

Churches Opening for Private Prayer

Statement from Bishop John Arnold

Monday 15th June 2020

The diocese is currently considering which churches can be safely opened for private prayer and how this will be effectively managed. Before they can open, parishes must undertake a thorough Risk Assessment, following guidance from guidelines issued by the Catholic Bishops' Conference of England and Wales, agreed with the government.

Not all churches will be able to re-open at once. It is intended that several named churches, spread around the Diocese, will be ready to open for private prayer, and are currently being prepared. Other churches will follow as quickly as it can be assured that they are able to fulfil the conditions for cleanliness, and social distancing. All parishes will be assisted in these preparations.

We also need to be mindful that our churches will look and feel different during this period. These changes are essential to ensure the safety of all our people.

Parishioners will still not be able to come to Mass at this stage but Mass can still be accessed via live stream (Salford Cathedral). It is likely to be several more weeks or months before we will be able to celebrate Mass publicly and, even when that is possible, social distancing will limit the numbers of people able to attend – even in our largest church buildings. We must all be patient. We are under no obligation to attend Mass during this time, and making spiritual communion is a powerful way to welcome Christ into our lives at home.

I am so impressed by the many creative ways that people have found to encourage each other in prayer. Hopefully, this will continue in our journey ahead, centred on Christ and guided in prayer. We will continue to share resources for praying at home on the diocesan website.

Stay with us Lord on Our Journey

+John

Churches and times they are open

This list will be updated as more churches open.

St Joseph's, Longsight

Mon 4.30pm -6.30pm

Wed 11am – 12 Noon, & 4.30pm -6.30pm

Fri 4.30pm – 6.30pm

St Mary's, Burnley

Mon-Sat 10.30am – 12.30pm

St Mary's, Bamber Bridge

Mon to Sat 10-12 and 5-7pm

St Peter's, Middleton

Monday 1pm-3pm

Tuesday 10am-12noon

Wednesday 1pm-3pm

Thursday 10am-12noon

Friday 1pm-3pm

St Osmund, Bolton

Mon

9.30am – 11.30am

Tues

5pm – 7pm

Wed-Sat

2pm – 4pm

St William of York, Bolton

Mon

9.30am – 11.30am

Wed

6.30pm – 8.30pm

Sat

10.30am – 12.30pm

Salford Cathedral

Mon-Sat 1.30pm – 4.30pm

Holy Cross, Eccles

Tuesday, Thursday and Friday, 3pm – 6pm

Commonly asked Questions?

What is Private Prayer?

Private prayer also known as Individual prayer within a place of worship is defined as a person or household entering the venue to pray on their own.

You cannot be part of a group or join a prayer session. No communal prayer or regular scheduled services are permitted at this time. This includes any priest or lay person leading devotions or prayer.

All individuals must socially distance from other individuals or households.

No public worship, streamed or otherwise, can take place whilst the building is open to visitors.

Should I visit?

It remains a person's own choice whether they to come to church to pray. If you are in the vulnerable category you should consider whether this is safe for you to do.

The obligation to attend Mass on Sunday and Holy Days remains suspended at this time.

If you or a member of your household are showing symptoms of Covid- 19 you should not come to a church for prayer. If you display symptoms you may be advised not to enter.

Can I visit with my family?

You can visit with your family as long as you are part of the same household. People who are part of the same household can sit together but those not from the same household should maintain social distancing while in church.

We advise that under 16 year olds do not enter the church unaccompanied.

Will all churches open?

No, it may not be possible to open all our churches. We will open several named churches, spread around the Diocese initially. Other churches will follow as quickly as it can be assured that they are able to fulfil the conditions for cleanliness, and social distancing.

For some churches it may not be possible for them to open at all, but we will ensure that churches that can open are available across the diocese.

What are you doing to make the churches safe?

The Bishops' Conference of England and Wales have worked with Public Health England and the Government to provide clear guidelines to open our churches safely, which minimises the risk of virus transmission.

If visiting a church you will find:

- Stewards will be available to ensure that hand sanitisation occurs at entry and exit points, social distancing is maintained by people in the church and if a pre-determined capacity is reached, they will be unable to allow others to enter the building, until someone else exits the church.
- Alcohol hand gel will be provided at the doors, with notices asking people to sanitise their hands as they enter and leave the church.
- Toilet facilities in churches will remain closed to prevent any risk of transmission of infection.
- Hymn books, missals, devotional materials etc which may be re-used will be removed from the church.
- There will be no holy water in church stoups.
- Physical veneration of relics or objects such as statues, crucifixes and shrines is not permitted.