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Dear Friends

On Monday night, the Prime Minister announced a third national lockdown with immediate effect. It was widely expected. We have been watching as the new variant of the virus has pushed infections up dramatically and it's spread has been very rapid.

The updated Government website permitted communal worship to continue, as long as safety protocols were in place and strict social distancing observed. We consulted all our helpers, the Dean and the Archdiocese. A risk assessment was then carried out in Our Lady's church and St Jerome's church. At the end of the Mass I celebrated for the Epiphany at Our Lady's yesterday, I informed those present that we no longer had the resources necessary to allow people to move in and out of Our Lady's church safely. Therefore, for the time being, no communal worship will take place at Our Lady's church.

The necessary resources for safe movement at St Jeromes church are still in place and therefore I am able to celebrate Mass there on Saturday evening as usual. This is the situation as I write to you this morning, but events seem to be changing rapidly. We received a note from the Archdiocesan Chancellor yesterday to warn us to expect further guidance in what he called 'a rapidly developing situation'.

This seems an appropriate time to offer sincere thanks on behalf of all of us, to the stewards in both our churches and their co ordinators. Since the churches reopened last July, they have given wonderful service and selfless example to us all. Only because of them has public Mass been possible at all.

From this Sunday, I shall celebrate a live streamed Mass from St Jerome's at 10.00am. I shall also live stream Mass on Wednesday at 12 Noon. In this way, we can at least remain in communion with one another through the prayer of the Mass.

I shall keep you all updated each week as events move forward. I want to end by asking two things. Firstly, that we pray for each other, for those suffering with the virus in our parish, particularly for the children who are now affected by this new variant. Secondly, I ask that we all stay safe, take care of each other and make one final effort before the vaccine is rolled out and we emerge, please God, from this dark trial.

May God bless you and your loved ones.

**Father John**



**Our Lady of Compassion**

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