

## **FROM THE OFFICE OF THE PAROCHIAL ADMINISTRATOR:**

Dear friends in Christ,

May the peace and love of Christ be with you!

I must say I am delighted to send this message to you at this time when the doors of our Churches are gradually been opened for us to come in and be with the Lord. At this time my favourite lines are: "I rejoiced when I heard them say, 'Let us go to the house of the Lord.'" These words of Psalm 122: 1 resonate with my personal feelings, and I believe yours as well, at this time after being locked out for these past three months. The desire to return must have been burning in our hearts like the hearts of the disciples on the way to Emmaus were burning as they listened to the Risen Lord (Lk. 24: 32). My prayer is that we may all find that real satisfaction and fulfilment that we all yearned for as we gradually return "home;" that we may encounter Him in new and more meaning ways; that we may treasure Him and value Him more than ever before.

My intention of writing to you this time is to intimate you with the regulations and guidelines we must follow as we embark on our homeward journey. They are a bit challenging, but I am sure they are all familiar expectations having embraced these "new normal" ways of living these last months.

- 1. *Before We Return:*** We must have at least 3 volunteers as stewards and helpers at all Masses. I intend to celebrate all the weekend Masses (Saturday – 6. 00pm; Sunday – 9. 00am; 10. 30am; 12. 00 noon; 5. 30pm). The Church will not be opened on **Sunday, 5<sup>th</sup> July 2020. PLEASE KINDLY VOLUNTEER contact us by phone (02086475079) or email ([wallington@rcaos.org.uk](mailto:wallington@rcaos.org.uk)) and let us know which Mass you would like to assist.**
- 2. *Entry into the Church:*** Until further notice, we shall access the Church through the side door by the Wardroom Hall. Exit is through the main door facing Stafford road.
- 3. *Sunday Masses:*** The bishops have reaffirmed that *at present, the obligation to attend Sunday Mass remains suspended.* Weekday Masses can suffice. The number of people allowed to enter the Church at a time will be significantly reduced. For now, we can only accommodate 150 people at a time. Entry will be based on first-come-first-served basis. Therefore, I wish to strongly request that people should endeavour to attend the less attended Masses

for now until things completely settle in. These Masses are (Saturday evening – 6. 00 pm; Sunday – 12. 00 noon and 5. 30 pm). Families without younger children, and adults, especially those 65+ should try not to attend the 10. 30 am Mass. Attending a weekday Mass, when we start, will also be of help and will suffice. The bishops state that: *Given there is no Sunday obligation, we ask that you consider the possibility of attending Mass on a weekday. This will ease the pressure of numbers on Sunday celebrations and allow a gradual return to the Eucharist for more people.*

4. **NHS Test and Trace Service:** In line with the government Test and Trace approach to help the NHS, we are required to keep a record of attendance at Mass for at least 21 days. In order to do this, a Form is provided for individuals and families to complete before Mass. You could download the Form (attached) and complete at home to hand over to the stewards before going into the Church, or collect one from the stewards, fill it and hand over before entering. To further enhance the ability to “test and trace”, shall number the seats. Please note that you and your family are expected to maintain that same seat and to attend the same Mass for the next 21 days from the day we start Mass. If anything happens, we can easily trace you from the number of your seat.
5. **Mass on Week days:** Since we will be doing some minor works in the Church next week, we will not be able to celebrate Weekday Masses this next week. But we shall begin to do so sooner than later. Hopefully, from Monday, 13<sup>th</sup> July, 2020. This will be confirmed at the Masses of the weekend before.
6. **Booklets and Missalets:** For reasons of health and safety, all shared booklets and missalets and hymn books have been taken out or sealed off from public use. We are working hard to get the work on the newly installed projectors completed so we can use it for Mass, Readings, and Songs. In the meantime, we encourage individuals to come with their books that can assist them to fully participate at Mass. For those who do not have any books available at home, and need one, we have new copies of the Cycle A, Volume II of the Mass book for sale in the Parish Office at a cost of Five Pounds only. You can pop in to get a copy for yourself and family. There will be no congregational singing at Mass for now.
7. **Social Distancing:** The seating allowance has been carefully marked at 1. 30 metres. We should observe social distance during all movements in the

Church, including when we go for Holy Communion. We encourage people to wear their face masks to Church. Avoid unnecessary touching of surfaces. Parents should endeavour to keep children within their control.

8. **No Altar Servers:** We shall not need Altar Servers for now. However, we welcome parents to pick up a suitable alb from the sacristy and dry clean to be kept and for use by their children when they begin to serve.
9. **Readers:** Only one Reader will take all the Readings at Mass. Readers must wear disposable gloves. Avoid holding the ambo, touching the missal, except to open the pages and please do not touch or adjust the microphone. There will be no Bidding Prayer.
10. **Eucharistic Ministers:** We shall need 2 EM per Mass. Not anyone 70+ of age or someone with underlying health condition. Please arrive early for Mass to be properly instructed by the priest, at least at your first service.
11. **Offertory:** There will be no offertory procession with gifts to the altar. Boxes will be provided at the entry and exit points for individual offerings at Mass. You may want to make a generous offering that include all past Sunday we have been away from Church. This is most welcomed. We encourage you to set up Direct Debit offering through the provision on our website ([stelphegesonline.co.uk](http://stelphegesonline.co.uk)). You may call the Parish or send us an email for FAQ on this and more.
12. **Holy Communion:** The priest will offer the Body and Blood of Christ to all for a common general response of "Amen." This will suffice for the individual response during the reception. People should wait in their pews until instructed to move to the priest or the ministers by the stewards. There will be a physical barrier between the communicant and priest/minister to maintain social distancing. You will be required to fully stretch out your hands and open you palms as wide as possible. Communion will be given/received in silence. There is no reception of Communion by the tongue.
13. **Dismissal:** As soon as Mass is over, we shall be expected to exit through the main door facing Stafford Road. However, if for any reasons, one is not able to exit through the set door because of the steps, you are free to use the side door for exit. We are encouraged to leave the Church premises as soon as possible – no long chatting.

14. **Cleaning:** After Mass, the Church doors are shot for cleaning. Volunteers are requested to wait and assist in sanitising the Church. Disposable gloves, masks and wipes will be provided.
15. **Toilet Facility:** The toilets will be opened. But as much as possible try to avoid using the toilets. When you use the toilets, please note the precaution notices, and follow carefully.
16. **Confessions:** From Monday, 6<sup>th</sup> July 2020, I shall be available for Confessions in Our Lady Chapel Monday, Wednesday, Friday, and Saturday 10. 30 am to 11. 30am, except when we have funerals or any other activity that requires my presence and attention. Please note that you must be properly **masked** when coming for Confessions.
17. **Funerals:** We are now open for funeral Masses in the Church with all the restrictions and precautions in place. The number that is allowed for now is 30 people only. Families should liaise with the funeral home and the Parish Office for proper flow of the ceremony. Please note that no singing is allowed, no organist, only a one-page Order of Service. Bidding Prayer could be prepared on a free sheet of paper to be used by only one person, preferably a member of the family.
18. **Marriage, First Holy Communion, etc:** We are yet to receive concrete notifications on these sacraments for now. We encourage families to exercise some more patients as we wait for things to unfold with time.

With all these in mind, and with the help of volunteers, and being able to put all that we have to do in place; and God being on our side, **WE SHALL OPEN THE CHURCH FOR COMMUNAL WORSHIP ON SATURDAY, 11<sup>th</sup> July, 2020 WITH THE**

#### **6. 00 PM MASS.**

I am sincerely grateful to you for your patience and fortitude all this while. Your kind words and support were such immeasurable succour to me during this lonely period of isolation. I thank you for the support you provided for one another. Let us all thank God for journeying with us through this dark vale of tears. He never fails His own. Lord, we can never thank you enough. But we have to say: THANK YOU, LORD.

I look forward to seeing you then.

The Lord is good! All the time!

And all the time!! The Lord is good!!

**Fr. Patrick Udotai**

*Parochial Administrator*

*St. Elphege's Catholic Church*

*Wallington*