

13th October 2020

Abridged version of the letter

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Dear Fathers and Deacons,

I hope this finds you well.


I have been speaking to the Deans about the forthcoming Deanery Meetings and preparations are being made for them to happen virtually in the near future. I would want everyone to attend and contact with each other after these months of isolation. There is opportunity to hold the meetings at a time other than mid-morning, which may help attendance. I have prepared an agenda which I attach with this letter. I have sent out a number of documents and papers in recent weeks and I hope they help encourage good discussion about what has happened and what our hopes might be for the future. I would encourage a willingness to engage with each other and to listen for the guidance of the Holy Spirit among us. It would be good therefore to spend some time in prayer at the beginning, perhaps listening to a passage from Scripture and invoking the Holy Spirit's presence among us.

After the Deanery Meetings I would hope to receive the minutes quite soon afterwards and also a report from the Dean on the most important points raised at the meeting. I would then invite the Council of Priests to meet, also virtually, so that the views of the clergy can inform myself and the Diocesan community as we deal with the present and look to the future. I suggest that the Council of Priests' Meeting be held on Thursday 14th November at 2pm.

I thank you all for your good work in the parishes, schools, hospitals and care-homes at present, and I look forward to hearing good reports from these Deanery Meetings. I pray for the Lord's blessing for us and seek Our Lady's intercession as we seek to serve the Lord and the people of our Diocese in faith, hope and charity.

With my prayers and best wishes

Yours in Christ,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "+ Joseph Toal". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

+ Joseph Toal

Agenda for Deanery Meetings – October 2020

- 1) Opening Reflection and Prayer
- 2) Welcome – particularly to new members in the Deanery.
- 3) Opportunity for those present to share their reflections on what has happened in the last six months and its effects on our lives and ministry.
- 4) Review of how we celebrated the Liturgy and the Sacraments during the time of church closure, and how we are doing so under the present restrictions. What have we learnt from the time without public worship, and now what is positive or negative in our present way of doing things?
- 5) What pastoral initiatives have been possible beyond our Church Services? Are there new possibilities?
- 6) Does Pope Francis' Encyclical, *Fratelli tutti*, offer us some guidance for our outreach locally as well as its call to universal fraternity?
- 7) Planning for November – is it wise to consider prayer services in the cemeteries? Should we try to offer Memorial Masses for those who died during the time of church closures? Should the clergy concelebrate a Mass in the Cathedral for the deceased clergy, especially those who have died during the past year?
- 8) Election of new member to the Council of Priests in Central/Motherwell, Wishaw, and Airdrie Deaneries.
- 9) Nomination of a new clergy representative for the Diocesan Finance Committee.
- 10) Next Meeting – in November to consider preparations for Advent and Christmas