

OUR LADY OF FATIMA CATHOLIC CHURCH

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Dear Brothers and Sisters,

I hope you and your families are keeping safe and well.

As you're aware, there's been a lot of bad news lately. However, as Christians, we are focused on the Good News! This is needed as much as ever before, maybe more so. But when it's hard to hug, visit, talk and sing, we can feel restricted and feel like our hands are tied. Our legs and tongues seem to be tied too! So how are we going to proclaim the Good News to others? Well it might be in a different way but it needs to be louder and clearer than before! Personal approaches are always the best. A direct approach from someone who cares about them is the most powerful way. Who is waiting for you to approach them?

Mass has changed ... but we are still meeting Jesus in each other, in listening to His Word and in receiving Holy Communion. We can't sing or shake hands but we can pray and open our hearts to the Lord. We can listen and meditate. Maybe attending Mass at this time can be a deeper and more reflective experience for us. Maybe we need to work on that?

Here are three ideas which may help:

1. Arrive early and pray in silence before Mass begins. Make a real effort to listen to the readings and homily. Give thanks to God from the bottom of your heart after receiving Holy Communion.
2. If you read well, commit to being a reader at one of the Masses. Help us to proclaim the Word of God so that it enlightens the minds of those who listen. Our readers can play a big part in this.
3. Come to receive the mercy of God in the Sacrament of Reconciliation. It's the best way of recognising our need for God and receiving his mercy with gratitude.

At the moment, there are currently three Masses at the weekend but we may need to move to four Masses. At the beginning of the school year in September, our numbers usually increase with parents and children committing to Sacramental Preparation. I would especially like to encourage our young families to come back to Church, particularly in preparation for the Sacraments. How do we accommodate an extra 150 - 200 people? Our proposal is to provide extra services to enable people to continue to attend Mass in a safe way. I am suggesting one extra Vigil for Sunday Mass at 4.30pm on Saturday. It would start on 31st October/1st November, All Saints' Day. So from that weekend, we are proposing four Masses: Saturday 4.30pm and 6pm and Sunday at 9am and 11am.

ATTENDING MASS

At present, there is still no obligation to attend Mass. The 6pm vigil Mass on Saturday and the 9am and 11am Sunday Masses are now reaching their full "safe" capacity. Please note that our weekend Masses are booked up fairly quickly but there are places available at the weekday Masses. Every day is a Sunday! Weekday Masses are generally only half full at present so, if you are available, why not attend a weekday Mass? There is no need to book to attend weekday Mass.

As you know, in line with government requirements, parishioners MUST wear a face covering (unless you have a medical exemption), sanitize their hands on entry & exit and follow the track and trace regulations. Please follow the guidance of our stewards regarding seating and Holy Communion. The baskets as you enter and exit our Church are for your offertory and second collections. Please make sure you sit at least one metre apart from each other if you are not in the same household. Because accommodation is limited, once the maximum number of 40 people has been reached, in order to keep people safe, no one else will be able to enter the Church. Once the Church is full, we cannot safely admit any more people for that particular Mass. Please do not arrive for Mass on a Sunday unless you have received confirmation of a place. It is important that you phone the Parish Office on a Thursday or Friday 8.30am – 12.30pm to book a place at Sunday Mass. I am currently also planning for Christmas Eve and Christmas Day. My suggestion is three Masses on Christmas Eve at 5pm, 7pm and 9pm and on Christmas Day at 9am and 11am.

As we go to print, the new regulations allow 30 people at a funeral, 15 at a wedding and 6 people at a baptism. Please also don't congregate outside the church and PLEASE DO NOT GATHER IN THE CAR PARK AS IT IS NOT SAFE.

Thanks to all who have supported us financially during the lockdown. We do need your financial help though I am very aware that people's finances may have changed so please don't feel under any obligation or pressure to donate if it's not appropriate for you. However if you are able, you can make up for the weeks when you were absent simply by making a cheque payable to *Our Lady of Fatima Catholic Church, Quinton*. We have received our annual Gift Aid claim of £7,256. Many thanks to all our donors. Please consider being a Gift Aider as this is free money for our Church from the tax man.

Normally we would have the Blessing of Graves in November, but due to the Covid restrictions, this will not be possible this year. However, I am happy to attend your relative's grave at Quinton cemetery for a private blessing. This must be booked beforehand by contacting the Parish Office.

Connecting with each other during this time of restrictions is very important and we need to be mindful of members of the parish who have "gone off the radar". A telephone call to a fellow parishioner whom you haven't seen for a while is always a good idea and helps people to feel connected to the parish community and to God. So do pick up the phone and make that call!

Please note that the proposals mentioned are temporary measures during this Coronavirus pandemic. What do you think? Please email your thoughts to me. Hopefully, it won't be too long before we can celebrate Mass together as we did before! Please continue to pray for healing and solutions during this Covid crisis and pray that people will be safe and sensible in the crucial weeks that lie ahead.

God bless you all!

Fr Long Nguyen
Parish Priest
17th October 2020