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**11 July 2021**

Dear Friends

The Prime Minister's recent announcement that he intends to lift almost all restrictions placed on us in this time of pandemic has been greeted with euphoria by the media, dire warnings by some in the medical profession and what seems like a strange eerie silence in society as a whole. It feels like a strange time. The celebrations for the great success of the England team in Euro 2020 have been tremendous. Tomorrow night will be an experience we haven't had for a long time. And yet... this silence and quiet seems to continue.

I haven't written to you for some time. There has been little to tell you. I think we have all just been taking it one day at a time. The life of the Church has continued of course; our Masses, live streaming, the funerals for our loved ones who have passed, our wonderful volunteers, many conversations. But all this is just a fraction of usual parish life.

But things are changing and it's time to write to you again. Over the past 10 days, I have celebrated 4 First Holy Communion Masses in Our Lady's and St. Jerome's for Years 4 and 5 of our two Schools. About 140 children received their First Communion, along with their families. They were evening celebrations, the weather was beautiful, the soloists sang beautifully, and the look of joy and excitement on the faces of children and parents alike was beautiful.

There are almost 30 baptisms scheduled over the next few months and several weddings. There is a sense of things beginning to wake again and people are instinctively turning to the Church to help them celebrate the key moments in their lives. The parish phone was never quiet during lockdown and restrictions, but now it has become noticeably busier.

So, although things look and seem quiet, out of sight, life is stirring again. How many times have we heard in our Scripture readings and prayers that God prefers to work in hidden and quiet ways, away from noise and fuss? That the silent growth of the seed was the preferred parable for Jesus, to explain how the Kingdom of God works? Yet, throughout this past 16 months, many of us have found it uncomfortable and difficult to be faced with quiet and a seeming loss of our normal routine. It has been a hard lesson, but perhaps we have found the courage to remain in the silence and go a little deeper within ourselves. To meet God within. To understand that life filled with activity is not always valuable, and that our outreach to each other and the needy is made more powerful by those frequent conversations with God, which we call prayer. What has God been saying to each one of us? Only each one of us can answer that question.



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18 School Lane, Formby, L37 3LW

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

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We now wait to hear how things will change for us in our churches, our worship and our parish life. That we will now move forward is beyond doubt. However, we will also have to accept that it will be a 'multi tracked' experience. I doubt if there will be a single explosion of activity. Some will be nervous and apprehensive. The needs of all will have to be taken into account. However, we will soon be on our way and as soon as I hear about what is happening I shall let you know.

Until then, enjoy the football!!

God bless you all!

**Father John**



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