

OUR CHURCH IS RE-OPENING!

This is obviously great news and I want to start by thanking those dedicated parishioners who have made this possible. The plan is that the Church will be open for private prayer this coming Sunday 12th from 11am to 1pm and on Tuesday 14th at the same times. Next weekend 19th and 20th we aim to have public Masses as usual.

Before going further, can I just remind us of the letter sent by our Archbishops a few weeks ago in which they pointed out that we are returning to Mass in very changed circumstances. There are 2 key issues which we will probably find may take some getting used to. The first is that we will have to clean and sanitize the Church after every Mass and time of prayer. This is obviously to safeguard against infection. Without a full team of volunteers, we will be restricted in what we can make available. Please see the appeal inside this newsletter. A Big Thank You to those who have already offered their help.

The 2nd difference is that social distancing of 2 metres (and this is still the norm) means that we can only have 30 people in the congregation at each Mass. My own wish is that we should restore our previous number of Masses for weekends and work out how many weekday Masses we can have, given the cleaning requirements. I should emphasise at this point that the obligation to attend Sunday Mass remains in abeyance. Also, we are investigating live-streaming Sunday Mass from our Church. So the big question is: how do we work out which 30 people attend which Mass. A number of options are being proposed by our bishops and it is a case of working out which is best for us here in Braintree. The first option is first come, first served. Personally, I would not favour this as I would hate that anyone should be turned away from Mass, but would be glad for views on this. The 2nd option is some sort of booking arrangement through the Parish Office. This booking could be made by phone and online. A number of parishes are adopting a ticketing service, but I believe it is essential that we should not disadvantage parishioners who do not have access to the internet, hence the suggestion of telephoning as well. A 3rd option is that parishioners are assigned places alphabetically from the Parish Register which would mean that people would be offered places maybe every 3 to 4 weeks. I would really appreciate feedback from you as to which option is preferred. In these changed times, let us work patiently together to see what works for us.

In the meantime, next weekend 18/19 July, I propose Mass for Saturday 6pm, Sunday 9am and **11.30am** (later time because of cleaning). If you wish to attend, please ring 01376 326779 Monday to Thursday next week (up to Midday Thursday) and if leaving a voicemail please let us have your name and contact phone number. Thank you for your support.

God bless. Fr David