

## *S. Dominic's Community – South West Leicestershire*

### **The re-opening of our churches for Mass**

We are happy to tell you that having fulfilled the necessary requirements of the government and the diocese, our churches are now able to re-open for Mass, which we plan to do from next weekend (September 12/13). This will have to be done carefully, sensitively and responsibly and will certainly be nothing like we have experienced before. The key factor in enabling this to happen is the number of stewards who have kindly volunteered to guide us through the process, and have been doing so for private prayer sessions. While some of the regulations imposed on us may be considered somewhat constraining, we can do no other for the moment, so your patience and flexibility in these matters will be much appreciated. We do not wish to 'sanitise' our churches out of existence or make people feel unwelcome, but at the same time we want to do all we can to ensure that some sort of 'normality' returns to the prayer life of our communities. The churches have been reconfigured so although it might seem a little strange at first we hope everyone will get used to it and then in the fullness of time we can return to something like we had before. Many people still feel uneasy about coming out and we respect their feelings and fears. For this reason the YouTube Mass will continue for the foreseeable future but it will now become one of the public Masses to which we can come over the weekend. The experience of other parishes which have re-started this process is that about a third of the normal Mass-going population have come back, so we do not anticipate large numbers of people initially but hope that this will increase to what it was as time goes on and we all feel more confident. There is of course always the possibility that we might be locked down at very short notice and thus have to suspend Masses once again, but we hope not. We have to be prepared for every eventuality. The revised Mass schedule will be as follows in order to 'space out' the numbers of people coming:

#### **Sunday Mass**

Saturday – Hinckley 12.00pm (YouTube Mass); 6.30pm. Market Bosworth 5.00pm

Sunday – Hinckley 8.00am; 9.45am; Earl Shilton 11.30am – when permission is obtained

#### **Weekday Mass**

Earl Shilton – Monday 10.00am; (When permission is obtained) Market Bosworth –

Wednesday 10.00am; Hinckley – Monday and Friday 12.00pm

The private prayer sessions will remain as normal for this week but we will re-adjust them from next week. Should there be very few people at any of the Masses, we might consider cancelling one of the Hinckley Masses for the moment, but we will have to wait and see how things turn out.

**Before you come to Mass** – please make sure you do not have any symptoms which could possibly be the start of Covid19 – eg. dry sore throat, higher temperature, excessive tiredness. If this is the case, please do not come until they have passed – you might even wish to be tested for the virus, which can be arranged through your GP. Please do not come at the last minute as many people often do because this will make life very difficult for the stewards. Have your phone number ready to give to the stewards when requested.

**On arrival** – please queue outside in family groups at an adequate social distance from others. You will be invited to come into church and the stewards will make a note of the family or individual phone number (as required by the government’s ‘Track and Trace’ policy). Please sanitize your hands and put your mask on. Masks are required now for everyone except children and the celebrant. Take a Mass sheet and be sure not to return it at the end of Mass but to take it home with you. The stewards will direct you to a place in church – every second bench is cordoned off - and make sure that proper social distancing is observed between family groupings and individuals. The doors of the churches will all remain open in order to ensure a flow of air through the building during Mass. We are not allowed to use hymnbooks or to sing together as yet, but we can have quiet music being played at various times during Mass.

**Holy Communion** – the stewards will direct you to come forward for Holy Communion. As you approach the minister, briefly remove your mask. You will need to stand a little away from the ministers and reach out your hands to the full extent. In order to prevent people walking past each other in the bench we ask that everyone comes forward and those not able to receive Communion will receive a blessing as indicated. Please offer a flat hand to the ministers as this enables them to place the host on your hand without physically touching you. We are not allowed as yet to receive Holy Communion from the chalice. Ministers will sanitise their hands immediately before and after distributing Holy Communion.

**At the end of Mass** – please wait to be directed to leave by the stewards. If you wish to stay in church for a little while, please feel free to do so. The Sunday collection will be taken in open baskets held by the stewards as you leave. If you wish to talk to friends afterwards, please do so outside observing the necessary social distancing. Your priests will be on hand as usual to greet you and talk to you in the same way – looking forward to it!

**Cleaning the church** – we are required to clean the church after each service. This involves wiping door handles, cleaning the benches and the vessels used at Mass. If anyone would like to offer their services to do this, we would be very grateful. The church needs to be empty for at least 20 minutes after the cleaning has taken place.

**A new and unfamiliar situation** – this of course is all very new to us, but once we get used to it, hopefully we will all be reassured that we are safe and above all else, welcome. Every precaution has been taken to ensure this will happen to help us rediscover our much-loved celebration of Holy Mass together after a very dry and difficult period. Thank you most sincerely to all those who have worked so hard to prepare the documentation, stewarding and reconfiguring of our churches to enable this great day to happen at last.

*Father Frank*

*September 5 2020*