

PARISH OF OUR LADY & ST. ANNE

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Thursday 2 July 2020

Dear Parishioners,

The Government has authorised the opening of churches for the celebration of public worship as of the weekend of 4 July. This authorisation is subject to severe restrictions and the Archdiocese of Birmingham is insistent on a rigorous implementation of the new protocols of behaviour and meticulous observance of the mandatory safety/hygiene measures. Most of you will find these strange in the beginning and perhaps irksome, yet protection of the health of everyone and the pursuit of the common good make it essential for us to observe all the measures and the new behaviour discipline that the coronavirus have introduced into our day-to-day lives, in church and in most of the enclosed spaces we are likely to visit over the coming months.

The Eucharist is the centre of our lives as a parish and the Mass our greatest prayer. It is my intention that Mass be celebrated with decorum, in an unhurried way and with the dignity you all have a right to expect of a liturgical celebration. When St. Dominic founded the Order of Preachers he decreed that the Divine Office be celebrated *with despatch*, so we might need to take a leaf out of St. Dominic's book.

It is well to know at this stage that Mass therefore will be simpler and shorter: there will be no music or singing, the homily will be brief and Holy Communion will be distributed at the end of Mass. There will be no tea/coffee in the Cenacle at the end of 10.00 Mass on Sundays.

Most of you will be anxious to get back to assisting at Mass, knowing in advance that the re-opening of the church for worship does not signal a return to normal. The new "normal" requires careful management and will only be successful with teams of volunteers and with gradual re-introduction of Masses. It would be my proposal to commence with daily Mass on Tuesday 7 July [09.15 hrs.] and Thursday 9 July [08.00 hrs.] and, should all systems be in place, a Sunday Mass or Masses on the earliest weekend possible. Due notice will be given in the Bulletin or on the parish website.

Ours is a large parish with an average weekend Mass attendance of 360 – 80. Not all will be able to fulfil the role of steward nor be members of a cleaning team: the Archdiocese has insisted that volunteers, in their own interest, be under the age of seventy. Still there are enough people in our parish to provide sufficient teams to cover the Masses. The more of you who volunteer to help, the lighter will be the burden. Were sufficient of your to volunteer, we could have three teams each weekend rotating every week so that any individual volunteer might only need to cover one Mass every three weeks/month.

If you are willing to volunteer, please mail your name, contact details and Mass at which you are prepared to be on duty to Lis Leddy at the email address indicated above.

All volunteers will need to attend a training session and we can organise that as soon as we have an idea of who is volunteering and teams provisionally set up.

You will also be aware that lockdown has brought financial difficulties in its wake, not least for parishes where we have had no offertory collection since 20 March. I know some of you have direct debits, some of you have opened fresh accounts and many of you have saved up your envelopes. Alas, there will still be a considerable short-fall, so as we prepare to return to a schedule of public Masses I would ask you to consider how we can make up the losses we have incurred over the months of lockdown.

The Bulletin continues to be published on the parish website, the Sunday homily too is posted each week and there is a weekly text for spiritual reflection. All of these things, so important for so many of you during lockdown, will continue for the foreseeable future.

With every best wish and blessing,

Father Patrick