

Dear parishioners,

As you will be aware, all COVID regulations in England have now been lifted, but there remain guidelines in place, specifically around face coverings, personal hygiene, and ventilation.

At St Joseph's Parish, we continue to adopt a cautious approach, in recognition that many of our parishioners are vulnerable or elderly.

The St Joseph's COVID committee have reviewed the current COVID situation, considering the government recommendations, and have made the following decisions:

- There is no longer a legal requirement to wear a face covering. The government suggests that you continue to wear a face covering in crowded and enclosed spaces where you may come into contact with other people you do not normally meet. We believe that our church falls into the criteria of this recommendation.

St Joseph's parishioners include many who are vulnerable and/or elderly. In consideration for others, we have therefore decided to continue to encourage parishioners to continue to wear face coverings whilst inside the church building, as currently, including whilst singing.

- Simple and effective personal hygiene behaviours can also reduce the risk of catching or spreading COVID-19. We will therefore continue to encourage parishioners to sanitise their hands, when entering and leaving the church.
- Letting fresh air into indoor spaces is important because when a person infected with COVID-19 coughs, talks, or breathes, they release droplets and aerosols which can be inhaled by other people.

We will, therefore, continue to ensure the adequate ventilation of our church, by leaving doors and windows open, when possible and appropriate to weather conditions, to improve air flow throughout the building.

- As stated previously, we do not wish to turn anyone away who wishes to celebrate Mass. As such, we now have no limit on numbers at any of our Masses. We will still utilise every other row at our 6pm Vigil Mass, where possible, to maintain a level of social distancing, but we will utilise the rows if required, should this Mass become busy, starting with the rows at the back and centre, and moving forward if needed. This will be managed by the Welcomers as needed.

We recognize that this may cause anxiety for some parishioners, so will be maintaining the gap between rows on the two side seating blocks, where possible, so these will be more suitable for any parishioner who wishes to continue with social distancing.

We will also continue to provide cards, printed with the words: "PLEASE LEAVE A SPACE" which can be obtained from the foyer on the way in, and placed next to you, if you would prefer a space between you and other parishioners. We would ask that everyone be considerate and respectful towards any person who wishes to maintain a social distance whilst at Mass.

- We will be continuing with live music at the 11am Mass, and recorded or live music at the other Masses, dependent on the availability of musicians. We will be providing hymn books at all Masses and encourage the congregation to join in with the singing, if you feel comfortable to do so. Please continue to wear a face covering whilst singing.

We will also continue to live-stream the 9am Mass.

- We will continue to distribute the newsletter, which will include this statement, via email. If you are not receiving an electronic copy, but would like one, please let us know, so that we can add you to the mailing list.

These processes and procedures will be reviewed again in 2 months, but please do not hesitate to direct any questions to Catherine O'Connor in the interim.

Thank you for your continued support for our church community, and may God bless you and your families and keep you well and safe.