



Parish Priest: Rev. Mgr. John M Walsh

Parish: Our Lady of Compassion

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15 July 2021

Dear Friends

As you know, the Government has decided to lift most restrictions, this coming Monday, that were imposed at the beginning of the pandemic almost 18 months ago. The Archdiocese has just issued its guidance to Parish Priests about the way forward for our churches and how our worship will be organised. I have asked that the full text of the guidance letter be printed and attached to the newsletter this weekend, so that you can read it for yourselves. The main points are as follows;

- Face coverings will remain mandatory for all attending Mass and liturgical celebrations in our churches.
- You are asked to continue to use hand gel when you enter the church.
- You may enter and exit the church through either of the two entrances at Our Lady's and St. Jerome's.
- Track and trace is ended. The practice of cleaning the benches after Masses is ended.
- We will continue to ventilate the church as best we can, whilst minimising discomfort.
- All social distancing will be removed. Stickers on benches, signs and notices inside and outside the church will be removed. Access to all the benches will be restored and permanent seating in the transepts will be restored. You may sit wherever you wish.
- The Sunday collection will still take place by leaving your offerings in the baskets as you leave church. We are not permitted to pass the bags around.
- Holy Communion will be restored to its traditional place. You may approach the Altar as usual to receive communion, bench by bench.
- The Sign of Peace is restored, but only by acknowledging one another, no physical contact will be possible.
- If it has been your previous practice to receive Holy Communion on the tongue, you may now do so.
- Holy Communion from the chalice will not be offered for the foreseeable future.
- Singing is now permitted and the use of hymn books is permitted. Exactly how we can sing with face coverings is yet to be clarified!
- Weddings and funerals may now be attended up to the full capacity of the church.

The most obvious change will be the end of the service of our stewards. I cannot find the words to thank each and every steward who has served Our Lady's Church and St. Jerome's Church over the past year. Only because of their generous and selfless service have we been able to have Masses, funerals and weddings. To each and every one of you, I want to say on behalf of us all THANK YOU!



Our Lady of Compassion

18 School Lane, Formby, L37 3LW

Served by the Churches of Our Lady of Compassion and St. Jerome

Roman Catholic Archdiocesan Trustees In. Reg. Charity No: 232709



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We will now reintroduce, and build on, the ministry of Welcome. The welcomers will be on hand to welcome, guide and reassure.

These changes will first be seen at our parish Mass next Wednesday at 12 Noon. It will take some time for all of us to get used to a more normal experience of Mass. The diocese has promised further guidance in the weeks ahead. During this time, I will be providing more information about the increase and timings of our daily Masses and the arrangements for our groups to meet together. The School holidays are about to begin and people will be going away to enjoy some kind of break and rest. All our new arrangements will be in place by the beginning of September. Please keep an eye on the parish newsletter and listen out for announcements as things begin to happen.

A final word. We all know that this pandemic is not over. Far from it. We have all heard the warnings and concerns of many in the medical and scientific communities. The coming winter is causing concern. Nevertheless, it has been decided that now is the best time to open up and move towards normality. We will certainly play our part. We all want normal times to return. However, I ask that we remain sensitive to one another. Some remain anxious and concerned. It is not possible to have a 'big bang' return to normality. It will be gradual, but the changes will be immediately noticeable.

We have been asked to be cautious. It seems perfectly reasonable to be so. The coming months may be challenging and the guidance may be altered at any time. However, let us be thankful that we have arrived at this point, praying for those who are sick with COVID, those suffering from the lasting effects of the virus and those who have died because of the virus. We remember them all. Now let us enjoy our new found freedoms and look forward to brighter days.

God bless you all!

Father John



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