

Cathedral of Our Lady and St Philip Howard

The Arundel and Brighton Diocesan Trust is a Registered Charity No. 252878

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To all Parishioners

17th March 2020

Dear Friends,

Coronavirus (Covid-19)

I find myself having to write to you once again to explain the new measures the Church has introduced to slow the spread of this virus. I am grateful for your patience. In the light of the information coming from the Government in the last few days it seems we are now in a very challenging situation. It is not unexpected, and it has required those in authority to make some tough decisions. Amongst those who have faced some difficult choices in the last few days has been the Bishop's Conference of England & Wales who have reviewed our public worship and come to the following conclusion-

"In response to the Coronavirus pandemic, so many aspects of our lives must change. This includes the ways in which we publicly express our faith. It is very clear that, following official advice and in order to keep each other safe, save lives and support the NHS, at this time we must not gather for public acts of worship in our churches. This will begin from Friday evening, 20th March 2020, until further notice.

...We want everyone to understand that in these emergency circumstances, and for as long as they last, the obligation to attend Mass on Sundays and Holy Days is removed. This is, without doubt, the teaching of the Church (Catechism of the Catholic Church 2181). This pandemic is the 'serious reason' why the obligation does not apply at this time."

The two documents attached explain this decision in more detail. I know this decision will be difficult for us all to accept, but I believe that it is necessary at this time for the reasons the Bishops' set out above and in their letters. For us here in the Cathedral, I can confirm that I will celebrate Mass each day in private and the Cathedral will remain open each day for private prayer. The Cathedral shop, however, will be closed for the protection of the volunteers who work there. If you visit the Cathedral during this time, please keep up the standards of good hygiene by washing your hands and using tissues and practice what has become known as 'social distancing' when you meet other people.

On Sunday, for prayer, using the readings and prayers of the Mass for that day will help the Parish to be united in a spiritual way. The Morning and Evening Prayer of the Church is a good way of praying and unites us with the Church across the world. There are many websites to help with prayer and these include the Bishop's Conference and Diocesan Websites, CTS and Universalis.

There are leaflets on 'Lectio Divina' at the back of the Church and other ways of praying. Please continue to pray and to look out for others who may be in need. If you or others need a priest, please ring me on (01903) 882297. The website, phone and e-mail will help us keep in contact. I will be here in Cathedral House so please keep in touch as I will try to keep in touch with you. If you can offer help to those in need please telephone on the same number and leave your name and telephone number.

I appreciate that this is a time when many will feel the need to come together to pray with Our Lord present in the Blessed Sacrament. Not being able to do this as a Parish is a loss and a sacrifice. I feel this too. I also trust in the Lord, though, who will unite us spiritually in prayer and give us the courage to take the steps needed to help the vulnerable, and those who love them, avoid unnecessary suffering.

With my best wishes and prayers,

David Parmiter

Canon David Parmiter
Parish Priest