



FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

REGARDING THE RE-OPENING OF CHURCHES FOR THE CELEBRATION OF MASS DURING THE COVID-19 CORONAVIRUS PANDEMIC FROM 4TH JULY 2020 DIOCESE OF LEEDS

Q 1. *Will all churches be open for Masses on 4th July and beyond?*

No. Only some churches will be ready to re-open for the celebration of Mass on 4th July; others will re-open for public worship either shortly after or at a much later date. There may be different but very good reasons for this. One of these, is that some parishes may have difficulty recruiting sufficient volunteers to help with the stewarding and cleaning arrangements that need to be in place before a church can re-open safely.

Q 2. *How will I know when I can start going to Mass in my local parish?*

You will need to read the information that is published on either your parish's own website or in its weekly newsletter. Alternatively, you can telephone your local clergy or parish office to speak to someone or listen to a recorded message with details of the scheduled Mass times which will be offered. Please note that some parishes may offer additional celebrations of Mass or have a changed Mass schedule to the one which operated before the closure of churches on 20th March. It is important to understand that not every parish may yet be able to offer a scheduled Mass for public attendance on or after 4th July (see Q1. above)

Q 3. *Will the numbers of people able to go to Mass be restricted?*

Yes. Each church building will have a maximum capacity that is determined by its size, seating arrangements and the requirements for social distancing.

Q 4. *Now that churches can re-open for public worship, is the Obligation to attend Mass on Sundays and Holydays of Obligation restored?*

No. This Obligation has been suspended by the Catholic Bishops of England and Wales; it is unlikely to be restored until the pandemic has ended in this country and people are able to freely attend Mass once again without any restrictions. Consequently, those wishing to attend Mass should consider the possibility of doing so on a weekday. For example, someone who is retired or not in full-time employment during weekdays may be able to attend Mass easily during the week; this would enable the Masses which are celebrated at the weekend to have more room available for those who are only free to attend on a Saturday evening or on a Sunday. Such a willingness to be flexible would ease the pressure on numbers attending Sunday celebrations and allow a gradual return to attendance at Mass for more people.

Q 5. *Will I need to wear a face mask to attend Mass?*

No, not if you attend a Mass in the Diocese of Leeds. All churches in the Diocese of Leeds that are able to re-open for the celebration of Mass will keep the 2^m social distance requirement. Under the Government's current instructions, this will mean that wearing a face covering will not be compulsory for those attending Mass. However, if the Government's advice should change, then you will be advised accordingly. Those who choose to wear a face mask are of course at liberty to do so and should bring one with them.

Q 6. *Can I just turn up for a scheduled Mass in any church?*

No. You will need to register your intention to attend a scheduled Mass. You can register either on-line, via a link on your parish's website or by telephoning your parish's usual contact telephone number. The online booking service is totally free to those wishing to register and will require only your name and email address. For telephone registration, only your name and contact telephone number will be required. This will enable us to observe the government regulations which ask that we keep a record for 21 days of the names and contact details of all those who visit our churches; it will assist NHS Test and Trace with requests for that data if needed for contact tracing and the investigation of local outbreaks.

Q 7. *Why do I need to register to attend a scheduled Mass?*

We wish to ensure, as far as possible, that no one comes to one of our churches and is unable to be admitted due to the social distancing requirements which limit the number of people who can be accommodated safely in the church. The registration will enable the parish priest to know that the safe capacity of the church will not be exceeded.

Q 8. *Can I register to attend with members of my family?*

Yes. Parishioners will be able to register for their own attendance and, where applicable, include the number of people who will attend with them from their household if sufficient capacity remains available at the time of registration. When the church capacity for a scheduled Mass is reached, it will not be possible to make any further registrations for that specific scheduled Mass.

Q 9. *Do I need to register for weekday Masses as well as Sunday Masses?*

It may not be necessary to register for attendance at weekday Masses in every church. However, a parish priest may decide to require this should there be a concern that the capacity of the church and the numbers which may attend could result in the ability of parishioners to be socially distanced being placed at risk. You will therefore need to check the information supplied by your local parish.

Q 10. *Are there restrictions on who can go to Mass?*

Any individual with symptoms of COVID-19 coronavirus (a new continuous cough, a high temperature or a loss of, or change in, their normal sense of taste or smell), or

anyone from a household with possible or confirmed COVID-19 coronavirus infection should act in accordance with the Government guidance. This means that they should stay at home and not come to Mass. For anyone in this situation they should wait until after they have been tested for COVID-19 coronavirus; only if the test is negative should they consider registering their name for a scheduled Mass. Those people to whom the NHS has written advising them to shield are currently advised not to meet more than one person from outside of their own household, and therefore not currently advised to attend places of worship.

Q 11. *Will there be anything different about what I have to do in church when I go to the scheduled Mass I have registered for?*

Yes. Please come a little early before the time that Mass is due to start; this is to give time for the stewards to safely admit everyone into church. You may have to queue outside, briefly, especially if you arrive at the last minute! Please be patient and understanding of the responsibilities and work that the stewards have to do, particularly as they and all of us get used to the arrangements we need to follow. Please also note that:

- a. The Holy Water stoups will be empty to avoid passing on any infection from the COVID-19 coronavirus. Normally we would make the sign of the cross with the Holy Water on entering the church to remind ourselves of our baptism. Please continue to make the sign of the cross though (without the Holy Water), either as you enter the church or when you genuflect before the Presence of the Lord in the Blessed Sacrament in the Tabernacle of the church.
- b. There will be no Hymn Books or Missals distributed. Paper missalettes and parish newsletters, etc., may be available but are for your individual use only and you should take them away when the celebration of the Mass is concluded; you should not leave any of these in the church at the end of Mass.
- c. There will be no congregational singing at Mass. However, there may be organ music and/or a cantor to sing some of the parts during the celebration of the Mass.
- d. There will be no children's liturgy of the word.
- e. There will be no procession of the offertory gifts and no collection of offerings will be taken during the Mass. You are encouraged to make your donation to the church online or via standing order. However, in some churches there may be collecting plates or boxes for cash offerings placed at the entrances and exits, and these will be overseen by stewards.
- f. The Sign of Peace will not be exchanged at Mass.
- g. After the priest has said, "*Behold the Lamb of God ... Lord I am not worthy*", he will hold up the Host to the Congregation and say audibly "*The Body of Christ*" to which the people should respond "*Amen*". In the same way, he will elevate

the chalice and say, *"The Blood of Christ"* and again the people should respond *"Amen"*. The reason he will do this is because when you come to receive Holy Communion, this personal affirmation of your faith in the real presence of Christ in the Eucharist which you receive will already have taken place. Doing so at this point will avoid the risk of the transmission of any COVID-19 coronavirus infection from the exhaled spoken breath of either the priest or the communicant during the distribution of Holy Communion (see note 'j.' below).

- h. Holy Communion will be distributed under one kind only. Holy Communion from the chalice will not be given. It is our ancient Catholic belief that the Sacred Body and Precious Blood of the Lord Jesus Christ is really and fully present in both the consecrated Host and the Chalice. Therefore, we receive the Real Presence of the Lord wholly and entirely in Holy Communion under one kind.
- i. The arrangements for the distribution of Holy Communion may differ according to the seating and layout in different churches. You should listen carefully therefore to any instructions that are given before or during the Mass about how Holy Communion will be distributed. The priest or the Extraordinary Minister of Holy Communion may bring Holy Communion to you in the place where you are present in the church. Alternatively, you may be required to form a procession (similar to what previously has taken place) to receive Holy Communion; or, you may be asked to receive Holy Communion after the Blessing and dismissal at the end of Mass. The precise arrangements will be determined by your parish priest according to the safest manner suitable for the church where you are attending Mass.
- j. Holy Communion will be distributed in the hand only. When receiving Holy Communion, you should do so standing, with arms at 'full stretch' so that there is a good distance between the priest (or the Extraordinary Minister) and yourself. Your hands, palms upwards, one on top of the other, should be extended as flatly as possible. Holy Communion will be given to you **silently**. As the priest (or Extraordinary Minister) will be facing you directly at this point, **they will NOT say** *"The Body of Christ"* and you should consume the Host immediately and **NOT say** *"Amen"* at this point. This will avoid the risk of the transmission of any COVID-19 coronavirus infection from the exhaled breath of either the priest or the communicant when speaking (see note 'g.' above). The priest or deacon will remind the congregation about these arrangements before Holy Communion is distributed.
- k. If you or a member of your family normally come for a blessing at the time of Holy Communion rather than receiving Communion, you/they should still fold your arms diagonally across your chest. The priest will make the sign of the cross over you but without saying any words of blessing.

1. There will be no tea/coffee offered after the celebration of Mass. At this time, church halls and other church premises must remain closed for this purpose. Please be aware that due to the current requirements for a thorough sanitisation after usage and the need for enhanced ventilation within them, it may not be possible for the toilet facilities to be open in the majority of churches.

Q 12. If I am unable to go Mass at a local church, or I decide not to go because I have concerns about the risk to my health, will I still be able to access the live stream celebration of Mass from Leeds Cathedral?

Yes. The Mass will be live-streamed each day from Leeds Cathedral, even after the resumption of public Masses has begun. Daily live-streamed Masses will also continue to be available from the National Shrine of Our Lady of Walsingham.

**✠ Marcus Stock
Bishop of Leeds**

30th June 2020