



**To all the Clergy of the Diocese of Nottingham  
Celebration of the Sacraments and sacramentals of the Church  
During the Coronavirus Pandemic.**

**18th March 2020**

Dear brothers in Christ,

**Please note that this advice will be reviewed and developed as necessary weekly.**

The Bishops' Conference of England and Wales, having consulted the Ordinaries of the Dioceses, have agreed that the cessation of public liturgies should begin **from this Friday evening, 20<sup>th</sup> March 2020**. Because of the situation the Church finds herself in, the obligation for the faithful to attend Holy Mass on a Sunday or Holy day of Obligation is removed, until further notice. Please do all you can let your parishioners know this as soon as possible, especially those who are elderly or in a vulnerable group, so that they do not feel anxious or worried about not attending Mass. In preparation for the coming weekend I would suggest that you put a clear notice on your parish website and on the church door making clear that Mass is not being celebrated, but that the church is open for private prayer before the Blessed Sacrament for a period of time throughout the morning period, making sure that social distancing is taking place.

For my part, I will ensure that this letter is put on the diocesan website and on my Facebook and Twitter accounts. I have also created a YouTube channel, so that during this time Mass and other devotions will be live-streamed from the chapel at Bishop's House. This can be found by searching for 'Bishop Patrick McKinney' on YouTube and it will also be linked to my Facebook and Twitter accounts. **I will be streaming Sunday Mass at 10am this coming Sunday, 22<sup>nd</sup> March and each Sunday during this period.** Other devotions will be advertised on my social media channels. I invite you and your parishioners to join me **this Friday evening, March 20<sup>th</sup> at 7pm for a half hour period of Adoration, praying for all who are suffering or affected by this virus.** I encourage you to share this with parishioners and on your own website/social media platforms as a small way of remaining united in prayer as we begin this time in the diocese without public Masses. I know that the Cathedral is also planning to stream Masses and there may well be churches doing this in other parts of the diocese.

**The following instruction is now given for the celebration of the Sacraments and sacramentals of the Church at this time:**

### **Celebrations of Holy Mass**

Priests (parish priest and assistant priests) who hold parochial office should continue to celebrate Mass in a church within their parish without the faithful on a daily basis. Other priests (i.e. retired from office or entrusted with a non-parochial ministry) may celebrate Mass without the faithful in a church, chapel or their private home. Deacons should not participate in these celebrations.

The continuing celebration of Mass ensures that the faithful can join in spiritual communion with the priests of the Church. The Catechism of the Catholic Church states (1364): *As often as the sacrifice of the Cross by which 'Christ our Pasch has been sacrificed' is celebrated on the altar, the work of our redemption is carried out.* So please look upon your daily celebration of Mass, even if it is now on your own, as a powerful way of interceding on behalf of your parishioners and on behalf of everyone in our diocese. Liturgical resources for those at home, including those for making a "Spiritual Communion" with the priest, will be available on the CBCEW website and will soon also be put on our diocesan website.

Wherever possible, during this period, **churches should remain open**, especially on Sundays, for individual private prayer, without any organised services, and offering prayer before the Blessed Sacrament.

### **Baptisms**

Baptisms should be deferred until such time that the public health advice is that congregations can gather safely. In case of necessity, baptisms should be celebrated with all the hygiene precautions that have been laid down by the Church in its COVID-19 advice.

### **Sacrament of Reconciliation**

Confession may be offered on request as long as hygiene and social distancing requirements are observed (e.g. a physical barrier between the penitent and the priest such as a grille and cloth). The use of Rite II and Rite III of the Rite of Penance is not permitted as this, by necessity, requires the gathering of people in our churches.

### **First Reconciliation and First Holy Communion**

These celebrations should be postponed until a time that allows for families and friends to gather safely within our churches.

### **Confirmation**

The celebrations of Confirmation should be deferred until such time that the public health advice is that congregations can resume public worship.

### **Marriage**

If possible, the celebration of the sacrament of Matrimony should be deferred until such time that people can gather in numbers safely. However, if this is not possible and only in the most pressing of circumstances, then those present for the marriage should be restricted to the celebrant, bride and groom and immediate family, and if necessary, the legal Registrar.

### **Anointing of the Sick**

No pastoral visits should be made to people who are self-isolating until the isolation period ends. However, do offer phone support. When anointing the sick, the Oil of the Sick can be applied using a cotton bud which can be burned afterwards (one end for anointing the head and the other for the hands) and the priest extends his hands over the sick person for the laying on of hands, without physical contact. This has been confirmed as a valid mode of celebrating those sacraments which involve “laying on of hands.” Visits to people in care homes or hospitals should follow advice from the staff on infection control.

### **Sacraments of Initiation at the Easter Vigil**

No decision has yet been made. This will be dependent on the forthcoming decisions of the Bishops’ Conference for the Holy Week ceremonies.

### **Funerals**

It is so important that great pastoral sensitivity is shown to the grieving relatives at this most difficult time for them. **No Mass or service can take place in church.** The funeral service should take place at the graveside or at a crematorium, subject to the conditions laid down by the cemetery or crematorium authorities. Arrangements should be made for a Mass to be celebrated *in memoriam* at a later time when congregations are allowed to gather.

### **Care of all, including priests over 70 years of age or those with chronic health conditions**

Some helpful advice on social distancing for all, including clergy, especially the vulnerable with chronic health conditions and those over 70yrs of age will be sent out tomorrow. It will also include ways in which we who are under 70 can express support and care for our brothers who are over 70 or those with underlying health conditions, especially when the government require that they go into longer term self-isolation. I am grateful to Frances Cordes and our two VG’s for their work on this.

Thank you for your ministry, especially in these challenging times.

+ Patrick

**Right Reverend Patrick McKinney  
Bishop of Nottingham**



**Bishop’s House – The Park  
Nottingham  
NG7 1BB**