



Dear Parents

I do not think any of us will forget this half term in a hurry! It feels slightly surreal writing an end of term newsletter on the last Friday of term without hearing and seeing the children or staff. However there were still highlights in the first three weeks of this half term to celebrate before we move onto matters concerning Covid-19.

### **Ash Wednesday Service**

Fr Carlos kindly led, with the Chaplaincy Team, our Ash Wednesday service to mark the start of the season of Lent. I was very impressed this year with the pupils waiting to receive their ashes and blessing as they processed without fuss or upset. Well done to all who have managed to keep their Lenten promise in these testing times.

### **World Book Day**

Thank you for helping your child to celebrate world book day dressing up in a character from a book. I know the older pupils loved going to the younger year groups to share their love of reading. The good news for parents is that we only dress up every two years!

### **School Book Fair**

Our thanks to you all for supporting this year's book fair which raised over £1300 of commission which we will use to replenish class libraries. My thanks to Mrs Ogilvie and all the parent helpers who ensured the fair went to plan.

### **Sporting News**

Congratulations to the school football teams who finished off the league fixtures with wins against Little Hallingbury and Albury schools. Once again we qualified for the play offs and we were on course for another epic battle with Northgate School.

### **St Patrick's Day Celebration**

The School Association's St Patrick's Day celebration was a huge success. We were entertained with wonderful Irish dancing from current and past pupils, traditional Irish music, and the highlight for me being the St Joseph's band of parents, friends and staff. Thank you to all who organised and ensured the event went ahead - it really was a special afternoon and evening.

### **End of 'School' - Friday 20<sup>th</sup> March**

Thank you for all of the very kind comments shared during the week of the 16<sup>th</sup> March and on Friday 20<sup>th</sup> in particular. It does seem such a long time ago now! As I mentioned to some of the Year 6 pupils and parents, we certainly will have some form of celebration – hopefully a Mass and social at the very least once the country and schools get back to normal. It will be important to mark the end of your time at St. Joseph's, even if it is after September and you are in your new schools!

### **School PE Kits and belongings**

We have collected and put into bags the belongings and PE kits of those pupils who were not here on Friday 20<sup>th</sup> March. We will keep hold of these until social distancing restrictions are more relaxed as obviously it is not a necessity to travel to school to pick these up yet.

### **Care for Key worker children**

The staff have been providing care for the children of key workers in school for the last two weeks. It has been challenging to organise and provide the care but it has been possible thanks to the willingness of the staff to help in these unprecedented times. Our school has provided more care for pupils than any other primary school in the town. We will send out surveys to key workers during the holiday to find out if and when you need school care from Monday 20<sup>th</sup> April.

### **‘Free School Meal’ Vouchers**

Having organised our own vouchers for those parents who receive ‘Free School Meals’ in these last two weeks, those families will now be receiving information by email from the school on how to access the Government’s voucher scheme after Easter. Eligible parents will receive an email from the school today explaining the scheme.

### **Work for Pupils**

I am appreciative of the staff organising work for your child on the website from Monday 23<sup>rd</sup> with little time to sort this out. Moving forward, we will be putting more work up on the school website after the Easter holidays.

Some parents have asked about more guidance in terms of times to be spent etc which we will try and provide in the next set of work. However these will just be guidelines as ultimately you will need to gauge what your child is able to do. Working at home is very different to working in a classroom of 30 pupils where we have a mixture of group, paired and individual work during the day.

Some parents have asked about online lessons. I completely understand that there are lots of business meeting platforms which can be adapted, and indeed some teachers in this country and around the world are providing this. However there are major safeguarding issues in doing this and online safety requirements which still need to be followed, even in these unprecedented times, to protect children and staff. We will look into some possibilities of proving more tailored correspondence from the teacher to the class after the holidays, but I am not in favour of live streaming from a teacher’s home on an unsecured network which can’t be monitored by the Local Authority or the school so this will not be an option.

We have uploaded onto the website some lovely RE work as we approach Holy Week from the writer of our Diocesan scheme of work for your child.

### **Faith development at home**

As a school we subscribe and use Ten:Ten resources as part of our faith development for prayers and liturgies. You can now also access daily prayers for home and Sunday liturgies which you can use as a family at a time when we are unable to attend school or Mass at the weekend.

Daily Prayers for Home:

<https://www.tentenresources.co.uk/daily-prayers-for-home>

Sunday Liturgy for Families:

<https://www.tentenresources.co.uk/sunday-liturgy-for-families>

### **Reflection - Pope Francis’ message to the City and the World**

“The Lord asks us and, in the midst of our tempest, invites us to reawaken and put into practice that solidarity and hope capable of giving strength, support and meaning to these hours when everything seems to be floundering. The Lord awakens so as to reawaken and revive our Easter faith. We have an anchor: by his cross we have been saved. We have a rudder: by his cross we have been redeemed. We have a hope: by his cross we have been healed and embraced so that nothing and no one can separate us from his redeeming love. In the midst of isolation when we are suffering from a lack of tenderness and chances to meet up, and we experience the loss of so many things, let us once again listen to the proclamation that saves us: he is risen and is living by our side. The Lord asks us from his cross to rediscover the life that awaits us, to look towards those who look to us, to strengthen, recognize and foster the grace that lives within us. Let us not quench the wavering flame (cf. Is 42:3) that never falters, and let us allow hope to be rekindled”

Pope Francis, Urbi et Orbi, 27th March 2020.

### **Canon Eddie Matthews RIP**

On Wednesday we received the very sad news that Canon Eddie Matthews died. Canon Eddie was a great supporter of the school as parish priest here. He was very proactive in the school as Priest and Governor and helped to make the Mass accessible to the pupils, including introducing mass to the children in their classrooms. I never forget an early conversation with him when I started here in 2005 about my experiences of leading mass and liturgy in other catholic schools and the resources I had used, particularly my love of the children's book 'Listen!' which contained child friendly readings from the New Testament but was unfortunately out of print. I showed him my battered old copy and he smiled and replied, "I am glad you like that... I was part of the team that wrote it!" He wrote many books about how to develop liturgy for children and was the Diocesan expert in this area.

*May God welcome this gentle soul into His Kingdom, may the angels lead him into paradise.*

*Eternal rest grant unto him O Lord, and let perpetual light shine upon him, may he rest in peace.*

*Amen.*

I wish you a safe and peaceful Holy Week and Easter.

Peter Coldwell

Headteacher