

Restarting Public Masses

“All people clap your hands, cry to God with shouts of joy.” (*Psalms 46:2*)

I am delighted to say that from **Monday 6 July 2020** we will be able to recommence celebrating Mass with a congregation. It has been some four months since we were last able to do this and it is a cause of great joy and thanksgiving to God.

From Mon 6 July we will finish the present timetable of church opening for private prayer, and return to our normal schedule of Mass times and churches:

Day	Time	Church	Live-stream
Sunday vigil (Sat)	6.00 pm	OLOS	YES
Sunday	9.00 am	OLOS	YES
Sunday	11.00 am	CHS	No
Monday	12.00 noon	CHS	No
Tuesday	9.15 am	OLOS	YES
Wednesday	9.15 am	CHS	No
Thursday	9.15 am	OLOS	YES
Friday	6.00 pm	CHS	No
Saturday	10.00 am	OLOS	YES

However, I need to emphasise that this is NOT simply a return to normal, as there will be many procedures we need to follow to take the best care of one another and to minimise the risk of coronavirus infection. (These procedures are stipulated by our own diocese and the Catholic Bishops of England and Wales, in line with government regulations.) However, it is a wonderful first step back on the road to our normal sacramental and community life.

The main points are:

1. Whilst public Mass will be available, the obligation to attend Mass on Sundays remains **dispensed** by our Bishops. If you prefer to remain at home for your own welfare or that of others, this is perfectly acceptable.
2. We will continue to **live-stream** Mass from Our Lady of Sorrows (see times above).
3. We need to maintain **social distancing**. This will mean that about half of the seating in our churches will be taped-off as unavailable, and the capacity of our churches will be significantly less than normal.
4. Please therefore **attend Mass on a weekday** if you can, to allow others to attend on Sunday.
5. **Stewards** will be present at each Mass to ensure hand sanitisation and social distancing, to help people find seating, and to guide them at Holy Communion. They will also sanitise the church after each Mass. (A huge thanks to our volunteers!)

6. **Children** must remain in the family pew. If a child is too young to understand and follow social distancing, families are asked not to attend but to continue to live-stream Mass at home. This is needed to ensure the safety and wellbeing of all the congregation. We appreciate your understanding and cooperation.
7. Mass will be shortened, there will be no singing, homilies will be brief, and there will be no bidding prayers.
8. There will be no **sacristan** or **altar servers**. Even the **deacon's** role needs to be reduced.
9. Initially we will choose **readers** from among those who arrive for Mass. They will read from single-use sheets. (Later on we will draw up a new readers rota and invite readers to bring their own missal / phone / tablet to read from if possible.)
10. **Holy Communion** will be distributed just after the end of Mass and recipients can leave the church straight afterwards. Communion can only be received by the host and in the hand. No words will be spoken at that moment by the priest or communicant. Please hold your hands out flat as far in front of you as you can. The host will be gently dropped into your hand to avoid any physical contact. Please follow the guidance of the stewards to approach for Communion, and maintain social distancing whilst queueing and departing.
11. To begin with there will be no **collection** at Sunday Mass. Parishioners are encouraged to continue to follow the guidelines on the parish website at https://www.effinghamandfetcham.org.uk/uploads/4/0/8/9/40894629/mb_version_the_virtual_collection_plate_2.pdf

Fr Stephen
30 June 2020