



St Agatha's Roman Catholic Church

(1894; 1899; Cons. 25th June 1914)

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Dear Parishioners,

We have received a letter from our Archbishop John Wilson giving us instructions concerning the measures to be put in place regarding Public Worship and the celebration of the Sacraments in relation to the COVID-19 (Coronavirus) Pandemic. We give you the extracts from his letter to the clergy given in this regard dated 18th March 2020.

1. Celebration of Holy Mass

Priests (parish priests 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. 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 state: 'As often as 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.' (CCC 1364) Daily liturgical resources for those at home, including those for making a spiritual communion, will be available on the CBCEW website. Information about the life-streaming of the celebration of the Mass is available on diocesan and other websites so that the faithful can participate in the prayers of the priest at Mass at home. A fine example of this is from the national shrine of Our Lady at Walsingham, which will continue its full liturgical programme and this will be available to all via the internet. (www.walsingham.org.uk). Whenever possible, during this period, churches will remain open, especially on Sundays, for individual private prayer, without any organised services, and offering prayer before the Blessed Sacrament.

2. The Sacrament of Baptism

The Sacrament of Baptism 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.

3. Sacrament of Reconciliation

Confessions 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 grill and cloth).

4. 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.

5. The Sacrament of Confirmation

The celebration of the Sacrament of Confirmation should be differed until such time that the public health advice is that the congregation can resume public worship.

6. The Sacrament of Matrimony

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 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.

7. The Sacrament of Anointing of the Sick

No pastoral visits should be made to people who are self-isolating until the isolation period ends.

8. The Sacrament of Initiation at the Easter Vigil

This will be dependent on the forthcoming decisions of the Bishops for the Holy Week Ceremonies.

9. Funeral Liturgies

There must be great pastoral sensitivity to this issue. The funeral service should take place at the graveside or at the 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 when congregations are allowed to gather.

10. Funeral service of Bishop Peter Smith

It is a great sadness that these measures have an effect on the planned funeral liturgies for Archbishop Peter Smith. There will now be a private reception of the Body and Funeral Liturgy, with burial in the Cathedral vault. At a later date, when the restrictions have been removed, a Mass in memoriam will be celebrated where we can all gather together. Please continue to pray for the repose of his soul.

These are the directives given to us by our Archbishop and it is essential that we follow these procedures.

Masses will continue to be celebrated each day, but WITHOUT A PUBLIC CONGREGATION, so you will still be able to book Mass Intentions. Please post any Mass Intention envelopes through the presbytery door, or email via the parish email address kingston@rcaos.org.uk.

It is so important that we approach the period ahead with personal faith and prayer, doing all we can to support each other. Let us also pray for each other and keep in touch with each other, remembering that the Lord is our help and our strength.

Thanking you and praying for God's blessings on you and your families.

Yours in the Lord,
Fr. Anthony Oleh, MSP
Parish Priest