



**Bishop Paul's Pastoral Letter to the Parishioners of St. Gregory and St. Clare, Preston.**

***To be shared with parishioners on the weekend of Palm Sunday 2025 (i.e. need not be read out, but should be brought to their attention)***

Dear Parishioners,

We are about to enter Holy Week, the most important week of our lives. Let us step back from the distraction of world events and even from the details and concerns of our personal lives; in order to take time to reflect on what this Holy Week gives us. We have an insight into the heart of God and into the human heart. We see the determination of Jesus to be faithful to the Father's will, and in how He has overcome all evil, all that would spoil the good He wants for us.

For several months St. Gregory's has not celebrated Sunday Holy Mass. I am all too aware of the pain, frustration and even anger this decision has caused you. It was not a decision I made lightly, but I believe I was justified in taking it. Now I believe is the time to restore the celebration of the Mass. Having met with Father John-Mark Agulefo, Priest in Charge of St. Gregory's and Parish Priest of St. Clare's, Jim Maguire and a small number of parishioners, I have decided that Sunday Mass will be celebrated each week at St. Gregory's by Father John-Mark, commencing on Easter Sunday. The time of Mass is to be decided by Father John-Mark.

Let us all learn from the experience of these past months and let us carry a greater awareness of the call we share to live in the Church, beyond our local parishes, working together for the good of the Church. We still face significant changes as our numbers (both of Clergy and Lay Faithful) decline. Let us pray for vocations to the Priesthood and Religious life and let us pray for volunteers to step forward in our parishes. When changes inevitably come, let us understand that they are for the greater good of the Church even when they seem to affect us adversely at the local level.

May Mary, the Mother of Our Redeemer, be our constant guide, comfort and companion as we try to follow her son.

With my blessing,

+ Rt Rev Paul Swarbrick  
**Bishop of Lancaster**