

Statement re: St Luke's Parish, Frodsham

After 18 years as your Parish Priest at St Luke's, Frodsham, Mgr Peter O'Neill has made the difficult decision to retire as Parish Priest having reached the canonical age for retirement. Mgr. O'Neill has accordingly written to the Bishop to offer his resignation and will celebrate his last Mass as Parish Priest on Sunday 20 July. Following retirement, he will continue to live in the local area in a house provided by the Diocese. The Bishop wishes to record his gratitude for almost two decades of dedicated service which Mgr. O'Neill has given as Parish Priest and in the wider service of the Church especially in the field of education.

The Bishop is grateful to have received the offer of Fr Frank Waters SDS to serve in the Diocese. Bishop Mark has invited Father Waters to assume responsibility for the pastoral care of St Luke's from 1st October 2014. Fr Waters, a Salvatorian priest, returns to the Diocese where he served as a hospital chaplain in the Stockport area a number of years ago. Following Mgr O'Neill's last Sunday in the parish and pending Fr Waters arrival in October, arrangements will be made for Mass to be celebrated by the generous help of a number of priests.

The retirement of a Parish Priest is a moment to review the number of Sunday Masses now required in the local pastoral area and the requirement of every priest today to be available to support neighbouring parishes. It will be necessary for the current number of Sunday Masses in St Luke's Parish to be reduced from three to two. There will be a period of consultation in which the parish steering committee will have an important role before a final decision on Sunday Mass times is made. It is expected that the new Sunday Mass schedule will be in place in time for Fr Waters' arrival. St Luke's will have a resident priest caring for the needs of the parish but it is always true today that every priest may be called upon to minister outside the parish. Fr Waters has generously responded to the Bishop's invitation to serve in Frodsham and today the parish is invited to help in the necessary adjustments to allow Fr Waters to look after the parish here and fulfil that pastoral care in the wider area.

Bishop Mark sends his warmest thanks to Mgr Peter O'Neill and commends Fr. Frank Waters to your prayers. The Bishop, conscious of the declining number of priests across the Diocese also asks all your prayers for new vocations to the Priesthood. We can be thankful as a diocese for the increased number of young men now offering themselves for the Priesthood in the Shrewsbury Diocese. However, conscious of challenging times and circumstances let us all continue to work together to sustain and build-up the mission of the Church here in St. Luke's Parish and far beyond.