

Dear All

It seems like such a long time since our little community were together for Mass. We have missed each other and the fellowship and friendship that we have. We have not stopped being the Church and as I have been in contact with many of you it has been good to hear how you have been praying and caring for each other. We now have permission to recommence public Masses in Church from 4th July. However this does not mean that it will be business as usual and **if** we start Masses again at St Joseph's there will be a number of restrictions and measures in place, including the limiting of numbers. There is no expectation from the Archbishop that Masses begin at this stage and some parishes have already decided that it is not practical for them for a number of reasons. Below I have put down some of the areas for us to consider under headings and I ask that you respond to this email. I will not be sending a notice sheet this week as this covers what we need to know.

What is the demand in our parish at the moment? In order to ascertain whether masses will be celebrated at this time, parishes are asked to find out possible numbers of those who would wish to attend. The opening of the Church for prayer has worked well but most of the people attending are from Rugby parishes and very few people from our own parish have come. No one should feel pressured or obliged to come to church at this challenging time and I understand the complexity of reasons for people staying away. However, it would be good to know if the lack of parishioners attending at the moment is an indication that there would not be a demand for Mass in this immediate period. This is also important because I am planning with Fr Gerry Murray what will happen at English Martyrs where numbers may require additional Masses. *If there is not a demand right now we could review this again in a couple of weeks. **Please send me an email or phone me to let me know if you would intend to come to Mass after 4th July and when you would most likely attend.***

Planning Group As with the re-opening of the Church two weeks ago, I have asked for the assistance of some members of the finance committee in planning and risk assessing for the beginning of Masses. I am extremely grateful to James Crosskey, Chris McKee and the stewards who have staffed the Church.

Times of Mass I have not yet met with the planning group and so this is just my own idea and I will seek their advice before making any final decision on times. At the moment the Sunday obligation is dispensed of by the Archbishop and so those who wish to attend Mass could do so in the week in good conscience. Because of the need for stewards I would propose limiting the public celebration to Tuesday, Friday and Sunday at the times which the Church is already open. I would say Mass privately or with Claire and Lucy on the other days. We can't have two morning Masses on Sunday because of the need for the Church to be deep cleaned in between each Mass.

Stewards We could do with more stewards, especially as the holiday time is near. Stewards need to have a brief induction regarding the role which James C has kindly been doing. People can be over 70, according to Archdiocesan advice providing that they are healthy and also happy to undertake the role. There would be no pressure from me or anyone else for anyone to undertake this role.

Holiday. I have been working in the hospital since the outbreak and this has been a very stressful time. And busy time. Claire also, as a Nurse, has been in the thick of things. We do feel that we need some time off and so will be away for two weeks from 25th July for two weeks. There is a cover priest who is willing to step in if we begin Masses, but only for Sunday. Eucharistic services in the week are not permitted at this time.

Nature of celebration. Mass will be a much shorter celebration (hurrah i hear!). There will be no singing, although some musical accompaniment may be possible to enhance the celebration. There are no bidding prayers and only the priest will administer Holy Communion in one kind. There is no sign of peace and parishioners are asked to leave promptly after the celebration has finished. The use of a barrier, such as a table for the administration of Communion rail is required for Mass.

Numbers The numbers of those attending will be limited. At present with the 2 metre rule the number is just 10. With the reduction to one metre this will be more but the planning group will need to work this out and inform the Archdiocese. Therefore if Mass starts again we may ask people to attend just once each week for now. We will also have to decide how we cap numbers. Interestingly outdoor Masses are permitted on Church premises within the Archdiocese and so perhaps purchase an umbrella!

There is a lot to take in. I really would like to know your thoughts and have your prayers and support as we try to move forward as a parish. We look forward to welcoming you this week (Tue 10:30am-11:30am, Friday 6:30pm-8pm and Sunday 9am-11am). I am always at the end of the phone if you wish to have a talk.

God bless

Fr Matthew