



Pastoral Message from Bishop Patrick McKinney

to the Parishioners of the parish of Saint Mary, Marple Bridge, and Annunciation, New Mills

to be read at Sunday Masses on the Fifteenth Sunday of the Year

Saturday 12th and Sunday 13th July 2025

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ

You will remember that I wrote to you in January, proposing that because of the decline in the number of active diocesan priests, the sacraments, including Sunday Mass, would no longer be habitually celebrated in the church of Saint Mary, Marple Bridge, after Easter Sunday this year. Following my letter many representations were made to me, and a good number of you met with the Vicar General Canon John Kyne, and the Chief Operating Officer of the Diocesan Curia, Mr David Lawes, in March. Following that meeting I wrote again, asking that as many parishioners as possible might complete a questionnaire about the future of the church, and highlighting ways in which they would be able to actively support the parish community. During the time of this consultation I agreed that Mass and the sacraments might continue to be celebrated until September.

I take this opportunity to thank warmly the more than fifty of you who completed the questionnaire, and who took the time to explain to me your hopes and concerns for the future of Saint Mary's church. Thank you for your openness and your honesty. I have been reading the responses over the past weeks, and considering ways to respond positively to all that you have said. Whilst noting the negative responses, especially from those who have long association with the church, and were naturally saddened to think that Mass would no longer be celebrated there, I was heartened by the number, about a quarter of the responses from Saint Mary's parishioners, who actively agreed to become more involved with the life of the parish community. As I have said previously, this is ever more necessary in all of our parishes, to ensure that we are outward-looking missionary communities, and are open to all that the Lord is asking us to undertake in his Church and in his world. This missionary activity can't be left simply to the priests, and each one of us has a unique call to holiness, and, as Saint John Henry Newman put it there is, 'some particular service which the Lord has entrusted to me and to no one else.' I very much hope that you are already managing to put into effect these promises to help in the parish.

As you know, Father Emmanuel will be leaving New Mills and Marple Bridge in September, and I'm very pleased that Father Greg Tobin, currently in Derby, has agreed to become your new parish priest. He will have pastoral responsibility also for Buxton and Chapel-en-le-Frith, including the area around the former church in Tideswell, which makes for a large area. He will need as much positive support and active participation as you, and indeed all of the parishioners across these three parishes, are able to give. Thank you in advance for your enthusiasm and your activity. I'm now very pleased to announce that, because two priests are being loaned from the Diocese of Kumba in Cameroon, I'm now able to appoint an assistant priest to work alongside Father Greg. This means that it will now be possible for Mass and the sacraments to continue to be celebrated in each of the churches of Chapel, Buxton, New Mills, and Marple Bridge.

I know that Father Greg is looking forward to meeting with you, and working with you, in the mission of proclaiming God's love to the people of the High Peak. In turn I very much look forward to hearing from Father Greg of the positive and creative ways in which you are able to be of practical service to each other, and to all God's family, in continuing to proclaim the Gospel Message of Jesus.

With my prayers and good wishes for each one of you,

Bishop Patrick McKinney

Bishop of Nottingham