



Parish Priest: Rev. Mgr. John M Walsh

Parish: Our Lady of Compassion

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Dear Parishioners of Our Lady's, St. Anne's and St. Jerome's

This is the first time that I have written to you all since Archbishop Mc Mahon appointed me as Parish Priest of Our Lady's on July 20th. The sharp eyed among you will notice that I have greeted each parish in the order of the seniority of its foundation. The best way to do it, I think!

Now that just one Parish Priest is serving the three parishes of our town, I wanted to create a single means of information for us all, so that there will be as little confusion as possible. We now have a single Facebook page with a new title '**Formby Catholic Community**'. The title speaks for itself and underlines the need for us all to begin working more closely together. I want to thank Siobhan and Karen for previously taking care of the Our Lady's and St Jerome's Facebook pages, which will now be gradually phased out. I am grateful to Siobhan for agreeing to take the new page forward. Information about how to get in contact and how to share information will appear shortly. I am aware that not everyone is on Facebook and so I am looking at other ways to reach out to as many people as possible electronically. If you have any suggestions about the best way to do this, then please get in touch.

Let me begin by speaking to the parishioners of my new parish of Our Lady's. Thank you very much for your kind welcome before and after my first Masses last weekend. It was reassuring to see some familiar faces! Although I have been just an occasional visitor to Our Lady's in the past, I know that the parish has a long and distinguished history, and that the community there is blest with wonderful people. I want to repeat once again my grateful thanks to Father Bernard for his 22 years of dedicated and generous ministry. I am greatly impressed by the beautiful church of Our Lady's and look forward to ministering there to all of you.

The parishes of St Anne's and St Jerome's have been receiving a weekly letter from me since March, sometimes more than weekly. Both parishes are wonderful communities and it has been my joy and privilege to serve both; St Jerome's for 8 years and St Anne's for 4 years.

Allow me to say some words to the parishioners of St Anne's. Thank you for your great patience! You are a wonderful community and I know it has not been easy seeing the other two churches in Formby reopen and St Anne's remain closed. Parish Priests with more than one church were asked to open just one for the time being. Added to this is the problem we have of being able to accommodate suitable numbers for Mass with COVID restrictions. I am very sensitive to this situation. We must now wait until the Archdiocese gives us further direction. In the meantime, I thank you for your example of patience and forbearance.

What of the future for our three parishes? The pandemic has impacted deeply on parish life. So many familiar things have been taken away from us. We are only now able to gather for Mass again, but even this is a strange and difficult experience. Most experts seem to believe that we are in this for the long haul



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Roman Catholic Archdiocesan Trustees In. Reg. Charity No: 232709



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and the daily news offers little comfort. So, our social interaction is likely to be restricted for some time to come. Planning for the future is very difficult. I have been saying for some time that Formby is likely to see three parishes become one at some point in the future. I think that the pandemic is bringing that future to us more quickly than we might have imagined. No one expects that one priest can take care of three parishes, least of all myself! So, we can expect to hear more about this in the near future. But for now, the summer holidays are keeping everything quiet.

Regardless of what lies ahead, I believe that we are being asked to hold on to, and believe deeply in, the one who always stands at the heart of the Mass and each one of our communities; Jesus. The life and work of each one of our parishes serve him. So let us hold on to him and do our best to take care of each other. I ask for your prayers. But I am greatly encouraged by the wonderful and faithful people of our three parish communities. I ask for your patience in these coming weeks and months and ask you to bear with me as I try my best to serve you well and lead us forward into a very uncertain future.

May God bless you and your loved ones,

Father John



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