

**ST OSWALD & ST EDMUND ARROWSMITH
CATHOLIC CHURCH**

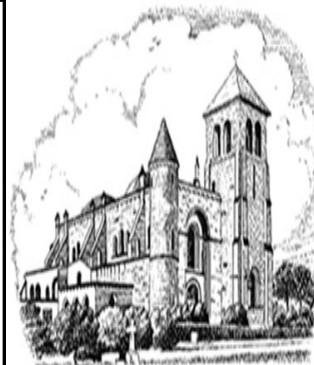
Liverpool Road, Ashton-In-Makerfield, Wigan, WN4 9NP
Liverpool R.C. Archdiocesan Trustees Reg. Charity No. 232709

Parish Priest: Rev. John Gorman Tel: 01942 727271

Deacons: Revv. Paul Blinston, Jim Byrne, John O'Brien (rtd)

Parish Office: 01942 727249 Open: Tuesday, Thursday & Friday 9am—2pm

Parish Website: www.stoswaldandstarrowsmith.org.uk



Week commencing: 7th June 2020

SOLEMNITY of the MOST HOLY TRINITY (A)

Parish Mass Book: Page 81 Order of Mass: Page 7

Preface of the Most Holy Trinity: Page 64 Eucharistic Prayer 3: Page 27

TRINITY SUNDAY (A)

Saturday	6.00pm	Jean Unsworth
Sunday	9.30am	John Vinson
	11.00am	Parishioners
	6.30pm	Paul Browne

Weekday Masses

Monday	9.00am	Private Intention
Tuesday	9.30am	Fr Gerard Roscoe
Wednesday	9.30am	Tony Duxbury
Thursday	St. Barnabas	
	9.30am	Lauri Stevens
Friday	9.00am	Marie Topping
Saturday	St. Anthony of Padua, Priest & Doctor	
	10.00am	Private Intention

CORPUS CHRISTI (A)

Saturday	6.00pm	Michael O'Brien
Sunday	9.30am	Fr Joe Donlan
	11.00am	Alfred & Ann Conroy
	6.30pm	Parishioners

Amnesty

Some time ago, we showed Bishop Robert Barron's series *Catholicism* in Our Lady's Parish Centre. I seem to remember lending out copies of some of the discs, but don't remember to whom (I've reached that age!)

If you have one, could I ask you to post it anonymously through the Presbytery door, and no-one will be any the wiser. Many thanks.

Services during the week

Confessions: There are no Confessions until further notice.

Rosary: There is no public recitation of the Rosary until further notice.

Holy Hour: There are no public Holy Hours until further notice.

Novena: There is no Novena until further notice.

Ashton Food Bank

Many thanks to all those who responded to the appeal on behalf of Ashton Food Bank which has been tremendous.

Items may be dropped off between 9.30-11.00am on Fridays at St. Thomas' Church Hall.

Alpha Online

Are you, or do you know someone looking for an opportunity to explore faith, belief and the big questions of life? Starting in two weeks, Youth 2000 will be hosting their 2nd Online Alpha Course for anyone aged 16 to 35. All of the content will be delivered via Zoom and details will be sent out to those who register.

The course begins on Thursday 18th June until Thursday 6th August from 7.30-8.30pm. Meet new people, watch thought-provoking videos and discuss in small groups each week.

Latest Developments

The Vigil Mass on Saturday evening for the Solemnity of the Most Holy Trinity will be recorded and uploaded onto the Youtube channel **rcchurchesashton** for you to view it on Sunday morning.

In addition, there will also be a recording to mark what would have been 40 hours of Devotion before the Blessed Sacrament which was due to take place in Our Lady's from Thursday of this week, in preparation for the Solemnity of the Most Holy Body & Blood of Christ (Corpus Christi) next weekend. This will, hopefully, be available by Friday morning.

It had been my fervent hope that we would, by now, have been allowed to open the church doors in time for this. However, it would seem that the authorities (whoever 'they' are) are determined to keep places of worship among a list of 'leisure activities' which will be the last to open, despite the pictures we have seen from beaches, parks and squares across the country in recent days. In effect, it is illegal for you even to visit a Church, let alone attend Mass—the kind of prohibition not seen in this country since the time of the reformation—and shows the level of religious illiteracy in our country today and why we need to pray for our leaders. In the meantime, we take consolation in the Lord's words: 'The last shall be first...' and 'your perseverance will win you your lives.'

As a result, the information received from the Archdiocese last week still stands:

*'As far as church reopening is concerned, there is a staged response . We are at **Stage 1**: the closure of our places of worship. **Stage 2**: will be the opening for private prayer. **Stage 3**: will move us towards liturgical celebrations in the presence of small numbers. There may well be a number of other stages.*

*This is in preparation for **stage 2**: a reopening for private prayer.*

The Archbishop has set in place a clear procedure for this to happen. To reopen a church, the Dean will collate all requests for each Pastoral Area. These will be presented to the Archbishop, who will issue a document of permission indicating which churches can open and at what times. No other churches may be opened for any reason other than those so decreed.

In considering which churches should be reopened as part of stage 2 two main points need to be considered:

- 1. A team of volunteers will need to be trained so that we can safely manage the numbers who come and go and the necessary sanitisation that will be needed before and after each visit.*
- 2. Is that church usually open? - if not this may not be the right time to begin opening outside liturgical celebrations.*

Our main concern will always be the safety of our priests and people. For some people there is a real desire to come and pray in church, there will be others who will continue to pray at home and observe the restrictions that will still apply to them.'

Until further information is available as to what the 'necessary sanitisation' involves, and what is meant by 'before and after each visit' is it impossible to say whether we will be able to gather a team of volunteers together. Clearly, this cannot be left to the ladies who clean the Church each week, many of whom are still self-isolating.

What is also clear is that, if the current norms for social distancing (i.e. 2 metres apart) are still in force whenever public Masses are allowed to take place, this will severely restrict the number of people who will be able to attend (less than 20% of the normal capacity) depending on which Church is being used. While this may be not be a problem for weekday Masses, it will be for Sunday Masses, and so we will have to consider what measures will be necessary in those circumstances.

No decisions have been made and we await further instructions.

Bethlehem

Further to my correspondence last week from Fr. Rami in Bethlehem, the following article appeared on the newsite *Cruxnow* in recent days:

Bethlehem residents returned to the Church of the Nativity as the holy site opened to visitors May 26th after being closed since March because of the COVID-19 pandemic. But amid the joy was a feeling of uncertainty about their economic future, as pilgrims and tourists are not yet able to return.

In the crypt, where Christians venerate the traditional site of Jesus' birth, local Syriac Catholic tour guide Rizek Nazi was filming a video on his cellphone with his two sons, George, 10, and Aram, 9, to give pilgrims a virtual tour of the place as it opened, and to entice them to plan a visit once international travel reopens. The sole breadwinner for his family, Nazi has not worked since March 7. "I want people to keep the idea of coming on pilgrimage to Bethlehem in the back of their minds for when they can travel," he said. In his videos, he emphasized the safety and health precautions being taken in Bethlehem. "As Palestinians, we know to always try to keep some savings for the dark days, but now all that is gone," he added.

Samir Hazboun, chairman of the Bethlehem Chamber of Commerce, noted that unemployment was 95% in the tourism sector of what he called the "Christian triangle" of Bethlehem, Beit Jala and Beit Sahour. "The Christian triangle depends on tourism and handicrafts related to tourism. Whenever we look at tourism (now) around the world, we can see how difficult it is," he said. Though the spring and summer months are generally low season for the area, residents are still unsure when and how many visitors will return in the ensuing season, he added. "All the hotels and restaurants are closed, bus drivers are out of work, people working in the handicraft industry producing religious articles have been heavily affected. We are trying to develop a plan," he said. At the moment, even mail orders for the various cooperatives and fair trade workshops are not an option, because international shipping is not yet possible, he said. "The social impact of the economic crisis on the Christian Palestinian community (will be serious.) The Christians will be heavily affected, as their income is mainly related to the tourism and service sector," said Hazboun. Unemployment in all the Palestinian areas has doubled from the 22 percent pre-pandemic level, he said.

Saliba Bandak, who is Greek Orthodox, sat idly chatting with two friends, currently unemployed as tour guides. His souvenir shop normally supports his family of seven, which includes his parents and siblings. "Without tourists, we have nothing," Bandak said. "Since the beginning of March, we have not had any income. But we are Palestinian and we keep God as our hope."

Father Rami Asakrieh of St. Catherine's Parish said almost 450 families from his parish depend solely on the tourism sector for their income, and the parish council has been trying to organize special help for them. He said Israel, which is also slowly opening up its economy, has not yet given entry permission to all the Palestinians who worked in the construction industry to return to work in Israel. "People who had money have gone through their savings and now need to pay their outstanding checks and loans," he said. While the Israeli government has been able to provide grants to its residents, the Palestinian government has not been able to do so, he added.

Through the Pontifical Mission, the St. Catherine's Parish Council has been able to provide 150 families with vouchers for groceries, but now many more families than before need help to meet their basic needs, Asakrieh said. The usual partner organizations that help them are also feeling the crunch because their own donors are unable to contribute more, he said, so they are hoping individuals who visit the Bethlehem parish website will consider donating.

In Jerusalem, on May 25th, sections of the Church of the Holy Sepulchre were opened to visitors who are required to wear masks and use hand sanitizer before they enter. Though the Israeli government allowed businesses and stores to reopen, souvenir shop owners in the Old City who depend on tourism have been left with no form of income. The Knights of the Holy Sepulchre launched a support fund for needy Christian families and Latin Patriarchate schools in Palestine and Jordan who have been affected by the coronavirus pandemic.

In Bethlehem, Father Emad Kamal of St. Catherine Parish welcomed parishioners filling the pews on May 26th to recite the rosary and then celebrate the first communal Mass since March.

"I feel so happy today. When the church was closed we prayed on the phone, but it is a different feeling to pray together," said Eliana Alaly, who came to church with her three children, carrying a packet of disposable masks and wearing latex gloves. She was one of the few people who wore a mask. "We are still a bit afraid."

Before going to Mass at St. Catherine's, Naheeda Thaljieh lit a candle in the adjacent Church of the Nativity. "When I entered the church, I just cried and cried and cried," she said. Her family depends on the income from a small grocery store but there have been few customers, she said. "After 80-plus days, I entered the church and I lit candles for all the people and that all the people who are sick in the world will get well."