



PHILIPPUS
DEI ET APOSTOLICAE SEDIS GRATIA
EPISCOPUS PORTUS MAGNI

Measures in Response to the Challenge of the Coronavirus

DECREE

The following provisions are immediately to be put in place:

1. Mass. Public Sunday and weekday Masses are to be suspended. I hereby temporarily release the faithful from the Sunday Obligation. Instead, priests (parish priest and assistant priests) will say a daily Mass in a church within their parish but without the faithful. Other priests (e.g. retired priests) may celebrate Mass without the faithful present in a church, chapel or their private home. Deacons should not participate in these celebrations. The Mass intention can be maintained, unless the family ask for a rescheduling. When there is a concelebrating priest, the main celebrant distributes the Host to him so that he can then receive the Precious Blood by personal intinction. The main celebrant consumes the remaining Precious Blood and purifies the chalice in the usual way.
2. Churches Open. All churches should be kept open during the day for the faithful to visit and to pray before the Blessed Sacrament. I encourage periods of Eucharistic Adoration (with rotas etc. but without public liturgies) so that everyone can find solace in their moment of need. Clergy are encouraged to spend time in church giving pastoral support and responding to requests for the Sacraments. In church, all must take care to ensure 'social distancing,' i.e. maintaining a clear distance from others, with minimal social contact.
3. Sacrament of Reconciliation. Confessions may be offered as long as hygiene and social distancing requirements are observed (e.g. a physical barrier between the penitent and the priest such as a grille and cloth).
4. Sacraments to the Sick/Housebound. It is important that those who request the Sacraments can receive them. Ministers should wash and cleanse their hands before and after visiting the housebound. Visits to people in care homes should follow advice from staff on infection control.
5. Anointing of the Sick. When anointing the sick, the Oil of the Sick can be applied using a cotton bud which can be burned afterwards (one end for the

head and the other for the hands) and the priest extend his hands over the sick person for laying on of hands, without physical contact.

6. Holy Communion. All ministers of the Holy Eucharist must cleanse and sanitise their hands before and after administering the Blessed Sacrament. Communicants are strongly urged to receive on the hand, which is 'safer' than reception on the tongue, with the minister avoiding any physical contact. If a communicant insists on reception on the tongue, the minister should sanitise their hands immediately afterwards.

7. Baptisms. Baptisms might best be deferred until such a time as when people can gather again in numbers safely. In case of necessity, baptisms may be celebrated, strictly limited to the immediate family and within all the various hygiene precautions needed.

8. Matrimony. Weddings might best be deferred until such a time that people can gather again in numbers safely. If this is not possible, the marriage should be limited to the celebrant, bride and groom, immediate family and legal Registrar. Participants might consider a follow-up Liturgy and social gathering at a later date, after the COVID-19 emergency has passed.

9. Funerals. Funeral services may take place only at the graveside or at a crematorium, subject to the conditions laid down by the cemetery and crematorium authorities. Priests are encouraged to offer a private Mass for the deceased. Again, a Mass *in memoriam* might be offered later, when people can once again gather in numbers safely.

10. Other Liturgies. First Holy Communion and Confirmation Masses should be deferred until a time when people can gather again in numbers. Diocesan celebrations (e.g. the Chrism Mass) will be reviewed on a case by case basis.

11. Devotions, Stations of the Cross, etc. Communal celebrations are suspended, although individual/private devotions are to be encouraged.

12. Holy Water. The use of holy water stoups is suspended. However, the faithful should be invited to have some holy water for use at home.

13. Hymn Books and Collection Plates. Shared hymn books, missals and collection plates should be taken out of use.

14. Veneration. Veneration of relics, the Cross, statues, icons etc. should not take place by kissing or physically touching them.

FURTHER GUIDELINES

1. What the laity can do. The faithful are urged to establish at home a small sacred space or altar. They should avail themselves of alternatives to Mass in order to sustain their faith: e.g.

- Make a private visit individually and/or as a family to the Blessed Sacrament in the church on a Sunday (ideally using resources noted

next) and/or on other days too in order to make a Spiritual Communion;

- Reflecting on the Sunday Liturgical texts (prayers and Readings), reading the Bible, reading the texts from the *Magnificat*, using a *Treasury of Prayer* and saying the Rosary;
- Participating in a Sunday Mass online, making a Spiritual Communion;
- Using on-line resources such as *Universalis* in order to say parts of the Liturgy of the Hours;
- consulting the Diocesan website for further prayers, ideas, videos and suggestions.

2. Prayer and Entreaty. Everyone should regularly say prayers for an end to this scourge, for the sick, for those affected materially and financially, and for the medical staff caring for the sick. A *Prayer in Time of Epidemics* from the Roman Ritual will be distributed for use.

3. Hygiene. In churches, good hygiene should be ensured. All should cleanse their hands upon entering. Cleaning of surfaces (e.g. door handles) that people touch should be ensured. Catering (coffee etc.) should be suspended.

4. Care of Dying. Hospitals and care homes are urged to enable the priest to visit Catholics who are dying in order for the Last Sacraments and Apostolic Pardon to be administered. This will need negotiation on a case by case basis.

5. Parish Life. Many aspects of parish life will need to be suspended or amended on a case by case basis, especially in the absence of public liturgies. Private meetings (e.g. a parish-staff meeting), subject to appropriate safeguards and hygiene advice, might be permitted.

6. Charity and Community Welfare. Parishes should do their best to continue their works of charity, care for the sick, the needy, the poor, the lonely, those in self-isolation, the homeless, those dependent on food banks etc.

7. Support of the Church. The faithful are urged to continue generously supporting their parishes, which otherwise will lose vital income. Donations can be made through the parish and diocesan websites. It is also possible easily to set up a Standing Order to your local parish by requesting a form from your parish or directly with your bank, giving them the parish banking details. For more on this, contact cshore@portsmouthdiocese.org.uk or 023 9421 6457. Visit the diocesan website for more information.

Given on this 19th March 2020, the Solemnity of St. Joseph

+Philip

Bishop of Portsmouth



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