

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: 10th May 2020

5th Sunday of Easter

Although we hear so much about the easing of the lockdown regulations, it looks as though we have to wait a while longer before we can open our churches once again. The Archbishops of England and Wales have recently released a message to the Catholic faithful entitled "A People who Hope in Christ". The bishops recognise the pain of Catholics who, at present, cannot pray in church or receive the sacraments. and are deeply moved by the Eucharistic yearning expressed by so many members of the faithful. They also indicate that they are already planning what the phased reopening of our churches will look like.

The Bishops conclude their letter by recalling how, on that first Easter, the disciples were in 'lockdown' in the Upper Room when Christ himself appeared to them and said, 'Peace be with you'. The bishops hope that the peace of the risen Lord may reign in our hearts and homes as we look forward to the day we can enter church again.

The full text of the letter can be found below.

World Day of Prayer

Pope Francis has accepted the proposal from the Higher Committee of Human Fraternity for May 14, 2020, to be a Day of Prayer and Fasting and Works of Charity, to implore God to help humanity overcome the coronavirus pandemic.

Pope Francis has asked us all to observe a special day of prayer and fasting for the world on 14th May. A day of prayer for help in the Coronavirus pandemic and special devotion to Our Lady in month of May.

"We began May a short while ago, Marian month par excellence, during which the faithful love to visit Shrines dedicated to Our Lady," Pope Francis said. "This year, because of the health situation, we go spiritually to these places of faith and devotion, to place in the Holy Virgin's heart our worries, expectations, and plans for the future.

"And, as prayer is a universal value, I have accepted the proposal of the Higher Committee of Human Fraternity so that next May 14 believers of all religions unite spiritually in a Day of Prayer and Fasting and Works of Charity, to implore God to help humanity overcome the coronavirus pandemic.

"Remember: May 14, all believers together, believers of different traditions, to pray, fast, and do works of charity."

Christian Aid Week

I have received the following message from Christian Aid Organisers:

'We are unable to collect house to house in Leominster this year As the coronavirus spreads across the world, love rises up in response. Join us this Christian Aid Week in reaching out to protect our neighbours around the world. Please think about giving a donation and sharing an e-Envelope with your friends.'

Further information can be found on their website:

<https://envelope.christianaid.org.uk/envelope/eyJlbnZlbg9wZSI6Mzk2NywgImNoYW5uZWwiOiJjb3B5ln0=>

A People who Hope in Christ

A Message from the Metropolitan Archbishops of the Catholic Church in England and Wales

Dear brothers and sisters in Christ,

The radiance of the risen Lord shines upon us. At a time when so many shadows are cast into our lives, and upon our world, the light of the resurrection shines forever to renew and restore our hope. In the words of our Holy Father, Pope Francis: 'In the midst of isolation when we are suffering from a lack of tenderness and chances to meet up, and we experience the loss of so many things, let us once again listen to the proclamation that saves us: he is risen and is living by our side.' (27 March 2020)

The impact of Covid-19, both nationally and internationally, has been immense. So much of what we take for granted has changed. Our health and physical interaction, our capacity to travel and gather, have all been affected. There is uncertainty in our future, especially with work and the country's economy. As we know, very sadly, large numbers of people have died because of the coronavirus, and others have been or remain seriously ill. Keyworkers, not least in the National Health Service and care sectors, are serving selflessly to sustain the life of our nation. Our hearts and prayers go out to everyone who is suffering because of Covid-19, and to all those battling to overcome its effects. May those who have died rest in peace and those who are bereaved find comfort.

When the Prime Minister announced the lockdown, this included places of worship and therefore Catholic churches. These measures were put in place to stem the general transmission of the virus. It is right that the Catholic community fulfils its role in contributing to the preservation of life and the common good of society. This must continue until the restrictions applied by the Government are lifted.

None of us would want to be in the situation in which we find ourselves. While the live-streaming of the Mass and other devotions is playing an important part in maintaining the life of faith, there is no substitute for Catholics being able to physically attend and participate in the celebration of the Mass and the other sacraments. Our faith is expressed powerfully and beautifully though 'seeing, touching, and tasting.' We know that every bishop and every priest recognises the pain of Catholics who, at present, cannot pray in church or receive the sacraments. This weighs heavily on our hearts. We are deeply moved by the Eucharistic yearning expressed by so many members of the faithful. We thank you sincerely for your love for the Lord Jesus, present in the sacraments and supremely so in the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass. The bishops and priests of every diocese are remembering you and your loved ones at Mass each day in our churches as we pray 'in hope of health and wellbeing.' We thank our priests for this faithfulness to their calling.

As the Government's restrictions are relaxed step by step, we look forward to opening our churches and resuming our liturgical, spiritual, catechetical and pastoral life step by step. This will also be of service to those beyond the Catholic Church who depend on our charitable activity and outreach through which much goodness is shared by so many volunteers from our communities.

None of us knows, as yet, how or when the lockdown will end. There is likely to be a phased return to travelling and gathering. As a church, we are now planning for this time and our discussions with the statutory public health agencies and Government representatives are ongoing. Together with Catholics across England and Wales we desire the opening of our churches and access to the sacraments. Until then, we are continuing to pray and prepare.

We want to acknowledge with gratitude the service of our fellow bishops and priests, our deacons and religious, our families and lay faithful, together with all our parish and school communities, for the wonderful ways the life of the faith is being nourished at this time, especially in the home. We also pay tribute to the Catholic organisations and networks that are working to support the vulnerable and needy.

On that first Easter day, the disciples were in lockdown and the doors were closed. In their isolation the Lord Jesus came among them and said 'Peace be with you.' May the peace of the risen Lord reign in our hearts and homes as we look forward to the day we can enter church again and gather around the altar to offer together the Sacrifice of Praise.

We unite in asking the intercession of Our Blessed Lady and assure you of our prayers and blessing

Yours devotedly in Christ,

✠ Cardinal Vincent Nichols, Archbishop of Westminster ✠ Malcolm McMahon OP, Archbishop of Liverpool ✠ Bernard Longley, Archbishop of Birmingham ✠ George Stack, Archbishop of Cardiff ✠ John Wilson, Archbishop of Southwark

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"