

Sacred Heart Bilton and English Martyrs Hillmorton Newsletter

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Weekend 25/26th July, Masses: Sacred Heart, Saturday 5pm and Sunday 9.30am English Martyrs, Sunday 11 am. No Saturday Mass at present.

Dear Parishioners and Friends,

It is great that after such a long interval our Churches at Sacred Heart and English Martyrs are now open for public Masses at weekends. It has been great to welcome many of the congregation coming together for Mass. I want to say thank you to the Parishioners who have helped in the preparation for the opening and those who are helping by stewarding at the Masses. Thank you too for cooperating with the arrangements that have been put in place for our safety and security. It is true that not everyone has felt confident enough yet to return but we hope no one will feel they have to return until they are ready. We look forward to when the Church will be full again and all the precautions will no longer be needed. Sadly, there is no guarantee that this will happen any time soon.

We are fortunate that we have been able to provide a recorded Mass from Sacred Heart at weekends and some weekdays and of course Masses from places near and far are available on the internet. The broadband is not reliable enough at Sacred Heart to live stream but we hope this can be remedied. The Diocese has asked us to continue to provide internet Masses for the housebound and the vulnerable. **The obligation for Sunday Mass has been relaxed.**

Offertory Collections. As you will be aware income has dropped in both parishes and we continue to need your support. Thanks to all who pay by monthly Standing Order this has meant a regular stream of income. I would ask those who pay weekly to do their best to support us. We have also lost a lot of income from regular lettings which help sustain the parishes. I appreciate that the income of individuals and families may have been affected by the pandemic. Please consider paying by Standing Order if you can and also Gift Aid your offering which increases its value at no cost to yourself. Please contact us for the necessary forms. You can even donate to the parishes on the diocesan website. We will look into how we can distribute the envelopes for this financial year which were due to go out just as the pandemic struck.

Good news for English Martyrs that we have begun the long awaited refurb of the toilets and kitchen in the parish hall. This is being funded by cashing in some of the saving units we had invested with the diocese. We will still need to be careful and seek to reduce our overdraft which has just dipped under 100k. The Parish Hall is a very useful source of income.

English Martyrs School has had to face the challenges presented by the corona virus. All the staff have worked very hard to meet the changes and challenges. **Mrs Deery** was able to extend her departure till summer half term. She has **now moved on to her new post.** Sadly, we did not have the chance to mark her leaving as we would have liked. She has made a great contribution to the ongoing success of the school. **Miss Petras, the deputy head, is now acting head until Christmas while a new head teacher is found and appointed.** First Holy Communion in both parishes and Confirmation at Sacred Heart will be arranged in due course as time and conditions permit.

There have been some **eight funerals during the lockdown** period which were held according to the restrictions. Please pray for those who have died and for their grieving families and friends. **A couple of marriages have also had to be cancelled and rearranged for next year.**

Baptisms too have been postponed and need to be rearranged. Current rules allow a gathering of up to 30 with distancing and precautions as for Mass.

Visits to the sick and housebound are still difficult and where necessary can be made taking careful precautions and distancing. Let us remember those who are in care homes, their families and those who look after them.

Confessions can be arranged with the priest but again distancing has to be observed.

It is good to hear how parishioners are keeping in touch and keeping an eye on those who are alone or vulnerable. I am sure this needs to continue.

We need to build up the life and activities of the parishes and try and see what lessons can be learnt from what we have experienced through this difficult time of lockdown and isolation.

Fr Matthew Fr Graham and myself Fr Gerry wish you all well and be assured of our prayers. Enjoy the summer.

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