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**2 June 2021**

Dear Friends

### **Beginning again!**

It's been a little while since you last heard from me. I have been taking the opportunity for a few days quiet break. These days have given me the opportunity to reflect more deeply on the past 15 months and all it has meant for us as a faith community. To say that this time has been unprecedented is an understatement. Reflection will continue for years to come, since the effects of this pandemic have been far reaching. But we will all have our thoughts about what these past months have meant to each of us. All eyes are on June 14th. Then we are likely to hear whether the final stage of the 'roadmap' can go ahead on June 21st. I don't envy the Prime Minister! Huge pressures come from all sides of the debate... not moving quickly enough, moving too quickly.. Likewise for us. Some think we have moved too slowly. Others believe we should remain cautious. We cannot see the future, but we are right to be optimistic about the months ahead. Yes, we know that the pandemic is not yet over and that the variants will remain a reality for some time to come. But the weight of the good news is increasing. Hope is growing!

So are we expecting to just jump back to the days before Covid, and pick up where we left off? It would be perfectly natural to want to. But in our heart of hearts we realise that we cannot. Things have changed. The most obvious change is our new parish; no longer three parishes but one. Three communities of faith now beginning the journey to integrate into one. But at a deeper level, we have all changed. It may not be immediately obvious. But change makes itself felt in the deepest parts of us.

What lies ahead of us in the coming weeks? The return of weekday Mass, of singing, of meetings and coffee to name but a few. Let's hold our nerve for a while longer. Above all, let's look to the Holy Spirit, asking Him to move among us in a new way, to open doors, breathe on us afresh and open our eyes and ears to each other and to God. A new beginning in more ways than one!

God bless you and your loved ones!

**Father John**



**Our Lady of Compassion**

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