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PARTNERSHIP MID-WEEK UPDATE

Date: 7th July 2020

PUBLIC CELEBRATION OF SUNDAY MASS TO TAKE PLACE AT SAINT MARY'S

On 11th/12th July, three Sunday Masses will be celebrated, with a congregation, in our largest church, Saint Mary's at Hexham. Holy Mass will be celebrated at 17:30 Saturday Evening, 09:30 and 10:30 on Sunday. One Mass will be live-streamed on the Internet.

Following advice, we will observe a **2 METRE SOCIAL DISTANCING POLICY**, and observe a strict cleaning and hand sanitising regime. The seated capacity of Saint Mary's is 33 individuals (seated separately) and two families (maximum five people - from one household - seated together in one bench).

If you are in any doubt, or are worried, please continue to celebrate Mass from home using our livestream.

BOOKING IS ESSENTIAL: TELEPHONE or ONLINE

You **MUST** book your place in advance; **if you haven't booked you will be turned away**. An online and telephone booking system for Mass attendance will be available each Tuesday at 11.00 am where you can reserve a place at one Mass. This system is in place to ensure,

- Fairness, where places are allocated on a first-come-first-served basis.
- People do not have any wasted journeys, given our rural situation.
- We can temporarily retain contact details of who is present in case of a localised outbreak.

BOOKING PORTAL is on the Saint Mary's website or telephone 603119

on Tuesdays from 11.00am - ONLINE OR BY TELEPHONE ONLY

WHAT TO DO ON THE DAY

Please do not come to church if you have a high temperature and/or feel unwell.

Coming to Mass - the church doors will open 10 minutes before each Mass is due to begin, a socially distanced queuing system will be marked on the pavement approaching the church. (Entrance via Main Doors) Please be prepared for any inclement weather; queuing takes place outside. Please note that, following advice, there will be no access to the toilets.

You will be greeted by a steward who will ask you to sanitise your hands and will check your name off the list. (Remember - if your name is not on list, you will be turned away).

An usher will show you to your seat and we ask you to remain there until the conclusion of Mass when you will be directed by the usher to Holy Communion or to the exit route, which is via the chapel and Parish Centre corridor.

Holy Communion will be distributed at the end of Mass in the PALM of the HAND ONLY.

Please sanitise your hands as you leave the church.

A MESSAGE FROM OUR DEACONS

Each week, one of our Permanent Deacons will provide a topical reflection for us to consider. This week, Deacon David Collins writes:



This week marks the start of the next phase of our exit from “lockdown”. You can now go to the pub for a pint - I haven’t tried it yet; go to a restaurant and if you’re really lucky get an appointment with a hairdresser. And of course our churches can now re-open for communal worship.

But despite these re-openings, I’m not expecting it to be business as usual any time soon. I’ve heard recently that you have to make a reservation in some pubs if you want to call in for a beer and that some hairdressers have as many as 2,000 people on their waiting lists, with some folks having to hang on until mid August to get an appointment with their favourite stylist.

And as I write this piece its still unclear when we might be able to attend the celebration of the mass in many of our churches. And this absence of opportunity to gather, worship and receive the blessed sacrament must have been and continue to be painful for lots of people. But of course that doesn’t mean that in the “lockdown” world God has been unavailable. After all God is always there for us wherever we are and he never turns his back on us. It’s just that over the last few weeks we might have had to be a bit more imaginative in finding ways to connect.

But thinking about what we have experienced and contemplating the return of more normal times perhaps the challenge we face, as worshiping communities might be to look forward to what we can do rather than looking back on what we couldn’t. I heard something recently that was speculating that as life gets back to normal we might encounter a sort of wave of “post-lockdown” nostalgia, as we fondly recall empty roads, empty skies and a yearning for a common cause to unite society.

But perhaps our focus as Christians should be more forward looking, whilst at the same time learning from our collective experience. In our Gospels from Matthew this week we will hear numerous stories of Jesus’ acts of mercy. Curing the woman with the haemorrhage, raising the daughter of the official, casting out devils but then He crucially acknowledges that He needs others to take responsibility for carrying on His mission.

And so on Thursday we will hear Matthew’s account of Jesus giving the twelve authority to cast out unclean spirits and cure sickness and disease before He sends them out into the world to proclaim that the Kingdom of God is close at hand. Wow - what a daunting challenge that must have been. Up to now they’ve been followers not leaders. Up to now it’s been Jesus doing the teaching, Jesus performing the miracles.

But Jesus recognises their concerns and tells them not to be afraid (Saturday’s Gospel) and reassures them that if anyone declares himself for Him in the presence of men then He will declare His presence for them in the presence of His Father in heaven.

And almost two thousand years later Jesus expects us, as members of His Apostolic church, to rise to His challenge and play our part in pointing others to the Kingdom and the love of God. For we too, like those first century Apostles, are called to holiness and to follow Jesus.

Continued on page 3

Continued from page 2

And whilst I'm as fond as the next person of a little wander down nostalgia lane, playing our part in fulfilling Christ's mission on earth today means ministering to our own time and addressing its own particular needs.

And as our chance to engage in more "normal" modes of worship returns, I imagine that we might all be called in some way shape or form to play out our own unique role in helping other encounter God's love.

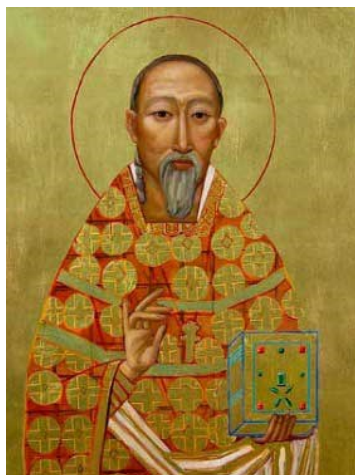
So perhaps we might pray that our hearts and minds are open to that call to mission as we begin to understand the impact of the new normal. And that in response to Jesus telling his disciples in today's (Tuesday's) Gospel to "ask the Lord of the harvest to send labourers" we each might echo the words of the prophet Isaiah from Saturday's reading - "Here I am, send me"

Stay safe, stay faithful

Amen

Deacon David

SAINTS' DAYS THIS WEEK



Thursday 9th July: Saint Augustine Zhao Rong

Chinese Christians had enjoyed a period of toleration at the end of the 18th century, but the new century was to bring new persecutions. Various imperial decrees granted amnesty to all who denied their faith, but imposed the most severe penalties on practising Christians. Many people—priests, catechists, lay men and women were put to death. Augustine, a Chinese diocesan priest, was arrested and tortured in prison. He died from his ordeal before he could be executed. He was canonised in October 2000 by Pope Saint John Paul II, together with 119 martyrs of China who suffered in various persecutions spanning several centuries, from 1648 to 1930.

Saturday 11th July: Saint Benedict, patron of Europe

(480 - 547) Benedict was born in Nursia, in Umbria, and studied in Rome; but he was unable to stomach the dissolute life of the city, and he became a solitary hermit at Subiaco. His reputation spread, and some monks asked him to be their abbot; but they did not like the discipline he imposed and tried to poison him.

Benedict organised various small communities of monks and nuns in various places, including the great monastery of Monte Cassino. He drew up a set of rules to guide the communal life of monasteries. Although this was not the first monastic rule ever, the Rule of St Benedict has proved so wise and balanced that it has served as the foundation of practically every attempt at communal living ever since – and not only in religious communities. The Rule of St Benedict recognises that people aim at perfection but often fall well short of it, and aims to be a "rule for beginners" in which even the least perfect and least able can grow in spiritual stature. To visit a Benedictine monastery of almost any kind is to find oneself spending time among a group of people who, by their strivings to live and grow together, have become more and more themselves, as God intended them, instead of being crushed into false uniformity by some idealistic and authoritarian regime.

For those of us in the world, too, the Rule of St Benedict has much to say: it drags our eyes up to the stars but keeps our feet firmly on the ground; it calls us to perfection but keeps us sane.

Monday 13th July: Saint Henry

(973 - 1024) Henry was born in Bavaria in 973 and succeeded to the dukedom at the age of 22. He became Holy Roman Emperor in 1014. He was noted for his support for the reform of the Church and for his encouragement of its missionary activity. He set up many bishoprics, and he and his wife, Cunegunda, founded many monasteries. He died in 1024 and was canonised by Pope Eugenius III in 1146.

