

CHRISTMAS MESSAGE FROM FR NAZ

I wish a Holy and Blessed Christmas and a Peaceful New Year to all the lovely people of the parish of St Joseph's, Malvern. This has been a uniquely challenging year and Christmas is bound to be out of the ordinary. We have in our community those who have lost loved ones and a number who have lost livelihoods due to the coronavirus pandemic. We also think of those who will not be able to gather with their loved ones at Christmas. Many of us will have the challenge of bringing both comfort and joy to our celebration of Christmas. We should remember the words of St Paul in Romans 12:15: ***'Rejoice with those who rejoice; weep with those who weep'***. We will celebrate where we can, but must also be mindful of those who may not be physically able or emotionally ready to celebrate. Let us focus on bringing comfort and joy to all during our celebrations this year.

PEOPLE OF THE PARISH

I wish to thank all the people of the parish for the love and commitment they have for their parish. Many individuals have risen to numerous challenges this year. Al and Jithin organised livestreaming of Mass during lockdown. Al then saw through a permanent livestreaming solution which allows me to flip a switch and share the Mass on Youtube with ease. Mike Walsh organised the re-painting and supervised re-carpeting of the interior of the church before retiring from the Maintenance Committee. I thank Mike for his long and dedicated service and Zbigniew Twarowski for taking on his mantle. Alf Teuma retired from the role of Parish Treasurer after 10 years of distinguished service and it has taken four people to replace him! I thank Chris Park, Mary Marsh, and Sam Craig for taking on the accounts and Anne for taking on the 100+ Club with dedication and good humour.

Sue Stubbings saw through the reopening of church for Mass in July, recruiting and training a team of stewards who keep everyone safe and without whom we would not be able to open. Amongst the stewards are several parishioners who, up until now, had low profiles in the parish. I thank them and all the stewards for lending us their time and talents. At meetings with other clergy I have become aware of how difficult it has been for some parishes to get people to come forward to steward making it a struggle to open for more than a few Masses. Our stewards make seven Masses possible each week!

I would like to thank the PAC for their commitment to sharing ideas about the running of the parish. Extraordinary Ministers of Communion, particularly those who reach out the housebound, have been a source of great support to the most vulnerable members of our parish. Liz and Chris Burger run a helpline for any parishioner who needs assistance during lockdown and I thank them for this valuable service. Carol Ann Harnett has lent us her talents as a catechist and creates weekly Family Activity Sheets which go out to families by email each week. Several parishioners write reflections each week to share with the community on the website. Helen Louise and Carol Ann run our new Facebook page while Edd Hogan runs Twitter for Catholic Malvern and Al keeps our Website fresh and lively. Various groups such as the Liturgy Group, One Word Group, Climate Group, Thursday Adoration Group and Youth Group have been a driving force of life in the parish at this difficult time. Church cleaners and those in charge of flower arrangements as well as readers and altar servers have made our church a place of which we may be very proud. The wonderful school and its dedicated staff have been a beacon of hope to pupils and their parents. We are fortunate to have Worcestershire's Head Teacher of The Year, Thérèse Langford, spearheading the school's efforts to keep everyone safe and ensure children continue to learn. We have so much to be proud of and I am grateful to each and every one of you.

BERYL GAUNT LEGACY

As we celebrate the joyous Feast of Christmas, I would like to thank God for the many blessings He has bestowed on our parish during this most difficult year. I particularly wish to thank God for the

blessings received through the legacy of Beryl Gaunt. If it were not for Beryl's generosity, the parish would be in a terrible financial predicament. Thanks to Beryl Gaunt, the opposite is true. We have been able to fund repainting, livestreaming and other necessary works. Her gift has given us the funds we have needed to rise to the challenges the pandemic presents and adapt in ways that enhance our ability to bring God's word to his people.

ANONYMOUS CARPET DONATION

I would also like to thank God for the blessings the parish has received from a parishioner, who wishes to remain anonymous, who has funded the whole carpet project in the church and adjacent rooms. I would also like to thank Edd Hogan who was responsible for getting the job done at almost half the price.

THE PARISH OFFICE

Thanks to our secure financial footing, we were able keep our office staff during the pandemic. Sue, Anne and Sam have continued to help me with the day to day running of the parish. Their high efficiency in the presbytery and zeal to reach out to all in the parish has been second to none. In addition to Sue organising the reopening of the Church, Anne has inputted data from more than 250 parish census returns which has allowed us to work with up-to-date contact information throughout the pandemic. Sam has used some of this data to create an email distribution list which allows us to communicate with parishioners weekly by email. If you would like to receive our weekly communications, email the parish office at stjoseph.malvern@rcaob.org.uk. Sue's, Anne's and Sam's work makes a huge difference to the life of the parish. Their administrative work makes my pastoral work possible. Without them I would have burnt out long ago.

YEAR OF ST JOSEPH

Some of you may be aware that on 8th December 2020, Pope Francis declared the beginning of a Year of St. Joseph. Being the patron saint of our parish, this will be a special year for us. The declaration of the Year of St Joseph on the feast of the Immaculate Conception of Mary, Joseph's spouse, adds to the observance of the Season of Advent as well as to the celebration of Christmas. It also gives us a reason to look forward to 2021. The Year of St Joseph coincides with the 150th anniversary of the declaration of St. Joseph as Patron of the Catholic Church by Blessed Pius IX. During this year the Church will celebrate the humble and hidden Husband of Mary. So, as we celebrate Christmas, let us honour the patron saint of our parish, the foster father of Jesus, and, in so doing, make Christmas a celebration of the Holy Family.

Let us keep all who are sick or facing difficult times in our prayers. Likewise let us think of those who are far away from home. It is a strange year and we cannot gather as we would like. We can, however, hold one another prayerfully in our thoughts. Let us approach this Holy Season of Christmas with the attitude of listening and being silent. "LISTEN" and "SILENT" are spelt with the same letters. Let us reflect on that as we move forward with hope into the New Year.

I wish you and yours joy during this blessed Christmas season.

Yours in Christ,

Naz

Nazarius Mgungwe
Parish Priest
Christmas 2020