THE CHURCH OF ST CATHERINE LABOURÉ, FARINGTON.

Last year the parish of St Catherine Labouré at Farington and the parish of St Mary at Euxton were merged to become one parish with two churches. In the months since then we have reflected and held consultations which were used to assist Archbishop John in his decisions for our parish. Through those, it became obvious that we simply do not need and cannot sustain two physical sites for the parish. The result is that the archbishop has signed the decree which will see St Catherine’s Church “taken out of use for public worship” - the formal way of saying that the physical church will close.

Archbishop John will celebrate a final Mass of Thanksgiving and celebration of the life of the church at 7pm on Friday 5th September 2025. Due to the small size of the church, this will need to be a ticketed event to sit in the church, but doors open into our hall to cater for anyone that might arrive. A Reception in a marquee in the grounds will follow.

Why has this happened?

Basically, a shortage of priests!

It is not just the shortage of priests, of course. There is also a shortage of parishioners (the very source of new Vocations). Whilst there are very many people baptized into the Catholic Church, sadly many of them choose not to practice their Faith regularly. The vast numbers who choose to attend only for Baptisms and First Communions means that the numbers that should be sustaining parishes - financially, spiritually and socially  -  are just not there. This, sadly, is where the real heart of the matter lies.

However, given the circumstances in which we find ourselves, it is surely better - though emotional and sad in the short term - to build one thriving Christian community gathered around one church, rather than trying to keep two or three struggling communities on the go. A fuller church and the combined talents of a larger group of parishioners will enable a much better opportunity for growth and evangelization. A reminder that a parish is there not just to sustain its existing parishioners but to call back the lapsed and reach out to those yet to find Our Lord.

Long before he became Pope, Benedict XVI, predicted that the Church in the Western world would become much smaller, keeping only the truly committed, before it would begin to grow and thrive again. It seems he was right. So now we must take courage and work with the Holy Spirit to see a way forward to giving witness to our Catholic Faith in these new circumstances.

Please do pray for us through the intercession of Our Blessed Lady and St Catherine to guide us in our new path.

Fr Simon Henry.