

**To catechumens preparing for Sacramental Initiation into the Church,  
And to candidates from other ecclesiastical communities preparing to be received  
into full communion with the Catholic Church**

Dear friends,

In my first pastoral letter as Bishop of Northampton, I used an image that I would like to share with you again now. It is the early Easter picture of the disciples hiding together behind locked doors because of fear. Maybe this image of the first Christians speaks to us in an even more powerful way during these days of coronavirus lockdown. Then again, we may be telling ourselves that at least they were hiding in their locked room “together”!

Being a disciple of Jesus Christ is a community experience rather than an individualistic and solitary one. God’s people have always been a pilgrim people and by his grace, you have been brought into an experience of this pilgrimage journey to the Kingdom of Heaven. The Church is a people. Within the isolation of our homes, it is difficult for us to feel part of this people at times. There is the live-streaming of Masses from cathedrals and churches, a very poor substitute for the dynamic gift of being brought together by the Holy Spirit, in order to sing the praises of the Lord who has gathered us to celebrate the mysteries of our faith. How I, and indeed every priest, long to be able to celebrate these life-giving mysteries again with the people of God!

In the meantime, we must wait in patience. During these days of the Easter Season I wanted to share this with you, that you are very much in my heart and prayer. Please do pray for the virtue of hope and fidelity to the call you have received. I know that many of you will be living lives of service, where and when you are able to help others within your family and community. These are signs of your faith in Christ Jesus and desire to belong to his Church. May our Lord bless you and continue to support you in faith, hope and love as you await the day when you are able to celebrate the sacraments with us.

We will soon celebrate the Feast of Pentecost, the day when Jesus fulfilled the promise that the Father and he would pour out the Holy Spirit upon this world. I encourage you to open your lives to the coming of the Spirit in these days.

✠ David J Oakley  
Bishop of Northampton