

## **My Dear People of the Parish,**

We are, as you will have apprehended, living through an unprecedented for our church. The bishops of England and Wales as our chief pastors have introduced a number of measures which affect us all. **These are for your protection and wellbeing. We have no vaccine to combat coronavirus. Our best defence is to reduce human contact to a minimum as this is how it spreads. So, I would ask you to abide by all that they have set out in the attached documents and not try to do things yourself.** The measures include the following:

**Mass:** the suspension of all public Masses absolutely. The priests are bidden to say Mass in private especially on Sunday. Please do not try to gain access to the church if you know when Fr is saying Mass – it will put him in a very awkward position.

**Spiritual Communion:** The Faithful, are invited to make spiritual communion and follow the Mass from your missal or missalette. You can look up ‘spiritual communion online and published versions will be available in our churches. Look for live streamlined Masses online. Hopefully we will have more information on this from the Dioceses as time goes by. When we get a little more organised there may be Eucharistic Adoration on Sunday, but we need volunteers onsite whilst the church is open. Lay Leaders can expose the Blessed Sacrament but please ask Fr Swales first, so I know who is doing what and when.

**This Saturday and Sunday** our churches will be open at the normal Mass times if anyone should come also to pick up handouts that will be available. You can also pick up missalettes to use at home. Of course, there will be no Mass.

Thereafter, I propose that our churches will be open for private prayer Tuesday to Friday from 9.30 to 10.30 a.m. and on Sundays from 10.00am to 11.00am. No public devotions (Rosary or Stations of the Cross) are to take place nor will Holy Communion be distributed. These measures are to prevent gatherings where people may become infected or pass on the virus. Be aware you may be a carrier without displaying any symptoms.

Also, it is to protect our clergy who, if the situation worsens, will be in the front line. Also, we do not wish to put the clergy at any more risk than necessary.

**Eucharistic Services** are suspended as well as all other meetings – i.e. SVP, Legion of Mary, Lectio Divina, Rosary Group, Children's' Liturgy, Coffee Afternoons. This is to preclude unnecessary gatherings of the Faithful. Parish social events suspended until further notice.

**Baptisms:** are suspended until further notice.

**Funerals:** Funerals will continue but may only be celebrated at the graveside or in a crematorium chapel.

**Stations of the Cross and Rosary:** Public Stations of the Cross and Rosary in churches are suspended until further notice. Again, to prevent people congregating.

**Home visits.** Pastoral/sick/bereavement visits and visits with Holy Communion are suspended until further notice. Please keep in touch with your housebound or sick by phone or text. Please inform Fr Swales if anyone needs the Sacraments.

**Caring for each other:** Please keep in touch with each other, by phone, text or our Facebook page at Edmund Duke Parishioners. Keep in phone contact with your housebound and sick. Remember those who live alone too.

If you are in a household of 2 or more and one shows symptoms COVID 19 then all in the household must self-isolate. If you live alone and think you have contracted coronavirus please contact someone family or friend, go online for advice or call 111. Do not try to go it alone.

**Elderly and vulnerable:** (over 70s or with other health problems) please take sensible precautions about large gatherings. Stay at home if need be.

**Collections and financial Offerings:** On a practical note as public liturgies are suspended please keep up your financial contributions – save them ready for when we open again. We do not want to go into the red – bills and direct debits still need to be paid. Thank you.

**Hygiene:** All parishioners please get into the habit of washing hands regularly with soap and warm water for at least 20 seconds. Wash your hands before and after Mass. This is better than sanitising gel. Soap destroys viruses better than gel. Please use tissues to sneeze or cough into. Bin them after use. If you feel unwell i.e. develop a cough, high temperature or what appears to be a common cold, go online ring or 111 and stay at home unless advised to do otherwise. Follow the advice given. If you need someone to help, please ask.

**Keep informed** about the situation via news media but don't watch it for too long as you will become agitated or depressed. NHS website and Government website also gives up to date and good information. Maintaining good hygiene, good food, a bit of fresh air and a good state of mind will all help in the coming months.

**Contact Persons:** I have designated contact persons in each church community if there is something we can help with other than those things provided for by the NHS or other agencies. This will be generally by 'phone unless you need the Sacraments. These persons will liaise with Fr Swales.

Fr Swales for all three 0191 377 0542

Fr McKenzie for all three 01429 882634

Deacon Vincent Purcell at Coxhoe 0191 377 3356

Denis Grimley at Trimdon 01429 880055

Mike Carter at Sedgefield 01740 622011

Christine Portues at the parish office 07907572930

**Finally: Stay calm, be sensible, follow the recommendations and stay safe.**