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### **Dear Parishioners of Our Lady of Compassion**

Lockdown is over, there is good news about the vaccine and there are just three weeks until Christmas. I hope you have kept safe and well and are now able to plan for the Christmas festivities. Whatever our plans, we are all part of the great Advent season which is now slowly unfolding.

Stirring words from the Prophet Isaiah, the appearance of John the Baptist who cries out in the wilderness 'Prepare the way of the Lord' and the prayers of the Mass that urge us to prepare our hearts. All these words are invitations to make good use of these days; to be prepared to meet Christ in unexpected places. Think of the number of people who walk through our village every day and see the wonderful Advent displays in the shop windows, who then go home with a slightly more open mind or heart.

God truly is a God of surprises. When we think we have seen it all and done it all in our faith life, He surprises us with new possibilities. Nothing major perhaps, nothing dramatic; just something someone says to us, a thought that comes to us on a walk, an idea that excites us, a plan that suddenly comes alive. God is never stale or boring. He is always ready to take us out of the rut, to give us new life.

With these thoughts in our minds, we are facing a Christmas different to any other. This weekend, all the arrangements for our Parish celebration of Christmas will be explained. I will be celebrating four Christmas Masses to make sure as many as possible can come; two on Christmas Eve at 6.00pm and 9.00pm and two on Christmas morning at 9.00am and 11.00am.

For now, let us be glad that we can gather together for Mass again, listen to the Word and receive the Eucharist. That we can pray together, see each other and receive the Lord's blessing. For all God's gifts to us in these days; great, small and unexpected May His Holy Name be praised and glorified!

God bless you all.

**Father John**



**Our Lady of Compassion**

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