



**Parish Priest:** Rev. Mgr. John M Walsh

**Parish:** Our Lady of Compassion

**Tel No:** 07104 873230

**Email:** [ourladyofcompassionformby@rcaol.org.uk](mailto:ourladyofcompassionformby@rcaol.org.uk)

**Web:** [ourladyofcompassionformby.org.uk](http://ourladyofcompassionformby.org.uk)

**31 Jan 2021**

Dear Friends

***'O that today you would listen to his voice; harden not your hearts'***

These words are taken from the response in the Responsorial Psalm of our Sunday Mass. They are worth reflecting on. The Scripture readings of the last two Sundays have spoken of the call of God. God calls. He waits for a response. He wants our response to be free and generous. Samuel, Simon and Andrew, James and John all heard the call and responded. What about us?

Well, we might begin by asking why God is calling me in the first place. It is easy for us, after many years of going to church to settle into a routine. Everything becomes very familiar after a time and we get used to the liturgy with its readings and prayers. Before we know it, we have become spectators who watch and listen from a distance. This has not been helped by having to participate in live streamed Masses, helpful though they are!

All of this is understandable. But there comes a point when we look for something more; a greater depth, a greater engagement, a greater understanding. I think that this is a moment of calling; a call to enter into the Mass more deeply, to listen more carefully and to watch more intently. What is unfolding during the Mass is our story, the story of each one of us, the gathering up of all our concerns, anxieties and sufferings which are then offered to God.

The pandemic has had a major impact on our church life. We have not been able to attend Mass regularly. We have come to something of a crossroads. It would be tragic if we simply got used to not going to Mass. Instead, now is the moment to ask for a greater appreciation, a greater understanding, a hunger for the Mass, for God's word and for the Eucharist. I am convinced that God is calling us to meet Him on a deeper level, to learn to listen again and so find peace. Our Mass will return. Will we be ready to enter into it again?

So God is calling us for one simple reason. To make us happy. To draw us into His story and to unite our stories with His. This is what the Scriptures are about. The Mass is the place where God's story meets our stories and makes profound sense of them. Once we realise this, it is not possible to remain as a spectator at Mass. We begin to understand that we are not being spoken at, we are being spoken to. Each of us. Personally. By name.

So what can we do now? We can begin by being aware of the words at the beginning of this letter; 'harden not your hearts'. To find that joy, that happiness promised to us, we need to remain open to God. Let us ask Him to open our hearts to Him. To listen to His voice, to learn to be quiet and to trust. God speaks with a whisper, but His words are full of comfort and light.



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18 School Lane, Formby, L37 3LW

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Taking part in the Mass through live streaming is not the same as being in church. But even through a screen, God can work! Ask Him to let the light of His Mass flood through your heart and your home. For only when we learn to be at home with God, united to Him and not spectators, can we truly be at home with ourselves and those around us.

May God bless you and your loved ones.

**Father John**



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