

Weekly Message from Fr William for the First Sunday of Lent 2021

Dear People of St Mary's

Do you remember 4th Sunday of Lent last year 2020 ? It was the first Sunday that churches across the UK were closed due Coronavirus. Celebration of Mass for St Mary's was online for the first time, but recorded, not yet livestream – that came later with Easter Sunday. The website became a principal means of information for the parish, and I took out a Zoom account for meetings and for catechesis.

And here we are 1st Sunday of Lent 2021, almost a year later. Our parish as a whole and in each individual life has been through a lot due to the pandemic: change, disruption, increased stress and workload, illness, death, bereavement. I'm sure there's a lot of praying going on for those who have been particularly hard hit.

As I said on Ash Wednesday, and I'll probably say again at Mass today, Lent is a time for turning back to God with all our heart. This could also include asking him again to protect us and look after us – our family, our friends, our parish, our nation, our world.

Let's also pray for an effective and worldwide distribution of the vaccines.

Sunday Mass at St Mary's continues to be livestream only. It's just one of the ways we are sticking together as a parish at this time of heightened risk. This is still a voluntary closure of the church, something that I keep under review, taking into account the prevalence of the virus, the uncertain behaviour of new variants, the safety of everybody, and our responsibility to the wider community. I take soundings on this with the Parish Pastoral Council from time to time by email, and it is on the agenda for tomorrow's scheduled PPC meeting. A copy of the agenda is on the website.

Here's recommending again some of the opportunities for Lent on the bulletin, including the first session tomorrow Monday of Fr Tim's online scripture course, and the Global Healing seminars on Thursdays. There's also on the website homepage Pope Francis's fasting suggestions for lent.

Wishing you a happy Sunday and a holy Lent

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "William". The signature is written in a cursive, slightly slanted style.

First Sunday of Lent 21st February 2021