

## Weekly Message from Fr William for the Second Sunday of Lent 2021

Dear People of St Mary's

We continue to acknowledge the tremendous dedication of our school staff through the challenges of the pandemic. There are three lessons delivered online every day direct to the pupils' homes, and the online work is supplemented by workbooks and materials provided by the school. There is regular email contact between class teacher and individual pupils to provide additional support. There are also small group sessions online. In addition to all this, the school has been open for the children of key workers. So we can begin to appreciate the work and dedication of our wonderful school staff. We continue to wish them well and let's keep them all in our prayers as they prepare for a full reopening of the school next Monday 8<sup>th</sup> March, with the covid security measures and the next set of challenges they will be facing into.

I discussed the return to in-church celebration of Mass with the Pastoral Council on Monday. There are many factors I need to take into consideration – high standard of covid security at St Marys, low risk of viral transmission, low national stats on in-church viral transmission to date, emergence of new variants, wide age range of our parish and different degrees of vulnerability, rapid vaccination roll out, return of schools and the impact this may have on covid resurgence, our responsibility to the wider community, our responsibility to ourselves in terms of both physical and mental well being. The full reopening of schools is something I continue to welcome as one of the top priorities during the pandemic, and we need to be prepared to pay for this by the closure of other sectors of society. A parish such as ours can continue to operate and survive for a time with its doors closed thanks to the adaptability of its parishioners and their financial generosity. Many sectors of society cannot function at all with their doors closed and for this reason I would like to see them given priority. Livelihoods depend on it, as does the economy. I'm grateful to our PPC and I continue digest ongoing discussion and consultation with the council on these sort of factors. There has been no recommendation from the PPC for an immediate return to in-church mass, and I'm not predicting at this point whether we will recommence in-church masses for Easter, wonderful though that would be for all of us. I'll be guided the factors such as those I've summarised above, rather than by our shared desire to be in church by any particular date.

Meantime, please make the most of our livestream capability that enables us to continue to celebrate mass together across the town and across the parish. It's not the same as being in church, but it's good to know that we're celebrating mass together each Sunday even if we can't see each other.

Wishing you all a Happy Sunday and a holy Lent  
and God bless you!



Second Sunday of Lent 28<sup>th</sup> February 2021