



A PASTORAL LETTER

To the people of Saint Joseph's, Stockport ~ Sunday 3rd July 2022

Dear Parishioners,

I write to you this Sunday, sharing the sadness of the recent announcement that the Sacred Heart Fathers will be departing from Saint Joseph's after serving the parish for almost 40 years. I know you will understand the practical reasons which have led the Sacred Heart Fathers to make this difficult decision. Most of all, I am sure you would wish to join with me in expressing our gratitude to Father Jim, Father Blaise, Father David and all the dedicated priests who have served this much-loved church of our Diocese.

I share with you the desire to see the continuance of parish life and the flourishing of the mission of Saint Joseph's. I am, therefore, happy to be able to send a new Parish Priest to serve the parish and to undertake a new mission at Saint Joseph's. I have invited Father Sean Davidson - presently serving Saint Chad's and Saint Anne's Cheadle - with the pastoral care of the parish from the first day of September. I know you will give him a warm welcome and every help and support in the years ahead. I have confidence in committing a priest fully to Saint Joseph's for a new mission to establish the church as *our Diocesan Shrine of the Blessed Sacrament*. I hope this initiative will see the development of the work and witness of Saint Joseph's at the heart of Stockport as the 'open church' we have always known. Saint Joseph's has long been such an oasis of prayer; and I wish it to become a place treasured by many for Eucharistic adoration and especially of prayer and intercession for the sanctification of priests and for new and generous vocations to the Priesthood.

I appreciate this initiative will take time to develop in building upon the historic place of Saint Joseph's in the town centre and on the charism of the Sacred Heart Fathers in promoting devotion to the Eucharistic Heart of Jesus. I pray this initiative will assist a new flourishing of the life of Saint Joseph's as a community gathered around the Holy Eucharist. I look forward to being with you to give thanks to God for the four decades of the Sacred Heart Fathers serving the parish; and in due course to welcome Father Sean Davidson and entrust this mission to this historic and much-loved church.

United with you in thanksgiving for all the years' service of the Sacred Heart Fathers and with this prayer and hope for the future of Saint Joseph's,

+ Mark

Bishop of Shrewsbury