

# Resumption of Holy Mass at Good Shepherd church

## Statement from Fr Larkin

### Introduction to the new situation

The Archbishops have clearly stated that the obligation to attend Sunday Mass remains suspended and they go on to say,

*“Please be aware that there will be a limit on the number of people who can attend Mass in our churches. We therefore need to reflect carefully on how and when we might be able to attend Mass. We cannot return immediately to our customary practices. This next step is not, in any sense, a moment when we are going ‘back to normal’. We ask every Catholic to think carefully about how and when they will return to Mass.”*

They add,

*“Given there is no Sunday obligation, we ask you to consider the possibility of attending Mass on a weekday. This will ease the pressure of numbers for Sunday celebrations and allow a gradual return to the Eucharist for more people”*

It is important to reaffirm that, at present, the obligation to attend Sunday Mass remains suspended.

A significant number of churches may remain closed as they are unable to meet the requirements for opening for individual prayer. Fulfilling these requirements is a precondition for any church opening after the 4th July for the celebration of Mass with a congregation.

### **“Every day is like Sunday.”**

We cannot return immediately to our customary practices. This next step is not, in any sense, a moment when we are going ‘back to normal’. We ask every Catholic to think carefully about how and when they will return to Mass. Given there is no Sunday obligation, I ask you to consider the possibility of attending Mass on a weekday. We have to start thinking of the whole week as a Sunday – from now on “Every day is like Sunday.” If we can take this to heart, that every day is like Sunday, this will help to allow more people to return to the Eucharist.

### **Returning to Holy Mass**

When we return to Mass there will be some differences in how the celebration takes place. For the time being,

- there will be no congregational singing and

- Mass will be shorter than usual.

None of this detracts from the centrality of our encounter with the Risen Christ in the Eucharist. I ask everyone to respect and follow the guidance that will be issued and the instructions in church.

### **What does this mean for Good Shepherd parish?**

For us this means that instead of our church holding about 120+ people, it can only accommodate 30 (minimum 2m separation)

There is also a requirement to have some kind of booking system so that we can be safe, keep the rules and that we know when we arrive at church there will be space for us. 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 those who visit our churches; it will assist NHS Test and Trace and help with investigating local outbreaks.

As indicated above, we need to think of the whole week as a Sunday and by thinking in this new way we can increase the opportunity of Mass for all.

### **When we return to Mass there will be some differences in how the celebration takes place.**

Please come a little early before the time that Mass is due to start; this is to give time for the stewards safely to admit everyone into church.

- The Holy Water stoups will be empty.
- No Hymn Books or Missals distributed.
- No paper missalettes or parish newsletters, etc.,
- For the time being, there will be no congregational singing and Mass will be shorter than usual. There may be music (not the organ as it uses bellows to circulate air).
- No children's liturgy of the word.
- No procession of the offertory gifts and
- The Sign of Peace will not be exchanged at Mass.
- 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 at the entrances and exits.

## Arrangements for preparing and receiving Holy Communion

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.

Holy Communion will be distributed under one kind only and in the hand only.

The arrangements for the distribution of Holy Communion - the priest receives Holy Communion as normal and immediately cleanses his paten and chalice. He then holds a reverent silence before the Prayer after Communion, giving the Blessing and dismissal. At this point, the priest comes forward and cleanses his hand.

He then moves to the place for distribution - communicants are stewarded forward in an orderly manner to receive Holy Communion, and then immediately exit the church building.

When receiving Holy Communion, you should do so standing, with arms at 'full stretch' in silence.

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 in silence.

### After the Mass has finished

There will be no tea/coffee offered after the celebration of Mass. The church will be closed after the Mass has finished in order to clean the space according to the guidelines.

I ask everyone to respect and follow the guidance that will be issued and the instructions in church.

### **In conclusion**

There will also be quite a number of people who will be continuing to shield in the first weeks of this resumption of public Mass and so it is important to continue Sunday devotions at home. We're all going to have to be charitable and patient and help each other when the arrangements come out... We will be working towards **Sunday Mass on 26 July 2020** -

Naturally you will have many questions please read the **FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS** document from Bishop Marcus - regarding re-opening for Mass. It is attached separately.

In the meantime, why not set aside a time and come round to the church for private prayer even for a few minutes - we are open **Tuesday** 1.00pm – 3.00pm & **Saturday** 09.30 - 11.30am.