



PRIORY CHURCH OF OUR LADY AND ST MICHAEL, ABERGAVENNY
EGLWYS Y PRIORDY EIN HARGLWYDDDES A MIHANGEL SANT, Y FENNI

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DEAR PARENTS/GUARDIANS

REGARDING USE OF OUR LADY AND ST. MICHAELS CHURCH CAR PARK.

FROM – FR. MATTHEW CARNEY – PARISH PRIEST.

Many of you will be aware of the accident that took place in our church car park recently. No one was injured but the severity of the structural damage to the Saint Michael's centre demonstrates that if pedestrians had been involved, serious injury or a fatality could have occurred.

This accident has led to the Chair of Governors, the Headteacher and I, to review the use of the church car park.

We feel that we should remind all those using the car park, that it is the CHURCH car park, and is owned and maintained by the Catholic parish that worships here. Use of the car park by parents of children attending the school/nursery is granted as a courtesy. The car parks' principal use is for those attending church or events in St. Michaels centre. There is no automatic right for parents to use the car park. The car park is owned by the Belmont Abbey Mission CIO, which is the monastery that serves this parish of Our Lady and St. Michael. I, as Parish Priest, act as one of the trustees of that charity, and I am the responsible person on this site, responsible for the safety of those who use this site.

There have been concerns now for many years about parental/school use of the car park, and the possible dangers posed by that use. We have tried to mitigate these risks in many ways, frequent appeals through the school newsletter for parents to use the car park in a responsible way, and direct appeals within the car park itself. We now have 7 speed bumps to prevent speeding in the car park, there are demarcated walking lanes for pedestrians, and we have car park marshals present in the car park etc. We also have an arrangement with the company "Flash Park", that allows us to report and to fine those using the car park without permission, we have also asked parents to consider parking off site and walking the short distance to school, which a number of families now do.

All of these and other measures though have not solved the problem of continuing dangers to those using the car park, even since the accident took place last month, there have

continued to be problems, with some parents still not cooperating with directions given by myself, and sometimes petulant and bad-tempered behaviour by drivers.

The principal danger for me, is that although many parents have agreed to our requests to not use the car park and to walk onto the site, many parents still choose to drive onto the site in large numbers and often in very large vehicles. We have an average of 80 vehicles coming on to the site each morning and evening, not including staff vehicles and these are often very large 4x4's, minibuses, large works vans etc. In my opinion this number is far too high for the size and shape of our car park, which in places is very narrow, can become congested very easily, and we have vehicles at very close proximity to pedestrians, especially our children.

After the recent accident this cannot continue, further steps to mitigate the risks in the car park must be taken, and that will inevitably involve greatly reducing the number of vehicles using the site during the daily drop off and pick-ups. The measures to be introduced have been discussed and approved by the Parish Council and Finance committee of the parish and the school governing body, advice has also been taken from Monmouthshire County Council, Gwent Police, Belmont Abbey Trustees and the Archdiocese of Cardiff.

Therefore, from the beginning of next term, only those who have car park permits, (which I will issue) will be able to use the car park at the beginning and end of the school day. That is from 8.30am till 9.15am and from 2.45pm – 3.45pm, and on other occasions as determined by me. It is my intention to reduce the number of vehicles coming on site from 80 to below 20, so only a small number of permits will be available. Taxi's will be allowed on site, school/nursery staff, and those adults/children who have health or disability reasons for needing to use the car park.

Inconvenience or difficulty caused by not being able to use the car park will not be reasons for receiving a car park permit. Application forms will be available from me, please e-mail me at fr.matthew@live.co.uk

I realise this will cause difficulties for some parents and inconvenience to many, but the safety of the children and families using this site is paramount and must be addressed urgently.

As the responsible person here, I have the moral and legal duty to address the risks faced by those using the car park at this time. I ask for your understanding and cooperation.

Thankyou.

Fr. Matthew Carney.

Parish Priest.

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