

**GUIDELINES FOR THE  
RECOMMENCEMENT OF MASSES  
ST MARY'S, BATLEY & ST PATRICK'S, BIRSTALL**

**Introduction**

I am delighted that Masses are now able to be celebrated with you again. Having done three months of recorded Masses, it is lovely that you will finally be able to join me again for Mass.

However, for the foreseeable future, things will not be 'normal'. Lots of changes and adaptations will have to be implemented. This is for one simple reason - **to keep us all as safe as possible**. Many of you will find the changes difficult and indeed very sad, but please remember that the only reason for these changes is to keep people safe and ***the changes are temporary***.

I envisage that with the new restrictions in place, Mass will take about 30 minutes.

When you are in church, just prior to the Mass starting I will explain what is what so you know what to do. But just to give you some indication, please read the following, which explains the changes and procedures that are now in place for Masses in St Mary's and St Patrick's.

**Booking a place for Mass**

This week I have received a number of calls from people who are disappointed that we now have to book a place in Mass. Whilst I understand that this does seem to be an extreme measure and not very welcoming, it is being done for all the right reasons.

- It enables us to record who is coming to church and who has been in church. This is vital for the ***Governments Track & Trace Scheme***. All those who have been in church will have their names recorded and kept on file for 21 days.
- It also enables us to control the amount of people coming to church. Whilst I would love to have a full church again, at the moment this is just not possible as it is not safe. So the booking system is ***an attempt to try and limit the numbers*** of people who can safely come to church. If numbers are controlled, it means also that people who come to church not aware of the new system will not be turned away. That is the last thing I want to do.
- People only need to book a place for Mass for Saturday evening and Sunday morning Mass

- ***Weekday Masses do not need to be booked.*** At the moment, due to the low numbers of people attending weekday Masses, you do not need to book a place. However, hopefully, if numbers increase, then we will have the booking system again, in order to control numbers. But we are not at that point yet for weekday Masses. However, those who do come for weekday Mass will have their names taken upon entry to church, to keep our track and trace records in place.

May I say a big 'thank you' to Michelle and Patrick Anderson for putting in place a parish 'online booking system' for us. It means we are able to begin celebrating Masses straight away.

People are able to book a place at Mass either using the online booking system or by phone. All the details are available on the website.

### **Coming to Church - St Mary's**

- Entrance is the disabled access at the side of the church
- Please sanitize your hands when coming into church
- One way system in place - follow the arrows / stewards advice
- Please do not stand in the porch
- Social distancing during Mass
- Please only sit where there is a 'Please sit here' sign
- Please do not wonder around church
- No gathering in groups
- Please sanitize your hands when leaving church
- Exit is the central door at the back of church
- Toilet facilities unfortunately **are not available** at the moment

### **Coming to Church - St Patrick's**

- Entrance is the central door at the back of the church
- Please sanitize your hands when coming into church
- One way system in place - follow the arrows / stewards advice
- Please do not stand in the porch
- Social distancing during Mass
- Please only sit where there is a 'Please sit here' sign
- Please do not wonder around church
- No gathering in groups

- Please sanitize your hands when leaving church
- Exit is the side door near the chapel
- Toilet facilities unfortunately **are not available** at the moment

## **During Mass**

As you can imagine, Mass will not be the same as you are used to for the foreseeable future. A number of changes and adaptations have had to be made in order to ensure our safety as far as possible.

- **There will be no Mass Sheets for now**
- **No congregational singing in church** - this is for two reasons:
  - I - to avoid the spread of infection through singing
  - II - to minimise the amount of time in church to avoid infection
- **No Children's Liturgy**
- **Readers at Mass** - must wear gloves
- **No Prayers of the Faithful** - again to reduce the amount of time in church
- **No Offertory Procession** - all the gifts will be on the sanctuary and ready before Mass has begun. This avoids the risk of infection
- **Collection baskets** - these will not be passed around the congregation. They will be placed near the exit and people will be able to give their offering as they leave church
- **No sign of peace**
- **Eucharistic Ministers** will not be required for now.
- **Holy Communion will be received in silence**(*see below*)
- **Holy Communion ONLY in the hand**
- **There will be no chalices for Holy Communion**

## **Holy Communion**

In order to keep both priests and people as safe as possible, Holy Communion will be received in silence. How will this work?

Just before the priest receives Holy Communion, he will raise the Host and say, "The Body of Christ" to which you the faithful people respond, "Amen".

The same will also take place for the Precious Blood - the priest will hold up the chalice and say, "The Blood of Christ" to which you respond by saying, "Amen."

This means you are then able to come forward to receive Holy Communion in silence.

When receiving Holy Communion in the hand, please have the palm of your hand as flat as possible in order to receive the Host.

In order to maintain social distancing, Holy Communion will take place as follows;

### **Holy Communion at St Mary's**

- I - Please come down the central aisle and go back via the side aisles.
- II - The St Joseph side will come forward from the front and come out in pew order.
- III - Then the Our Lady side will come forward for Holy Communion.

### **Holy Communion at St Patrick's**

Communion will be received one section at a time as directed - starting at the chapel side and working our way over to the organ side.

### **Leaving Church**

Due to the one-way system in church, there will be a controlled way of leaving church.

### **Leaving Church - St Mary's**

When leaving church, we will do as follows;

- Please sanitize your hands as you are leaving church
- The St Joseph's Altar Side will leave church first starting at the back.
- Once one side has left church, then the other side leaves.
- Please respect social distancing when leaving church

**Collection baskets** - will be left near the exit with a steward for your offertory gift.

There will be ***no tea and coffee after Mass*** until further notice.

### **Leaving Church - St Patrick's**

When leaving church, we will do as follows;

Please sanitize your hands as you are leaving church

We will leave church in sections, starting nearest to the exit side door. Once one section has cleared, then the next may begin leaving.

Please respect social distancing when leaving church

**Collection baskets** - will be left near the exit with a steward for your offertory gift.

There will be ***no tea and coffee after Mass*** until further notice.

## **Conclusion**

All these guidelines for Mass are under constant review and will change in time. As and when things change, I will let you know straight away.

I am very aware that some people are not ready or able to come back to church yet. This is totally understandable. With this in mind, ***I will continue to record a Mass each week*** and make it available on the parish websites. I am currently in the process of installing a live stream facility in each church so all our Masses can be made available online. This will take a little time, but hopefully we will have this facility soon. I will however, keep recording Masses until the live stream is in place.

Thank you for your understanding at this difficult time. It is not easy for any of us, especially seeing our Mass being changed so much. But as I say, it is all in place for your safety, it is all temporary until such times when things get more back to normal.

If you have any questions or are unsure, please feel free to phone me and I will try to explain and reassure you.

God bless

***Fr Eamonn***