



Glossop Catholic Parishes

**Jesus Christ calls everyone to experience His transforming love.
We joyfully embrace our responsibility to proclaim this good news.**

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From the parish priest, Fr Martin Sylvester STB, MA (fr.martin@glossopcatholics.org.uk)

12th July 2025

The future of our parishes

Dear parishioners,

You may recall that in July 2019 we undertook a consultation about future provision for Catholic life in Glossop, with an open meeting skilfully facilitated by Ron Lynch, a highly respected management consultant who assisted us free of charge, motivated by his love of the Catholic Church.

The consequence of that consultation was a decision to struggle our best to keep open both our beloved churches, and to keep working together to seize our responsibility to be missionaries of Jesus Christ to those among whom we live and work, building on the work of earlier generations who were ably served by so many good priests.

With the aid of coaching from Divine Renovation and others, we continue to grow more and more into a community who strive to live up to the trust God has placed in us as the missionaries of our own generations.

Six years have passed, and nothing stands still. I have received a letter from Bishop Patrick instructing me to undertake a fresh consultation. He wrote:

As you know, there is an ongoing diocesan-wide process of consultation, considering the needs of our diocese now and into the future, so that we can be as outward facing and missionary-orientated as possible. The consultation also considers the current situation of each parish in light of factors such as the number of Sunday Mass attending parishioners, how many sick and housebound receive Holy Communion, how many schools, hospitals, or other chaplaincies there are, and the geography of the parish's area. This is all set against the diocesan picture of the numbers of priests, deacons and Religious who are available to minister in our parishes and communities.

[I]n the specific context of Glossop I am asking you to begin consultations with your parishes and the wider community about the viability of having two Catholic parishes and churches in the town, and looking to reduce these, through an extinctive union, into one single parish with one church for the entire town. I am aware that for many years there has been talk about the future of both churches, with smaller numbers of parishioners now attending each than in the past. I also know that the location of Saint Philip Howard School might play a part in these discussions. Please consult as widely as possible. [...]

In line with similar discussions and consultations across our diocese, I would ask that you are in a position to present a comprehensive review about amalgamation of the two parishes into one before the end of this year, 2025. I would hope that this proposal could then be considered by the Council of Priests early in 2026. At the

same time, and as has been undertaken in some other parts of our diocese, I would ask that the consultation also realistically considers which of the current two churches would best serve a single parish in Glossop as its single place of worship, and what might be done with the other church. In considering an extinctive union (amalgamation) of the two parishes into one, to become a reality in 2026, it would be necessary to have an understanding of the medium-term future of the two churches, one as the single parish church for a potential new single parish, and one to be no longer a place of worship.

With all good wishes to you and to your parishioners, and my prayers as you embark on this next stage of the ongoing development and mission of the Catholic Faith in the High Peak.

We love our churches, and our first reaction is bound to be one of dismay. To ask me, or any priest, for his opinion about which of the two churches he serves should remain as a single place of worship for the town feels like asking a parent which of their children should be spared. But I must seek God's help to rise above my initial, emotional response, and work with you, the people of the parishes, to seek the will of God for the Catholic life of this town. What arrangements will best serve God, and best enable us, and the generations who will follow us, to embrace our responsibility to proclaim the good news of the transforming love of Jesus Christ to those who so need to know it?

Putting aside the vexing question of church buildings, joining the two parishes into one new parish ("extinctive union") will greatly lessen the administrative load on many parish volunteers who generously undertake administrative and stewardship roles to help the Catholic community in Glossop, and who, for now, have to do many burdensome tasks twice. Our parishes share a joint pastoral council, a joint buildings and maintenance committee, a joint finance committee, and a joint core leadership team. We strive now to act as one, and a union of the two parishes seems to me to be a way of formalising the way we already operate.

I am delighted to say that Ron Lynch has once again accepted my invitation to help us. Ron will lead three open meetings: Sunday 7th September at 3pm, Saturday 4th October at 10am, and Thursday 23rd October at 7pm. Choose whichever meeting best suits your own schedule, and put it in your diary now; information on how to book a place will be published soon. I anticipate that a series of questions will be circulated to guide our thinking, along with information about how to take part if you cannot attend a meeting.

I urge you, please, to continue to say at least once a day our parish prayer, or to begin if you have not started, or to resume if you have grown slack. We must all play our part, and we must all remember that the Holy Spirit empowers us in ways that can astonish us.

Heavenly Father, bless and prosper our efforts to renew the life of our parishes. Help me to discover the part you want me to play, and give me the courage to trust in the power of the Holy Spirit. Through Christ our Lord. Amen.

Wishing every blessing to you all,
and eager for your prayers,

Fr Martin