

Dear Parishioners and Friends of St. Columba's,

The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God, and the Communion of the Holy Spirit be with you all!

Welcome to the end of the first week of our 'domestic retreat', and to our first Sunday at home, which corresponds to the 5th Sunday in Lent.

I hope that you are all keeping well, and keeping safe, and managing to adapt to a new routine for yourselves and your family.

I enclose our Parish Newsletter, together with a short 'Thought for the Day', based on our Sunday Readings.

I also include a few other links for live-streaming Masses. Apart from the websites that I have already sent to you (Pope Francis' morning Mass at the Casa Santa Marta in Rome, Mass from Bishop Barron's Private Chapel, and EWTN), here are some more. Have you watched the Masses live-streamed from our own diocese? If not, why not check out the RCDA website? Bishop Hugh is often the Celebrant at the Mass! There are also live-streamed Masses from St. Andrew's Cathedral in Glasgow.

The Catholic Parliamentary Office offers a list of live-streamed Masses throughout Scotland, at: <https://rcpolitics.org/list-of-live-streaming-masses/>

An exhaustive list of parishes offering streamed Masses, together with the Mass times, can also be found at: <https://mass-online.org/daily-holy-mass-live-online/>

As you'll see, this latter site offers links to over 30 live-streamed Masses a day, mainly in the USA and Ireland; these take place every hour, and indeed sometimes on the half-hour, and even the quarter hour. (No, I am not trying to intimidate you "with the use of quarter hours".. by the way, I am offering an Easter egg as a prize for the first person to identify the source of this phrase! No Googling allowed!), Thanks, Iain, for sending me the link to this site.

Tomorrow evening (Friday 27 March) at 5.00pm UK time, Pope Francis will deliver an extraordinary *Urbi et Orbi* blessing ("to the city and world"), from St. Peter's Square in Rome. The ceremony will consist of readings from Holy Scripture, prayers of supplication, and adoration of the Blessed Sacrament; and will conclude with Pope Francis giving the *Urbi et orbi* Blessing, with the possibility of gaining a plenary indulgence for all those who listen to it live through the various forms of communication. You can watch it on Vatican TV or on EWTN.

Just to give you an update on our finances. I am reducing parish expenditure wherever possible. Our heating has been switched off, and our external lighting in the car-park has also been adjusted accordingly. All expenses in the parish house has been cut back, where possible, to reduce outgoings.

I have transferred £36,000 from our Building Fund account to the Diocese, as part of the ongoing plan of repayments of our diocesan loan. After having authorised this payment, we still have a healthy £27,500 in our Building Fund, and our diocesan loan has been reduced down to £199,000. It is good to see it under £200K for the first time in very many years! I do not intend to make any further loan repayments in this calendar year, but have agreed with the Diocese an ongoing repayment plan of £10,000 per annum, over 20 years. Of course, if I win the Lottery, or if a substantial Bequest comes to us, then the issue of the loan will be resolved!!

The benefits to the diocese of this recent repayment are clear, since the funds can be used, if required, to assist struggling smaller parishes in this time of austerity. Thank you for your continuing generous support and understanding – it is much appreciated.

NB. Don't forget that Daylight Saving Time (DST) starts on Sunday: clocks go forward one hour!

Take care of yourselves, please continue your prayers for one another and for our parish, and be assured of my own prayers for all of you. The love of Christ urges us on! St. Columba – pray for us!

God bless,
Fr. Domenico.