



St Theresa's Presbytery
High Lane
Stansted Mountfitchet
CM24 8LQ

29 June 2020

Dear Friends

We are very pleased to confirm the announcement that we are allowed to resume the celebration of public Masses from Saturday 4 July. This great news comes with the caveat that we have to abide by the strict instructions from the government and from the bishops. We are also pleased to announce that Bishop Alan has graciously granted us the permission to add another Mass to our Sunday schedule that was lost during the time of Father White. So, in addition to our Vigil Mass on Saturday at 6:00pm and our Sunday Mass at 10:00am, we can add a Sunday Mass at 8:30am, this comes at a very welcome time as attendance at Mass will be restricted by the number of people we can safely accommodate in Church whilst maintaining strict social distancing.

Can we say a huge thank you to all those who responded so quickly indicating your intention to come back to Mass at the weekend. What has become clear is that we need to put in place a weekly booking form to accommodate the numbers wanting to be at Mass. We had hoped to avoid this need but it has become clear that this is now essential as more people wish to attend Mass than we have space for even with the additional Mass.

The next step is to have a system of booking that does not discriminate against those who do not have internet access so that the system is fair for all. The Bishops have been quick to stress that the Sunday obligation to be at Mass remains suspended for the time being, so the pressure to be at Mass in Church on a Sunday is eased. As Mass will be offered every day, it is hoped that people would spread their attendance over the week so that everyone who wishes to be at Mass can attend. What we have done to address this situation is to put a booking sheet on the parish website to be completed by those wishing to attend Mass. Can we ask that before filling the form in that you speak to those who you know will want to be at Mass but who do not "do the internet" so that everyone has a chance to book in. Clair, our Parish Administrator will be in the office again on a Thursday if you wish to telephone between 10:00am and 2:00pm to book a slot at one of the Masses through her. This will need to be done each week, not just as a one-off block booking. We are constantly reviewing the situation and if we need to put on another Sunday Mass to accommodate everyone who wants to be at Mass, we are willing to look at this. What we must stress at this time is that if people turn up for Mass on a Saturday evening or a Sunday morning

who haven't booked it they may not be able to attend Mass at that time. This is a situation that we are desperate to avoid for obvious reasons.

The Mass itself will be very different to what we are used to. The stewards who have volunteered their services for the periods of private prayer will be needed at each of the Sunday Masses and during the week if possible. They will be directing people where to sit in Church and will be directing people when it comes to the time to receive the Blessed Sacrament. Singing at all Masses is suspended for the time being, the use of our parish Mass books and our hymn books is also suspended, we will now use single use Mass sheets and newsletter that will need to be taken home at the end of Mass. Deacon Des and I will be the only ones in the sanctuary, we will not have a serving team for the time being, although the serving team will be introduced as we settle in to the new arrangements. We will be suspending the use of Readers and the Extraordinary Ministers of Holy Communion for the time being too. Again, these will be reintroduced as we get into this new pattern. Communion will be given in one kind only, and people will have to sanitise their hands before coming forward to receive Communion, and Deacon Des and I will be sanitising our hands before distribution of communion and after, Holy Communion will take place after Mass. No dialogue will be offered at the receiving of the Blessed Sacrament as we have done previously; the priest/deacon will not say "the Body of Christ" as we administer communion and the person receiving will not say "Amen". There will be no offertory procession, no collection (baskets will be placed at the exit for those who wish to donate, but we would prefer people to use the donation system we have in place that reduces contact with cash). There will be no exchange of the peace, and no prayer of the faithful. The use of Holy water stoops will continue to be suspended too.

All of this will seem very strange at first, and hopefully the things we have been used to will be reintroduced at some point in the future. I know these changes will be particularly painful for some people, all I ask is that we abide by them until normal service is resumed. It is becoming clear that not every Church will resume public Masses this weekend, some clergy are extremely anxious as they fall into the "at risk" category through age or underlying medical conditions and are very worried about coming into contact with people. Many of you may feel exactly the same anxiety. I would like to assure you all that we are doing our utmost to keep you safe at this time. No one should feel compelled to return to public worship right now, the live streaming of Mass will continue daily for those who wish to remain at home and you will continue to be prayed for daily.

Recap of Instructions for Mass from 4th July 2020

- Please book a slot at one of the Sunday Masses when you wish to attend, if you are not tech savvy, please ask someone to book you a slot.
- Please do not turn up "on spec" on a Saturday evening or Sunday morning, we really have no wish to turn people away from Mass, but when we are full we are full.

- Holy Communion, for those who wish to receive it, will be given AFTER Mass. Please come forward as directed by the Priest/Deacon. Immediately after you have received, please leave the Church, following “the one-way system”.
- You cannot receive Holy Communion whilst wearing gloves. Please remove these before sanitising your hands with the hand sanitiser and coming to Holy Communion.
- Please do not come to Mass if you are isolating or show any symptoms of illness.
- Please do not reserve seats in Church for friends. Everyone will be seated by a steward working to a plan from those who have booked a place.
- The toilets in Church will remain closed.
- All aspects of the liturgy, including readings, ministering of Holy Communion, setting for and clearing away from Mass will be carried out by the Priest and Deacon to minimise risks.
- Above all please be patient, it is a difficult and strange situation and we are seeking to implement plans set by a number of different people with different agendas, and we are all doing our best to keep you safe and to return us all to the Sacraments of the Church.

Finally, please give some thought to the Sacrament of Reconciliation before returning to Mass. It will be available all this week for those who wish to make their confession. Please come to the Presbytery and ring the doorbell on Wednesday 1:30pm-2:30pm, Thursday 1:30pm-2:30pm, Friday 1:30pm-2:30pm, and Saturday 5:00pm-5:30pm. Regular Confession Times will resume as they were before lockdown after the weekend and will be advertised on our Newsletter.

Please continue to pray for each other, be assured of my prayers for all of you, and please pray for me and for Deacon Des too.

With my love and blessing

Fr Lee