

Fifth Sunday Of Lent (Year A)

Sunday 29th March 2020

STATEMENT FROM THE DIOCESE - PARISH SUPPORT FOR THE VULNERABLE

For understandable and commendable reasons many parishes have explored the possibility of establishing support mechanisms for those in the community who are vulnerable in the current situation, both within and beyond the parish congregation. It is essential for all concerned that such schemes operate with appropriate health and safety, safeguarding and financial integrity frameworks. This is to protect both the volunteers and those receiving the service. It is particularly important that such schemes do not cut across the government restrictions on travel.

Following discussions with Bishop Declan, it has been agreed that our diocesan clear guidance to parishes is that any welfare or assistance scheme should not be established by the parishes or in conjunction with the parishes but, rather, people who wish to volunteer should be encouraged to do so through the publicly established schemes in each local authority area such as <https://www.gloucestershire.gov.uk/gloucestershires-community-help-hub/>

Volunteers should not be working in any role on behalf of the church, or in a church related activity, during this period. Remote support to vulnerable parishioners and other members of the community can be provided by the means of the telephone and social media platforms.

VIEWING THE MASS ONLINE

During the time where Mass and other Services are suspended, Fr. Barnabas will celebrate a 'Private' Mass at St. Margaret Mary's Church each weekend, a Weekday Mass and provide Pastoral messages. These will be videoed and uploaded to our Vimeo channel. You can access the channel by following the links on the parish website www.forestrc.co.uk.

OFFERTORY DONATIONS

At this difficult time parish income and cash flow is obviously going to suffer. Many parishioners are asking how they can continue to support the parish financially in the absence of the weekly offering. There are several ways in which offerings may be made;

1. Set-up a Standing Order to the parish (both Gift Aid and non-Gift Aid forms are available from Graeme.Bell@Cliftondiocese.com) or by post/e-mail from the Parish Office.
2. For those who use internet banking, non-Gift Aid Standing Orders can be setup online without the need for a paper form. In order to do this you will need the parish's bank account details which you can get by calling Kristyann on 01594 562593 during the Parish Office opening hours, or by emailing forestrcchurches@cliftondiocese.com
3. If preferred, you can send a cheque to the parish or make an electronic payment directly to the parish bank account. Contact Kristyann on 01594 562593 for the bank details.

A MESSAGE FROM FATHER BARNABAS

Hope? I'm afraid things don't look good! How do we draw strength from God at this time? Many people are fearful while others may be more pragmatic. You have permission to be fearful. But maybe the pragmatic ones can reach out a hand of support. Someone commented to me that once this is over, things will never be the same again. From a selfish point of view, I hope it may help to bring change in the church.

Some of the main building blocks are in place. The Vatican Council gave us the Theology. Since the Council our awareness of both the Word and the Holy Spirit have grown. Two thousand years of tried and tested Spirituality stays the same. Now these dreadful circumstances with the virus might take the four ingredients, Theology, Scripture, the Holy Spirit and Spirituality and give them a good shake up.

Then when things settle down again, however difficult this may be, please God, He will bring good out of this situation. The Church's faith will be stronger for being tested, hopefully we will appreciate the true value of community and the care of one another and our planet will move up the agenda. Perhaps it's not fair to dream when people's lives and livelihoods are at stake? Perhaps I should be concentrating on the immediate practical problem? I think that will be 3 Hail Marys for me....

Bless you all and if anyone wants a chat please phone but I won't necessarily give you more of this stuff!

LOCAL SUPPORT IN THE FOREST OF DEAN

West Dean Parish Council, in conjunction with COVID-19 Mutual Aid UK, is providing support for the vulnerable and those who are self-isolating or unable to leave their homes. They can help by arranging deliveries, picking up shopping & medication, providing a friendly phone call, posting mail, obtaining urgent supplies and topping up electric or gas key/cards.

Each area in the West Dean Parish Council area has a local coordinator. Details of the coordinators can be found on their website www.westdeanpc.org.uk or by calling 01594 510187/01594 564484. If you would like to support the local community and join in as a volunteer, please contact the local coordinator, details of which can be found on their website.

Responsorial Psalm: With the Lord there is mercy and fullness of redemption.

Gospel Acclamation: Glory and praise to you, O Christ!

Communion Antiphon: Everyone who lives and believes in me will not die forever, says the Lord.