

Government Plan B - Covid Guidance

(NB - This is a TWO-PAGE document: hover over the top edge of it to turn the pages!)

Further to the information published on 2 December, and following the Government announcement made by the Prime Minister, on the evening of 8 December 2021, please note the following to mitigate Covid-19 infections and reduce the risk of transmission, many of which are a continuation of what is already in place, but please note those which are now **compulsory requirements, or strongly-advised guidance, along with other important clarifications:**

- Parishioners are advised that if they have any symptoms of Covid-19, they should stay at home and not travel to church.
- Hand sanitiser should continue to be made available on entry to the church premises and for use before Mass and other liturgies.
- Good ventilation and airflow should be enabled throughout the church premises (especially during and between services).
- **“From Friday 10 December 2021, face coverings will become compulsory in most public indoor venues, such as cinemas, theatres and places of worship”** *(Government announcement of the move to Plan B in England)*. Parishioners should be informed of this Government requirement and requested to wear a face covering when attending liturgical celebrations unless they are exempt from doing so.
- There is now very strong evidence to support that the main mode of transmission is through breath and nasal aerosols, and the risk from surface and touch transmission is very small (no longer requiring the strict regime of church cleaning recommended at the beginning of the pandemic). Nevertheless, a thorough cleaning of the church premises using normal cleaning detergents once/twice weekly remains important.
- **“Everyone should test using a lateral flow device, particularly before entering a high-risk setting involving people you wouldn’t normally come into contact with, or when visiting a vulnerable person”** *(Government announcement of the move to Plan B in England)*. **Clergy and parishioners who are engaged in any form of pastoral ministry which involves visiting the housebound or those who are ill, should take regular lateral flow tests to ensure they are safe to do so.** These are free and can be collected from community pharmacies or ordered online.

If all these guidance points remain supported, then our churches will continue to be safe places for people to gather for prayer and liturgical celebrations, including over the Christmas period. Please note that, to date,

the Government has not made the NHS Covid Pass mandatory for places of worship.

Leaders within our local communities, including our own parish clergy are urged to encourage people to be vaccinated against the Covid coronavirus and to avail themselves of the booster jab. If any further advice or guidance is given by the Government regarding the developing situation with the new Omicron Covid variant, we will do our best to publish updates as soon as possible.

Mass and Liturgical Celebrations during the Christmas Octave

Although our churches will be open for the celebration of the Sacred Liturgy this Christmas, accommodating safely as many as possible of those who desire to go to a Christmas Mass will still require some planning by our local clergy. The circumstances of each of our churches – and of our priests – will be different, so in all cases, please refer to the bulletin notices, website and/or social media of your own parish.

Unlike the non-Christian view of Christmas being a single day, Catholics in parish communities should remember that, like Easter, the Nativity of the Lord is one of the two solemnities in the Church's liturgical calendar which has its own Octave. The Church regards each day of the Octave as if it were the solemnity itself.

Every Mass from Midnight Mass on Friday 24 December right through to Friday 31 December is a Christmas Mass, therefore if you wish to attend a Christmas Mass but you are anxious also about the ongoing pandemic situation, please do consider attending church on one of these Octave days, rather than Christmas Eve or Christmas Day.

Christmas Offerings 2021

Should you wish, as usual, to make your Christmas Offering for the benefit of the priest(s) serving your parish, you can do this on any day during the **Octave**. Each year, the collection taken at Christmas, together with the collection taken at Easter, is the offering which forms an important part of the annual taxable income of priests, so **please consult your own parish bulletin or website for information on your own preferred method of giving.**