

the place of your rest. May I never abandon you there, but may I be there, whole and entire, completely vigilant in my faith, entirely adoring, and wholly given over to your creative action. Amen

I remain grateful for the ministry of each one of you as we continue to move forward in faith, hope, and love. Thank you and may the Lord bless and be with you.

Preparing to Open Churches for Individual/Private Prayer

As I have said in a previous email, the Bishops' Conference of England and Wales is continuing to work with our Government to enable our churches to be opened as soon as possible for private, individual prayer. We have no firm date for when this might begin, but we can start getting ready.

In order to prepare for this, please find attached the important document - **Guidance on Re-opening of Catholic Churches for Individual Prayer** - from the Bishops' Conference of England and Wales.

Please read this document carefully. It outlines what will need to be put in place for any parish which intended to open its church, at the first opportunity, for individuals to enter for private prayer.

In this first phase of churches being allowed to open for private prayer:

1. A church will only be able to open if the parish can successfully manage all the necessary measures which need to be put in place as outlined in the **Guidance on Re-opening of Catholic Churches for Individual Prayer** document.
2. Every parish will be asked to complete a **Risk Assessment** to indicate:
 1. Whether the parish can open its church or not in the first phase;

2. That, if they are able to open, all the necessary requirements are fulfilled.

The Risk Assessment will need to be completed and copied to the relevant area bishop/episcopal vicar and the Property Department before a church can be opened.

3. Any parish which cannot put in place the necessary requirements, for whatever reasons, is not obliged to open. Opening the church will be a matter for local determination on the basis of capacity to fulfil the requirements. This decision will be communicated to the Archdiocese via the Risk Assessment. There will be full support from the Archdiocese for any parish that does not feel able to open its church in the first phase
4. The requirements state that parishes will need to provide volunteers who oversee the opening of churches with suitable protective equipment. Please read the document attached entitled **Personal Protective Equipment (PPE)** which gives details of the hand sanitiser, masks, and gloves, which are being bulk purchased by the Archdiocese and made available for parishes that need them. With respect to cleaning church buildings, normal household cleaning materials, available from supermarkets, are sufficient.

Every parish will be asked to complete a **Risk Assessment** to indicate: Please note that:

- If a parish can open in the first phase, it will also need to determine how many days each week and how many hours each day.
- **In this first phase, churches will not be open for the celebration of Mass or any of the Sacraments, but purely for individual prayer.**
- There can be no timetabled or group events in churches. This means there cannot be meetings of prayer groups, communal rosary, or

Benediction. Nothing which encourages a crowd to gather at a specific time is allowed.

- The Blessed Sacrament may be exposed, but this will need to take place from when the church opens until when the church closes, simply for silent, personal prayer, as if one were paying a visit to pray before the Tabernacle.
- In this first phase it is not permissible to hear confessions in church, although provision for confession on request may take place outdoors, providing the confidentiality of the sacramental encounter is preserved. There can be no times for confession published, or for any other events which will lead people to gather or queue indoors.

The Risk Assessment, based on the document **Guidance on Re-opening of Catholic Churches for Individual Prayer**, will enable parishes that are ready to open their church to demonstrate they have fulfilled the necessary requirements. Every parish will be asked to return a Risk Assessment whether they are opening or not, with those not able to open in the first phase indicating this.

We do not have a date for when churches will be allowed to open by the Government. The documentation attached will help the concrete preparation for this. The Risk Assessment will be sent to parishes next week so that we can begin to get a picture of how many churches will open in the Archdiocese in the first phase.

Guidance on Clergy in Schools During the Coronavirus Pandemic

Please find attached a document from the Catholic Education Service giving guidance to clergy in relation to schools during the Covid-19 pandemic. At this stage I do not think it appropriate to celebrate any Masses in schools when we cannot celebrate Mass in our parish churches. I therefore do not give permission for Masses in schools at this time.

Clarification about Educare Online Safeguarding Training