



Saint Mary's Roman Catholic Church  
Catlow Hall Street, Oswaldtwistle  
Lancashire  
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Parish Priest: Rev. Fr. S D O'Brien  
Tel: 01254-232433

DIOCESE OF SALFORD

Tuesday 9<sup>th</sup> June 2020

Dear Brothers and Sisters,

I'm writing to update you about new information that we have received from the diocesan communication department over the weekend:

***Dear Fathers, Following on from the policy circulated on Friday... now a date of the 15th June has been given for churches to prepare to reopen for private prayer. In all diocesan statements we are emphasising that this will not mean all churches will open on this day but that we are doing all we can to ensure that churches will open safely. All churches must be inspected and authorised for opening before they are opened for Private Prayer.***

The Bishop has stated, through his communications department as you can see above, that not all churches will be opened. When a church is finally inspected by a diocesan official and meets the required conditions then the diocese will allow it to be reopened. In response to this news I am very grateful to Jennifer Pickles, Karen Beard and Nevada Keenan who will be facilitating various preparations so that we can meet the pre-requisites to open St. Mary's as soon as possible.

Jennifer will be overseeing a rota for stewards/marshals. This is one of the conditions set down by the Bishops Conference of England and Wales for a church to open.

#### **'First Steps: Preparing for safe re-opening'**

**Even before churches can re-open, there are some important preparations that will need to be made. In order to be ready, Parish Priests need to ensure the fundamentals of infection control are in place (which will protect those who are vulnerable) by doing the following:**

**Assembling a team of stewards to ensure that the guidance in this document can safely be put into effect. The number of volunteers required will vary depending on the size of churches, but priests will not be able to manage the re-opening of churches on their own. It is important that those in the team should not be drawn from those instructed to shield themselves, nor, as a general rule, from groups considered more vulnerable to coronavirus.' (Bishops Conference of England & Wales June 2020)**

As you can see from above, to fulfil this condition a team of stewards/marshals is essential. This role will involve volunteers attending to an appointed entrance and exit of the church building and helping direct people to various hygiene stations. Marshals will help to clean and wipe down a pew immediately after a person has left. To clean door handles etc that might have been touched. To remind people (if needed) that church is open for silent private prayer. If you would like to help as a steward then please email Jennifer at [jennifer.pickles@virginmedia.com](mailto:jennifer.pickles@virginmedia.com)

Karen Beard, the parish housekeeper, will be overseeing the cleaning of church both for an initial deep clean and then for regular weekly cleans, again in accordance with the conditions to be met by the Bishops Conference:

**6. The church must be cleaned fully at least once a day, using appropriate cleaning products...**

- **Cleaning an area with normal household disinfectant or detergent (including on pews) will reduce the risk of passing the infection on to other people.**
- **Those doing this work must wear disposable or washing-up gloves and aprons for cleaning. How these are disposed of or cleaned is important.**
- **The cleaning method for surfaces and touchpoints should be by using a disposable cloth or disposable paper tissues; first clean hard surfaces with detergent and water or detergent spray; not polish spray on its own...**
- **Those doing this work must practice good hygiene: wash their hands regularly with soap and water for 20 seconds, especially after removing gloves, aprons and other protection used while cleaning...**

**7. Toilet facilities in churches should remain closed to prevent any risk of transmission of infection. If facilities for hand washing only can be provided, and these can be cleaned frequently, then these can be opened to allow people to wash their hands but only if liquid soap can be provided and air driers or disposable paper towels are used. Cloth towels should not be used.'**

**(Bishops Conference of England & Wales June 2020)**

If you are able to help St. Mary's meet this condition for reopening and volunteer to be a cleaner then please contact Karen at [jakey9998@aol.com](mailto:jakey9998@aol.com)

Navada Keenan will be facilitating the maintenance of the church grounds. With the sunshine and rain over the last few weeks the gardens of St. Mary's have really bloomed – including the trees I love so much! It would be wonderful to have some volunteers to help maintain the grounds like the car park and all pathways around the church. For this to be done safely and again in accordance with the governments social distancing rules Navada will be overseeing some form of flexible rota. Please contact her at [keenannavada@gmail.com](mailto:keenannavada@gmail.com)

**'These measures may seem burdensome, or even a little daunting. They are however necessary, not least because if any churches are seen to be operating in a way that may increase the spread of the virus, there is a risk that stricter measures such as prohibition or enforced closure notices could be reimposed by local authorities or even national administrations. It is our hope that with priests and their parishioners working effectively together, we will be able to open churches safely for private prayer, as a significant step towards the resumption of the celebration of Mass and the sacraments.'** (Bishops Conference of England & Wales June 2020)

I have received no communication from this diocese about when we will be inspected but hopefully the more prepared we are the better our chances to re-open. Without volunteers people will not be able to come before the Presence of Lord in the Tabernacle. Everything we do, every box we tick, every condition we meet is for Him and Him alone! At this time more than ever we need Our Lord and most especially in the very presence of the Blessed Sacrament.

God Bless and keep praying  
Fr. O'Brien

