

CATHOLIC CHURCH OF OUR LADY OF THE PORTAL & ST PIRAN
THE PRESBYTERY
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TRURO
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TELEPHONE : 01872 272291
Plymouth Diocesan Trust (Registered Charity No. 213227)

2nd July 2020

Dear Friends,

RE-INTRODUCTION OF THE PUBLIC CELEBRATION OF MASS

As the lockdown restrictions are gradually eased and churches are again permitted to hold acts of worship, including celebration of Holy Mass, I am writing to you with information concerning the arrangements which we plan to put in place here at the church of Our Lady of the Portal and St Piran, in Truro.

Please bear in mind that this is a new situation for everyone and therefore we are all 'feeling our way' at present. Coping with this is not easy for anyone, and what we do will not suit everyone; but I would ask everyone, please, to be patient and flexible.

1. The first point to note is that the Covid-19 virus *is still with us*. It is not 'defeated'; it has not gone away. Therefore, as restrictions are lifted, the likelihood is that there will be an increase in the number of infections. There may be local 'spikes' or, worse still, a 'second wave' leading to a new 'lockdown'. With all this in mind, we are staying on the side of caution in terms of the number of people we plan to admit. It must also be kept in mind that we are obliged to work according to strict guidelines, both from the government and from the Bishops. Everything is not going suddenly to return to 'normal'; even the way in which Mass itself is celebrated has to be somewhat modified because of the restrictions imposed.

2. The Bishop has recently sent out a reminder to the effect that the traditional obligation to attend Mass on Sundays continues to be suspended. Everyone is dispensed from this obligation for the time being.

3. In order to maintain safe 'social distancing', the number of people permitted to attend Mass has necessarily to be limited. At our church it is the intention to continue maintaining a distance of two metres. This means that there will be only twelve spaces available for congregational use. In reality that is not quite as bad as it sounds, because each of those twelve spaces is wide enough to accommodate two, (possibly three), people from the same household: so in theory we are thinking in terms of a congregation of around thirty as a safe maximum.

4. Given the severely restricted number of places, the Bishop has asked that those who are at work during the week, and therefore unable to attend weekday Masses, should be given priority on Sundays. Since the Sunday obligation is suspended (see above), those who can come to Mass during the week should do so, leaving space free for others on Sunday.

5. Initially the plan is to have a 10.00 am Mass on Sundays, a 10.00 am Mass on Wednesdays and a 10.00 am Mass on Saturdays. In time this may well change, but for the moment we cannot be too ambitious, not least because we have to supply stewards for each and every Mass and the church has to be cleaned thoroughly whenever groups of people have been in the building. **The first public Mass at Truro following the end of 'lockdown' will be celebrated on Sunday 5th July at 10.00 am.**

6. Having in mind the fact that there has to be a significant restriction on the number of places in church, plus the fact that many people travel some distance, much thought has been given to how best to operate under this new regime. The fairest way seems to be the introduction of a system of booking in advance for Mass – preferably by email for those with access to the internet, and by telephone for those who are not 'online'.

Looking at our situation in Truro, a 'first come, first served' approach would cause too many difficulties. For example, one of the requirements we are obliged to meet, with regard to the safety of everyone coming into the church, is that of facilitating 'Track and Trace'. This involves recording the name and contact details of everyone coming to Mass. If this were to be done at the door, whilst trying to maintain 'social distancing', with people queuing outside in all winds and weather, it could be quite chaotic.

Another consideration is the avoidance of wasted journeys: we do not want people to travel several miles to church, only to be turned away because the place is full. We really need to avoid this if we can.

In the light of all this, I think you will agree that the idea of booking in advance makes good sense, even though it may not be ideal. It does at least enable everyone to know where they are: those at church who are responsible for being 'on the door' and stewarding will know who is coming, and all names and details will have been taken at the time of booking, which in turn will obviate the need to queue to come in. Those arriving will know that they have a guaranteed place in church, thus removing any anxiety about whether they will be admitted when they arrive. The email address for booking is: truro@prcdtr.org.uk

7. There will be certain restrictions on movement within the church building, unfortunately. This will include having no access to the church hall and no access to toilets. Again, this is beyond our power and has to do with very stringent requirements regarding preventing transmission of the virus. Also, we need to use one entrance only, there will be no access via the steps: please use the car park entrance.

8. It stands to reason that if anyone has any symptoms of illness, or doubts regarding their health, they should not come to church.

9. Mass will be somewhat reduced in length and people are asked not to linger afterwards, but to leave promptly. Again, this is the official advice, which says that the time spent indoors should be kept to a minimum. Please aim to arrive in good time, but no more than ten minutes before Mass is due to start. Prayers of thanksgiving after Mass will need to be made at home or elsewhere.

10. Here is an extract from a recent letter written by Bishop Mark to the priests of our diocese: *'You will see that this is not a simple "return to things as normal", and the obligation to attend mass on Sundays is still suspended. Please reassure people of this, and it is expected it will remain for some months yet. All of us will need to adapt and to continue to be creative in the practice of our faith, and use our common sense, especially in the timing of services and in the ways we gather. I do not think we should instantly multiply masses in any parish on Sundays. The thorough cleaning of a Church after each mass is essential... Do encourage those who can in the parish, to come to mass on a day other than Sunday, to allow those for whom this is impossible to attend on Sunday.'*

Wishing you every blessing.

Yours in Christ,



Rev. Fr. A. J. Gilbert.

Parish priest, Our Lady of the Portal & St. Piran, Truro.
Our Lady, Star of the Sea & St. Anthony, St Mawes.