



Parish Priest: Rev. Mgr. John M Walsh

Parish: Our Lady of Compassion

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Dear Parishioners of the newly established Parish of Our Lady of Compassion

After communicating the Archbishop's decision to merge our three parishes into a new, single parish, I wanted to write to you all to share some thoughts and offer some words of encouragement.

I wasn't sure how I was going to feel when I read the messages to you all from the Archbishop. As the Mass progressed, I felt a heaviness and a sadness at what was happening. That is not to say that it was unexpected. I was obviously told about the Archbishop's decision before today's announcement. Also, all of us have realised for some time that the joining of the parishes was inevitable. Some have already commented that today's decision was long overdue.

One of the reasons for my sadness was having to communicate this news through the remoteness and the coldness of a live streamed Mass. Not being able to speak to a full church and, more importantly, be available afterwards to listen and to talk. The human warmth and closeness was missing and that is very sad.

I was very mindful of all of us during Mass. I want to speak in particular, for a moment, to the people of St Anne's. Dear friends, we last celebrated Mass together on Sunday, March 15th. Which of us could have imagined that this was our last meeting together? Much has been said about the terrible fallout from the pandemic, but I simply wanted to reach out to each one of you today, and tell you how sad I am that our parish life has ended in this way.

I had the privilege of serving as your Parish Priest for four years. In that time, I came to know your warmth, your deep faith, friendliness, generosity and the quiet prayerfulness of our church. I remember especially the lovely coffee mornings and parish dinners we shared together. It has been a very difficult few months as you have seen the other churches open, but not St Anne's. From the bottom of my heart, I want to thank each one of you for the example of fortitude and patience you have shown in this dreadful time. Thank you for the example you have given us all in our town. It will not be forgotten, but it will most certainly be carried forward into the life of our new parish.

Likewise, I know that the people of St Jerome's will be anxious about the future. Although there seems to be a certain resignation about the decision, I know there will be sadness as we look back on over fifty years of a wonderful history, of a vibrant and deeply caring community. Among so many memories, I cannot forget the care shown by so many to those in need, especially the poorest far away from our shores. For the privilege of being your Parish Priest for the last eight years, I also want to thank each and everyone of you.



Our Lady of Compassion

18 School Lane, Formby, L37 3LW

Served by the Churches of Our Lady of Compassion and St. Jerome

Roman Catholic Archdiocesan Trustees In. Reg. Charity No: 232709



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Which brings me to the community of Our Lady's. I am a newcomer to you all. We have not had any real opportunity to get to know each other, to meet, gather and speak face to face. We have just had those snatched conversations over the past four months since my appointment. It has been very frustrating. But I have learned enough and heard enough to know this community has given us all examples of dedication, care and love. In particular, I have been deeply struck by the care and devotion shown to Father Bernard, who served you all so faithfully for so many years. I also know how difficult it has been to get used to a new Parish Priest, with all the change and anxiety that can bring. I want to thank you all sincerely for bearing with me in these early days. I know that as things slowly return to normal, I will learn more and more about this great community and respectfully carry the best of your communal life into the life of our new parish community.

Some of you have been asking about what we call our churches and the future of those churches. We simply call each of our three churches by their names. It is the parish that has changed. One parish with three churches, each keeping its own name of dedication. As for the future of our buildings, all I can say is that no decision has been made about their future. The Saturday Vigil Mass will still be celebrated at St Jerome's and the other Masses at Our Lady's. St Anne's sadly remains closed. But we all know that three churches is unsustainable. However, for now things remain as they are.

So, dear friends, we will need time to adjust to the new reality. There will be grieving. But beyond that, there is much to look forward to. A new parish begins today. Our parish. Each one of us has a stake in its future. So let us pray for each other, reach out to each other and look forward to working together in our new community.

God bless you all.

Father John



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