

HOLY CROSS PRIORY LEICESTER

A PASTORAL MESSAGE FOR PENTECOST SUNDAY

SUNDAY 31 MAY 2020

Pastoral Message from Fr David Rocks OP to all the communities under the Pastoral Care of Holy Cross Priory

Dear Friends,

When Pentecost Day came round last year, I invited you on a journey. That journey had a conclusion, or at least a landmark – when Pentecost Day came round this year. Pentecost Day is here. Pentecost was the day that lockdown and isolation ended for the disciples. We've always known this. But this year those words lockdown and isolation have a very different echo for us, and they bring to mind the distance between us that has characterized the period of Easter this year, and which is not coming to an end today.

Writing to you today, I note that our bishops in England are beginning to ask questions about the safe opening of churches. I know many of you are thinking about opening business again, and hoping to return to work. Some of our children will return to school this week. Many people are afraid and apprehensive that it is too much too soon, while others are finding the whole situation is providing pressures not resulting from 'covid' but nonetheless oppressive.

Last Pentecost, I wanted to set a road map for our mission here at Holy Cross. At the time I wasn't sure what I was doing, and I felt that profoundly. Perhaps the Holy Spirit was preparing me! The idea I had was that we could make a big push together to make great progress with our development plans. We've done that to an extent, but it has been hampered by the 'covid emergency'. Now we are here, not where I hoped we'd be. But we're here.

When Pentecost Day came round this year, it marked the last Sunday during my term of office as prior at Holy Cross. I've done two terms now, so a total of six years as prior. The constitutions of the Dominican Order state that I cannot serve a further term of office, so in the days following Pentecost, the process of finding another prior will commence. I will remain in office as parish priest of Holy Cross for the time being, but I expect to be assigned away from Leicester in the not too distant future. So my message this week is a prelude to my farewell.

I've spent the last nine years of my ministry at Holy Cross. These have been years where I've been able to explore my priesthood, refine my passions, make my first mistakes, and learn many lessons. With every degree of sincerity, I ask forgiveness for the times I have failed you and hurt you. With profound gratitude, I thank you for allowing me to share in your joys and sorrows, your ups and downs. I've had the great privilege of meeting young adults I've baptized and confirmed, prepared for marriage, baptized their children. I've attended the deathbeds of your loved ones and celebrated funerals. I've laughed, joked, cried in your homes, where I've listened to you and argued with you. I've left behind my Man U obsession and become a Gold Fox – Go LCFC!!! What a wonderful year that premiership victory was!! And I've loved you and have been loved by you. These have been the best years of my life.

I will remain in office as your parish priest until new arrangements are made as the procedures dictate, and, as always, I will be there for you. I'll work with the relevant superiors to keep you informed of everything, before I say my final farewell. But for now a word of thanks. We've done the most amazing stuff together over the last six and nine years – raising over £90K at Blackfriars Market, turning round the deficit, relighting the church, refitting the priory, and so much more. That's because you were on side.

I'll give the last words to Blessed Edmund Rice: "Let us do ever so little for God, we know he will never forget it. One thing you may be sure of, that while you work for God, whether you succeed or not, he will amply reward you."

Be intent on prayer, and whatever may happen will turn to our good. May God bless you all.

Fr David Edward Rocks OP PP

Prior