

My dear Parishioners, as I prepare to stand down as your Parish Priest, I want to express my deep gratitude to you for the love, generosity, and support you have shown me since I arrived eight years and more ago. The Lord has given me abundant blessings and graces through you which have been so important in my growth as a person and as a priest. As I approach 71 years of age, I know that my energy and drive are diminishing and that it's time not only to retire but also to dedicate the next stage of my life to deeper prayer and contemplation. However, I won't become a hermit! I'll be living in the area and will hopefully continue to meet many of you about the town.

As in any parish, there have been so many moments of joy and celebration but times too of sadness, sorrow, and heart-break. But all of them have been moments of grace, drawing us closer to each other and to the Lord, forming us into a supportive, faith-filled community. I know that some of you have felt offended by what I have said or done at times and for that I ask your forgiveness. I can only say that there was never an intention on my part to give hurt or cause harm.

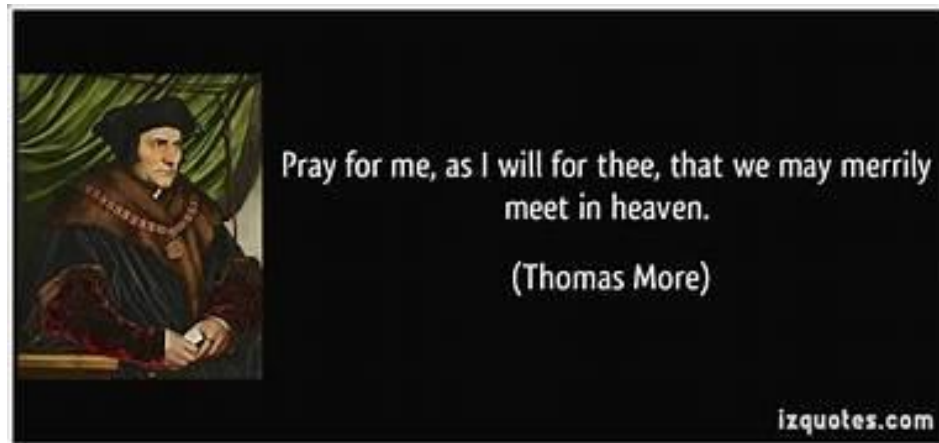
Two major crises took place in these past years: the awareness of clergy sexual abuse of children and the pandemic lockdown. In their different ways, both had a major impact on our faith, leading some even in our parish to choose no longer to attend Mass. This is a source of great sadness and we pray that the Lord will continue to bless them and fill them with his presence. It is truly a cause of great joy that so many of you continue in your Catholic faith and encourage others to do the same.

Pope Francis is deeply aware of the damage suffered by so many and understands that we must find a new way of being Church where there is no longer any room for covering things up, of power being abused, or having a two-tier church of clergy and laity. This is why he proposes a synodal church in which everyone has a voice which is listened to and everyone has a say in the decisions made. He dreams of a Church in which everyone enjoys the equality given in Baptism. Bishop Toal will soon be introducing Project Wellspring with the aim of renewing and invigorating our diocese. Both Synodality and Wellspring will serve evangelisation, the bringing of Christ's Good News to our world. This is the responsibility of all of us and I urge you to commit yourselves to these processes of renewal. I am grateful to all of you who have given of your time and effort to the flourishing of the parish, not least the members of the Synod Board who have taken on so many parish responsibilities.

There is great hope for our Church and our parish even with reduced numbers. Your dedicated presence as parish members shows that the Holy Spirit

continues to strengthen and lead us. I know you will give a warm welcome and every support to Fr Rooney who will lead the parish with vigour and enthusiasm. May the Lord bless him and you as you step forward into the future.

St Thomas More before his death said these words to his daughter which I make mine to you:



May God bless all of you, make you strong in faith and goodness, and fill you with his holiness and love. Fr Tom Magill