

St Werburgh's Chester

Coronavirus Information Sheet: 20th March 2020

During the present Coronavirus Health Alert, all Churches, including St Werburgh's, will be closed for Public Worship. This Information Sheet is designed to answer some of the many questions you may have around this Closure. If your question is not answered here, please do not hesitate to ask, either in person or via telephone / email.

- 1. Why are Churches closed for Public Worship?** *Because the Government has asked for all gatherings of peoples, the major way this virus spreads, to be kept to an absolute minimum, and Churches have to play their part in this very reasonable request.*
- 2. Will St Werburgh's be open at all in this period?** *Yes: 8.00 am-12.00 noon and 6.00-7.00 pm on Sundays; 11.00 am-1.00 pm and 6.00-7.00 pm on Weekdays; and 10.00 am-12.00 noon on Saturdays. Come in, light a candle, say a prayer, spend as long as you wish. But, above all, please "safe space", allowing at least two yards between yourself and anyone else in church. Please don't be offended if we ask you to create a little more space between yourself and someone near to you. I shall be around myself if you would like a personal word.*
- 3. Will there be any Masses during this period?** *There can be no Public Masses, i.e. Masses with a Congregation, but all Priests will be offering a Private Mass every day, and mine will continue to be for your Intentions as you have requested them.*
- 4. What is a 'Private Mass'?** *A Mass without a Congregation.*
- 5. Can I continue to ask for Mass Intentions to be said?** *Absolutely: there will be fewer Masses said - seven a week against the existing eleven or twelve, so it may be a little longer before your request surfaces, unless we have agreed a specific date. But all Masses with Intentions will continue to be said, and Mass Cards available as usual.*
- 6. Will the situation change week by week?** *Almost certainly: the Bishops of England & Wales have told us they will update us regularly, and our own Bishop Mark, who is doing such an excellent job looking after us all at this time (especially those many Parishes where the Parish Priest needs to self-isolate) updates us on an almost daily basis.*
- 7. How will St Werburgh's make decisions if the situation changes?** *Our first-class Parish Council will be meeting fortnightly, for those who are happy to attend, during this emergency, to review the situation and make any necessary changes to our arrangements as a Parish. If necessary, they can be consulted by email between Meetings.*
- 8. How will we all be kept up to date with developments?** *The first point of reference is the Parish Website - www.stwerburghchester.co.uk. The Home Page has two special Coronavirus links: one takes you to all the official Documents issued during this period; the other is the Parish Priest's incredibly irritating Daily Blog.*
- 9. Are there any good online Catholic Resources to help me in this period?** *Dozens: live streaming of Mass from so many wonderful Churches, Daily Office, readings, prayers, information sites. So many, in fact, that we are aiming to produce a separate Information Sheet on Online Resources for next Sunday. If you know any good ones, do send them in.*

10. What about Baptisms, Weddings and Funerals in this period? *Baptisms should be postponed, unless in emergency. Weddings may be postponed, but, if this is not possible, must be conducted with very limited numbers indeed. Funerals may not be celebrated in church, but only at Crematoria and at Gravesides. In this eventuality, a Memorial Mass may be celebrated later, once the coronavirus emergency is over. Again, the absolute imperative is to prevent numbers of people gathering together in the same place, the main way that this virus spreads.*

11. What about Confessions? *I shall be available on Saturday mornings, 10.30-12.00 noon, on the Sanctuary, chairs safely apart.*

12. Will any Parish Meetings take place in this period? *No, with the one exception of the vital fortnightly Parish Council meetings, where we can take the necessary decisions together, and you can be reassured this isn't just FP going off on one.*

13. What happens if a Parishioner needs to self-isolate? *We are compiling a list of those who are self-isolating and those who are willing to contact them, by phone, email or discreet visit. If you would like to be on either list, please let us know. Fr Neill has very sensibly decided himself to self-isolate during this period.*

14. Will the Newsletter continue to be produced? *Yes, both hard copy (Sunday Morning onwards, and then in the box on the Church Door) and online, Saturday afternoon onwards.*

15. Do You still want our Collections Money and Envelopes? *Is the Pope a Catholic? Seriously, folks: we are going to take a massive financial hit if the Collection Money dries up. If you use envelopes, do please keep using them. The Newspaper Money Box in church has been converted into a general Money Box, for you to pop in your collection money or Envelopes, and we are incredibly grateful if you do keep doing this. It will be placed at the bottom of the aisle as you come in.*

I hope this has answered some of your questions: if you have others, please don't hesitate to contact us. Meanwhile, do please keep praying for each other, especially any unwell through this virus; our front-line medical staff dealing with this emergency; all those worried by what's going on; for any of our elderly who are self-isolating and may be feeling very alone, and for our youngsters, particularly those who would have been facing Public Exams this summer. With God's grace and each other's support, we will definitely get through this!

The main task next week will be activating our "Self-Isolating List", those who are stopping at home and those who would be willing to contact them by phone to check they're OK and to see if they need anything.

If you wish to be on either list, please let us know as soon as possible.

God bless you all at this worrying time, and let's continue to look after each other,

Fr Paul, 20th March 2020

Please take this sheet home with you: do NOT leave it in church for someone else to pick up!