

## THE FEAST OF THE NATIVITY

*Friday, 25<sup>th</sup> December 2020*

**N**ew Year beckons me to a new community, a new country, a new ministry. Thinking of the time as Gerrards Cross PP is a thought of energy, that's the primary buzz of St Joseph's – a religious community and parish that gets you on your toes and keeps you from gathering moss and cobwebs.

I've had decent health and, bar a few hiccups, a contented ministry at St Joseph's and wider duties in the Deanery and will willingly say 'yes' if ever asked to return here again.

In one way I've become used to missing the social part of the regular congregating. The phone and email are helpful and necessary but nothing replaces presence. We've had a few generous offers to help with phone answering so please God we'll be able to maintain a decent service in that area.

The second post-lockdown opening has about the same attendance levels as the first one. We continue to spread the net for numerical strength of stewards. Deep gratitude to Joan Barham, Christine Cornwell and David Bentley for organising this.

Our grand raffle was very well supported with Celia Tobin gathering the troops "as a mother gathers her chicks...". Many thanks to Cathy Vennix for the enthusiasm she brings to the 200 Club, there's a real good vibe around it. Incredibly, the Furniture Market has thrived and the takings aren't that far behind a normal year.

Our Diocese has had to go the way of the parishes in furloughing staff and a letter of encouragement has recently come from newly appointed Diocesan

Chief Operating Officer, Anthony McNiff. Thank you to the donors of the fogging machine to ease the cleansing after communal events in the church and please God in the new year we will be able to use it if we get the Hall open again for activities. Since Fr Matt left and Fr Bob was on break, a series of volunteer cooks have supplied home cooked meals to the Priory. Its new life to us. I've even learned how to do a stir-fry!

Fr John has resumed saying Mass again. Fr Martin's "stuff" has already arrived from Dublin and he expects to be here the second week of January. I'll stay around for as long as needed.

*A few flashes and highlights of my last six years:* The centenary in 2015 and that fine meal up at the school and the white tablecloths. The refurbishment of the church and the massive scaffolding and the effect of the light blue. The privilege of being chosen to have the Holy Door for our part of the Diocese in 2016 in the Year of Mercy. The Adoremus conference in Liverpool and the subsequent commitment to monthly Adoration. The disabled entrance to church. The cemetery memorial wall. The installation of live stream and how disappointing it is when its down. The Year of the Word and the impetus of Fr Matt's talks. The beauty of the Mass. The friends in heaven.

God bless you all and sustain you. A wee prayer for me please in my new ministry. May the blessings of Christ be upon you and your loved ones throughout this season and into the New Year.

From our Carmelite family to yours – Merry Christmas and our very best wishes for 2021.

*Fr. Michael Spain*

“With the shepherds, let us enter into the real Christmas, bringing to Jesus all that we are, our alienation, our unhealed wounds, our sins.” *Pope Francis*