



Diocesan Centre
Coursington Road
Motherwell
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Rt Rev. Joseph Toal STB KC*HS
Bishop of Motherwell

31st December 2020

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

As 2020, with its trials and disruption to so many areas of life, draws to a close I wish you all a Happy New Year and pray with you that 2021 may bring relief and betterment, especially to all who have suffered through the months of the pandemic. With the possibility of receiving the vaccine we can certainly hope that our physical health will be protected and the normal activities which we have missed so much can return, while recognising the need for extra vigilance and care as the virus appears to be spreading again with so much virulence. Let us continue to pray fervently for God's protection for all our dear ones and our world.

I thank all those who have worked through the past six months to make our churches safe and welcoming for those who have managed to return to participate in the Church's public worship. A special word of thanks therefore to all our volunteers - cleaners, stewards, organisers, technicians, musicians and cantors – for the time and effort you have given in opening our churches and ensuring that Holy Mass and other services can be celebrated under current restrictions. I thank the clergy for their caring and enthusiastic ministry in service of their parishioners and communities through this time when so much of our normal priestly and diaconal work has been curtailed and adaptations required which have not always been easy to accept or put into practice. As we look ahead with renewed hope for our Parishes and our Diocese, we pray that we can learn from our present experience and ensure that we continue to be communities of strong faith and Christian charity.

I thank you for your continued material and financial support for the Church. Inevitably with fewer people attending Sunday Masses and the loss of most of the income from halls and other activities, our finances have suffered and it will be hard to recover. It has been heartening to hear that many people have continued to contribute even if they have not been able to attend Mass, and as we enter a New Year with only 20 permitted at each Mass I call upon your generosity in supporting the Church through cash and on-line donations or bank transfers. Some parishes will have had reserves to fall back on in recent months but that it is not the case everywhere and every parish will need your on-going financial commitment.

I thank those who have made special contributions to the Church during the emergency. Some of these have been in response to particular appeals, others in recognition of a need for which a helping hand has been quietly offered. As Bishop I would greatly appreciate any help that the Diocese can receive in fulfilling our responsibilities, particularly in the care of the clergy and in the education of those preparing for ministry. If extra support can be given by generous benefactors it will help relieve the amount requested from the parishes in the year ahead. If anyone can assist, I invite you to contact me either by phone at 01698 841848 or by email at bishoptoal@rcdom.org.uk and I will gratefully discuss this with you.

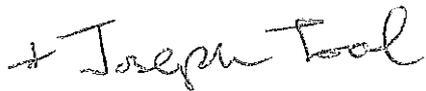
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Although it is necessary to write about the Church's material needs, I am very much aware that our priority is always spiritual and our gratitude is mainly for what we receive from our participation in the Church's worship and mission. Our faith is the Lord's gift to us, and as Catholics we have a strong awareness that our faith is sustained and nourished by the sacramental and devotional life of the Church. We enjoy coming together in the practice of our faith, especially for the Celebration of the Eucharist, and we have felt deprived at times through 2020, so our heart-felt wish and prayer is that we can soon come together again in the fullest way possible to honour God as Father, Son and Holy Spirit, and to seek his blessing upon us. With this desire for the Lord's protection let us enter the New Year offering ourselves and all our endeavours to God, our Creator and Redeemer.

With my prayers and best wishes,

Yours in Christ,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "+ Joseph Toal". The signature is written in a cursive style with a small cross at the beginning.

+ Joseph Toal