



Sacred Heart & St Catherine of Alexandria

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Mass in the time of Lockdown

Quite by chance, we selected the live stream from Ss. Mary and Benedict's in Coventry as the means by which we hoped to remain in contact with daily Mass and the devotions of the Church. The experience has proved a blessing beyond expectation. Not for a moment has it seemed we weren't somehow really attending Mass. It helps that the church is empty and you have no feeling of being a mere spectator at someone else's Mass, but nor are you alone for most of Father Jimmy's parishioners seem to be in attendance at his Mass, together with people from elsewhere in the Archdiocese and beyond.

The live stream is taken by a congregation that embraces people in New Zealand, India, Poland, Ireland, South Africa, Canada, Tanzania and Nigeria. We have prayed for a young man killed in a traffic accident in Tanzania, and a family in Poland have asked for prayers for a son, seriously injured in a similar accident, and now alone in a hospital in Coventry.

We have family and friends in Wales who join us for Mass every morning, and it was with surprise and delight that I heard that also attending this daily Mass were a community of Carmelite Sisters from Wolverhampton, in whose chapel I occasionally served Mass more than half a century ago.

All of us are present at this Mass, albeit after an unusual fashion; it is being offered to God on behalf of us all. No, live-streaming were it available would not be acceptable if, fit and well, I simply didn't want to go out on a Sunday morning in December, but as things are today it is a great blessing.

On a Sunday, there is just time to hear Mass in Coventry and then join Archbishop Bernard for Mass from the Cathedral. Under normal circumstances, such a thing would be impossible and unnecessary but, in these days, let us simply praise God that, for once, man's inventive genius is being harnessed in the cause of good, and that God, in his loving kindness, is giving us the opportunity to overindulge (were such a thing possible) in attendance at the Mass we are otherwise denied, and to become more acutely aware of missing sacramental Communion, for which there is no substitute, and which we are always in danger of taking for granted.

Last Saturday, following Mass, there was an hour of adoration before the Blessed Sacrament. Too often, time simply does not allow such things. This time, it allowed the opportunity of hearing read, in its entirety, Saint Paul's letter to the Colossians and brought wondrously to life by Father Jimmy's talents as a story teller. How much impact do we miss in only ever hearing a few verses at a time?

If I live to see normal service restored, if any of us lives to see quite that, I shall rejoice in my return to daily Mass at Sacred Heart but, God knows, I shall sorely miss both Father Jimmy and Archbishop Bernard.

Kevin Larkin