone or by a card or letter.

Unfortunately public worship is not allowed yet but there are some hopeful signs that it won't be too long before we will be able to gather in some way to celebrate together; for this reason the church will not be open during times that the mass is live streamed. The times that the church will be open will be advertised on the noticeboards and the facebook and web pages.

I am aware that there are members of the wider church family who aren't on the prayer list yet; if you would like them added then please do contact me with names. Prayers for those in any kind of need are offered at the eucharist so again please contact me if there is anyone who needs our prayers at this time.

During this period of lockdown and enforced distancing it is only through grace and prayer that I personally have been sustained. We are graced that the good God gives us such wonderful gifts to strengthen each one of us on our journey even in the most difficult times. It has been striking that even in an empty church time and again that phrase from the letter to the Hebrews has been in my mind, 'surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses' (Heb 12:1); the sense that the saints are with us and praying for us at this time brings great strength and consolation. Their prayers, especially those of Our Lady, have given focus and refreshment to my own faith. The challenge will be maintaining that sense of our communion with them when life returns to some sort of normality. Though it has at times been difficult celebrating mass alone being able to offer this sacrifice for you all has been a great joy and I long for that time when we will meet together to offer it as a community once again.

Please pray for me as I do for you

your parish priest

