

DIOCESE OF MENEVIA - ESGOBAETH MYNYW



EMERGING FROM LOCKDOWN A MESSAGE FROM ARCHBISHOP GEORGE STACK

On 15 June the Welsh Government issued guidance with regard to funerals taking place in a crematorium, place of worship or a cemetery indicating that attendance should be restricted to members of the closest family and friends and only if they have been invited. The implication of this is that Funeral Services of the Liturgy of the Word - but no Requiem Mass - may take place in our churches with the necessary health and Safety precautions observed.

On 22 June places of worship were allowed to be opened for private prayer of individuals and members of the same family, once again under the same restrictions as above. It has taken a week or more for a number of our churches to be prepared with signage, social distancing measures and sanitation and volunteers in place. I am extremely grateful to all who have made strenuous efforts to accomplish this. Churches open, even if only for a few hours each day, are a great sign of home and encouragement. There will be some churches which are unable to fulfil these requirements and will have to remain closed for the foreseeable future.

On 2nd July 2020 the Welsh Government Task Force issued guidance for marriages to take place in public buildings and places of worship subject to the same conditions as above and with the necessary civil authorisation.

Although authorisation for public worship (the celebration of Mass and other devotions) has not yet been given by Welsh Government, these three steps are important milestones in our journey towards the new normality which we hope for when this crisis has passed. I am grateful for those churches which have taken the measures needed to ensure the risks of virus transmission are minimised in their opening. These measures include effective hand sanitation, social distancing, signage and deep cleansing. All of these remain a public duty.

I wish to thank everybody in the Diocese for sustaining the life of faith in so many creative ways during these difficult months. Our priests for celebrating Mass faithfully and for the innovative ways in which they have enabled participation through live streaming and other ways. Funerals and the care of the bereaved have been a special duty and privilege on the part of the clergy, bringing their own extra pressures with all the restrictions imposed. There have also been numerous examples of pastoral care shown by priests, religious and laity for those for whom lockdown has been a time of isolation and vulnerability. To those who have been involved in "works of charity" from simply befriending and supporting neighbours to the major distribution of food and other necessities, a special word of thanks.

Many families and individuals have been helped by the distribution of Food Vouchers which the Diocese has been able to access through a number of charities and Trusts. A special word must go to our hospital chaplains. They have played a vital role, together with their colleagues in the NHS, supporting the sick, the dying and the bereaved.

So, although we “wait in joyful hope” for the time when we can come together once more for Mass, we give thanks for the important steps of the phased re-opening of churches for private prayer, and for the provisions for the celebration of funerals and weddings in church. In the meantime, we continue our dialogue with the Welsh Government through the Faiths Forum and Task and Finish Group.

With every blessing

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Metropolitan Archbishop of Cardiff
& Apostolic Administrator of Menevia