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|  | A warm welcome to all who gather todayaround the Altar of the Lord in our parishes of**Saint John the Baptist****&****Saint Bernadette**Working in Communion for MissionParish Priest: Father Tom Finnegan |  |
| St John the Baptist, 2 Wingfield Road,🕿 01225 752152Trowbridge, BA14 9EAwww.stjohnthebaptisttrowbridge.co.uktrowbridge.stjohnthebaptist@cliftondiocese.com | St Bernadette’s, 98 West End, Westbury, BA13 3JQ  thomas.finnegan@cliftondiocese.com  |
| St John’s Parish Centre01225 767215 | Diocesan Safeguarding Helpline 0117 0117 9540993 | St John’s Catholic Primary School 01225 752006 | St Augustine’s Catholic College 01225 350001 |
| **Fourth Sunday of Lent – 22nd March 2020** |
|  | ***Sunday Scripture Thoughts:*** “Oh, grow up!” said the parent to the petulant teenager. How often has that been said to us? There comes a time when we have to stand on our own two feet and take responsibility for our lives. If we’re young and wondering what we’re going to do with our lives, the mature response is to ask God’s guidance. Jesus opened the eyes of the blind. He can and will open our minds and hearts to knowing God’s definite purpose for us. Growing up is like coming out of a cocoon and spreading our wings – the sky’s the limit where service of God is concerned! |

*Dear Parishioners and friends of St. John’s and St. Bernadette’s*

My first words are to say that each and everyone of you are in my thoughts and prayers as we enter into an uncertain and concerning future. Our first reaction when crisis’ come along is to gather and pray. This crisis however is different and we are being forced to withdraw and isolate ourselves from one another. However, as a people of faith, we are never alone. We have the Holy and Blessed Trinity with us always.

As many of you are already aware, we have been instructed by the Bishops of England and Wales to suspend all parish activities. So, there will be no public Masses until further notice.

I will continue to celebrate Mass daily when I can I will record it to video. Each day this daily Mass will be posted on YouTube. To find it on YouTube, just search ‘Mass in Trowbridge’ and you should find it.

I will now try to answer some FAQs (Frequently asked questions)

* **Will the Church be open during this time?** Yes, St. John’s Church will be open as usual for you pop in say a prayer, light a candle and spend some time with the Lord. Please keep in mind the government advice of distancing yourselves and making sure you have washed your hands before you come and to wash them when you return home. St. Bernadette’s Church in Westbury will be open on Tuesday, Wednesday, and Thursday mornings from 10am to 12noon. (This will be reviewed if we get further restrictions regarding our movements)
* **Will there be Baptisms in Church?** No, any baptisms booked during this time will be deferred to a time where it is deemed safe to go back to normal. Baptisms can take place in an emergency; such cases rarely happen in Church.
* **Will Frist Holy Communions and Confirmation take place?** I have taken the decision with advice from the Diocese to postpone First Holy Communion and Confirmation this year. We just do not know when this crisis will be over. Re-scheduled dates will be announced when we know more.
* **Will there be Weddings:** As with Baptism, all weddings planned during this period will be deferred until it is deemed safe to go back to normal. However, if this is not possible a service of Matrimony can take place. But only the priest/deacon, bride and groom and immediate family present.
* **Will there be funerals in Church?** No; under the present guidelines there can be no funerals in the Church. We can conduct short services at the graveside or at a Crematorium with only close family and friends able to attend.
* **Can I receive the Sacrament of the Sick?** All regular pastoral visits and anointing by me and other ministers have been suspended. However, I will visit and anoint in danger of death.
* **Can I go to confession?** Yes, but only if you are in a state of serious sin. Remember, we can get rid of those everyday faults when we say the ‘I confess’. You can still say this prayer privately after an examination of conscience at home or when you pop into Church. There will be no regular confession slots during this period. An appointment can be made with Fr. Tom on request, by phone or email.
* **Can I still give my weekly offering?** Yes, if you use the envelope system for giving, please place you envelopes in safe place at home and bring with you to Church when we resume normal service. Alternatively, you may want to start a standing order with your bank. If you wish to do this, please email me on Thomas.finnegan@cliftondiocese.com and I will provide our parish bank details.
* **Can I still give to the Food Bank?** Yes, please do, but please do not leave your contributions at St. John’s or St. Bernadette’s. Leave them with the system that your usual food retailer provides.
* **When will things return to normal?** As soon as this virus is gone. Let us hope and pray sooner rather than later

I am sure there are many more questions that have not been covered. Seek advice from the NHS by calling 111 if you are concerned about your own health. Please try to stay at home as much as you can. Self-isolate completely if possible. Follow the guidelines on handwashing, coughing and sneezing. If you need any support or help with shopping or medications, there are many local support groups available. We have a small band of parishioners who have offered to help in any way they can. Please let me know by phone or email if you lack support at this time and we will see what we can do.

My dear parishioners, please keep safe and well as much as you can. Please keep up your prayers for a quick end to this crisis. Please be assured of my prayers and when it is all done, we will have a big party!!!

*“Let nothing disturb you; let nothing frighten you. All things pass away: God never changes. Patience obtains all things. He who has God lacks nothing. God alone suffices”.* ***St Teresa of Avila***