



**MARCVS**

**DEI ET APOSTOLICAE SEDIS GRATIA  
EPISCOPVS LOIDENSIS**

To our beloved brothers in Christ

**ARRANGEMENTS FOR THE SACRAMENTS AND LITURGICAL CELEBRATIONS  
TO REDUCE THE RISKS OF COVID-19 CORONAVIRUS TRANSMISSION**

The Bishops' Conference of England and Wales, having consulted the Ordinaries of the Dioceses, has agreed that the cessation of public liturgies should begin from Friday evening 20th March 2020. Because of the situation the Church finds herself in, the obligation for the faithful to attend Holy Mass on a Sunday or Holy day of Obligation is removed, until further notice.

The following instruction is now given for the celebration of the Sacraments and sacramentals of the Church at this time.

**Celebrations of Holy Mass**

Priests (parish priest 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. Other priests (i.e. retired from office or entrusted with a non-parochial ministry) may celebrate Mass without the faithful in a church, chapel or their private home. Deacons should not participate in these celebrations.

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 states (1364): *As often as the 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.* Daily liturgical resources for those at home, including those for making a "Spiritual Communion" with the priest, are attached in the document *Supporting the faithful and each other in Prayer* and will be available on the Diocesan website. Resources are also available on the Catholic Bishops' Conference of England and Wales website.

Wherever 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.

## **Baptisms**

Baptisms should be deferred until such time that the public health advice is that congregations can gather safely. In a case of necessity (danger of death), a baptism should be celebrated with all the hygiene precautions that have been laid down by the Church in its COVID-19 advice. Priests or deacons over 70 years of age or whose underlying health conditions make them more vulnerable to the risks of contracting Covid-19 Coronavirus should arrange for other clergy to administer baptism in these rare circumstances.

## **Sacrament of Reconciliation**

Confession 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 grille and cloth). The use of Rite II and Rite III of the Rite of Penance is not permitted as this, by necessity, requires the gathering of people in our churches.

## **Confirmation**

The celebrations of Confirmation should be deferred until such time that the public health advice is that congregations can resume public worship.

## **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.

## **Sacraments of Initiation at the Easter Vigil**

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

## **Anointing of the Sick**

No pastoral visits should be made to people who are self-isolating until the isolation period ends. However, do offer phone support either in person or with the assistance of the lay faithful (please refer to the Community Response Service being provided by Catholic Care).

When anointing the sick, the Oil of the Sick can be applied using a cotton bud which can be burned afterwards (one end of the cotton bud to anoint the head and the other to anoint the hands) and the priest extend his hands over the sick person for laying on of hands, without physical contact. This has been confirmed as a valid mode of celebrating the sacraments which involve “laying on of hands.” Visits to people in care homes or hospitals should follow advice from the staff on infection control.

## 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 only 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. Priests or deacons over 70 years of age or whose underlying health conditions make them more vulnerable to the risks of contracting Covid-19 Coronavirus should arrange for other clergy to preside at this celebration.

## Funerals

There must be great pastoral sensitivity to this issue. The funeral service should take place at the graveside or at a crematorium, subject to the conditions laid down by the cemetery or crematorium authorities. All arrangements for funerals in these circumstances should be made in collaboration with the Funeral Directors appointed by the family of the deceased. Arrangements should be made for a Mass to be celebrated *in memoriam* at a time in due course when congregations are allowed to gather.

Funeral services at the cemetery or crematorium should not be conducted by priests or deacons over 70 years of age or whose underlying health conditions make them more vulnerable to the risks of contracting Covid-19 Coronavirus. Requests for funerals made to them should be referred to the Dean (or if necessary to the Vicar General) who will arrange for them to be celebrated by other clergy.

Given at Leeds on the 18<sup>th</sup> March in the Year of Our Lord 2020



+ Marcus Stock

✠ Right Reverend Marcus Stock  
Bishop of Leeds

Sean Crawley

Rev Fr Sean Crawley  
Notary