



Guidelines on Liturgical Celebrations

25th June 2020.

Dear Reverend Fathers,

Over the past few months you have become accustomed to receiving a constant stream of information, guidelines and instructions aimed at keeping us obedient to the Government's call to protect public health, and Christ's call to remain faithful to Him during the current pandemic. I am conscious that, across our parishes, ability and circumstances vary; not everyone/everywhere is able to respond at the same pace. Thank you for your patience and efforts to keep the ship steady.

This communication is significantly different from previous ones because on Tuesday 23rd June the Government announced that **from 4th July 2020 religious groups may open their doors and hold public worship**. This is an answer to prayer, even though strict compliance with regulations still applies. Our parishioners are welcome, once more, to gather for public Mass, both on Sundays and weekdays. The celebration of Holy Mass has not been absent; for over three months we have celebrated Mass faithfully but in circumstances not of our choosing. As a Catholic community we have been waiting, preparing for this new stage to arrive.

I forward to you what I have received from the office of the Bishops' Conference.

1. A message from the Metropolitan Archbishops of the Catholic Church in England. (There is no obligation or expectation to read this to your parishioners, but you are welcome to use it in any way you feel is appropriate).
2. Guidance for the Celebration of public Mass
3. Guidance for the Celebration of the Sacrament of Reconciliation.

These guidelines are comprehensive, but you may still have concerns on points of detail. For those of you remaining with practical uncertainties either use your own initiative, or contact Canon Embery.

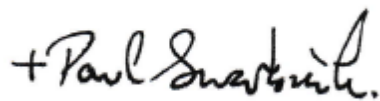
Note that we remain in a stage of transition and the dispensation from attending Sunday Mass still holds. It will take time to get back to normal practice. It is also possible that severe restrictions could be re-imposed should there be evidence of a second 'spike/wave' threatening.

About 60 of our churches are currently open for private prayer visits. This puts them well on the way towards meeting requirements for public worship. ***The Safety Toolbox COVID-19 Premises Re-opening Checklist*** must be completed, and is essential before a church can be authorised for public worship and confessions. Some have yet to do it. I do understand that not all parishes will have found themselves able. Don't give up! Work towards it as best you can, and do ask for help, perhaps first within the deanery and neighbouring parishes.

It is not compulsory but it may be practical to keep some sort of Log of what you are doing and how the experience of 'unlocking' is working in your parish. Such a log may prove valuable in helping us to learn lessons, and if we are asked to give 'feedback' at a later stage.

Participation in Divine worship and Liturgy is our privilege. It is ours not by right but by gift. These restrictions we experience are a consequence of us being citizens of a broader society, for whom we have a profound concern, and to whom we have a Divine Mission. Waiting and preparing have a place in the Mystery of Faith. Think of Christ's hidden years before His public Ministry, and His sharing of the Eucharist towards its completion. Think of His patience in delaying His Ascension to the Father. Think of the Apostles and Our Blessed Lady waiting for the descent of the Holy Spirit. Think of the Eucharistic fast, a time of waiting and preparation – definitely not time wasted!

With my blessing for you and my gratitude for your ministry,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "+Paul Swarbrick." The signature is written in a cursive style with a cross at the beginning.

+Paul Swarbrick
Bishop of Lancaster