



INFORMATION ON THE RE-OPENING OF CHURCHES FOR PUBLIC LITURGICAL WORSHIP DIOCESE OF LEEDS

On 23rd June, the Prime Minister announced that from 4th July places of worship would be allowed to re-open for collective acts of worship. This follows the permission which had already been given to re-open churches for individual private prayer from 15th June.

Many of the faithful and clergy are eager to learn when and how they can attend Mass again in church and to celebrate the other Sacraments after such a long absence.

The Steering Group which was set up and tasked to advise me on the re-opening of churches met (online) again on Friday 26th June; its members are finalising the documentation and guidance designed to assist clergy and parish communities in re-opening their churches for Mass safely. Further information will be relayed to the Deans of the 11 Deaneries within the Diocese of Leeds at a meeting on Monday 29th June. After any final adjustments to the arrangements have been made, the intention is to publish clear guidance on Tuesday 30th June which can then be issued to clergy and faithful across the Diocese.

Whilst permission has been given by the Government that churches may open from 4th July, it is important for everyone to understand that there is no imperative to do so on that date. The critical issue is that churches only re-open for both private prayer and the celebration of Mass when all the measures are in place that will make it safe for them to do so.

Although there is a deep desire to resume the sacramental life of the Church, many parishes will need some time to assimilate the guidance and to put the necessary framework of procedures in place before they can open. It is crucial to ensure that we are fully compliant in terms of social/physical distancing and to satisfy those governmental requirements which are designed to make safety paramount in public gatherings. I would ask everyone therefore to be patient, understanding and supportive as these arrangements are gradually implemented.

Sufficient eligible volunteers to help with the stewarding and cleaning of churches as part of these arrangements is absolutely essential. I would like to thank all those who have already come forward so kindly to assist with this work in their local parishes.

More detailed information about when and how our churches will be re-opening for the celebration of Mass will be published next week.

**✠ Marcus Stock
Bishop of Leeds**

26th June 2020