

Good morning everyone and thank you for the opportunity to say a few words as today sees Father Pat celebrating Sunday mass for the last time in St Joseph's after a remarkable 23 years of service to the parish as he leaves us for a well-earned retirement.

Speaking with Father Pat recently he said that this has been a very happy 23 years in St Joseph's, I am sure I speak for all parishioners in expressing our very grateful thanks for the support and compassion he has shown us and our families over this incredible length of time.

We thank him for his resolute focus on his ministry, his care for the sick and hope he will have many happy memories of more joyful occasions, baptisms, first holy communions, blessing of the food and weddings, there is of course much much more to it than that but again thank you.

The last 20 months have been difficult for everyone with the pandemic and I am sure it was heart-breaking for you and indeed us all to see the church shut for some months. Just as we all thought things might be getting better you were taken seriously ill. The prayers of family, friends and parishioners were certainly answered last autumn when showing incredible strength, you recovered after a period of being critically ill in hospital.

We hope that your retirement will be blessed with good health.

We know you won't be going far away and we look forward to seeing you from time to time.

I met Father Pat at Newbury Rugby Club recently and I was delighted that he knew nothing about the presentation we are about to make. For once he didn't know what was going on in the parish.

The mention of rugby brings me to an issue that we will face with Father Pat leaving, how are we going to get our sport and in

particular our Six Nations Rugby updates? You always handled the results very delicately particularly when the Irish got beaten, although I am sure you will want to tell us all about how Ireland beat New Zealand yesterday.

Coming on to the presentation, I would like to thank everyone for your generous support and contributions which reflects the esteem Father Pat is held within the parish, and a result of this and perhaps Graham will come forward we would like to present Father Pat with a framed picture of St Joseph's Church, an album of photographs of events in Father Pat's ministry here to remind him of us and a cheque for £4300 as a big thank you for everything he has done for us at St Joseph's.

Finally, and this is line that Father Pat uses with the first communion children "take a bow, it is time for some applause".

Thank you everyone, we will leave the picture and photograph on the altar.