

**The Parish of Our Lady of the Rosary, Bexhill-on-Sea
St Mary Magdalene, Town Centre & St Martha's, Little Common**

COVID 19 – Step 4 Guidance 19th July

As Fr Simon wrote in the newsletter on 13th June, we should not assume that we are ready to return to everything we had prior to March 2020, especially as we do not know what human resources, we may have available. Bishop Richard says, *'it is most important that we exercise great caution in the implementation of this guidance'*.

Sunday Obligation

As it may not be appropriate or possible for everyone to return to Mass at present, the obligation to hear Mass on Sunday remains suspended. It is proposed that the obligation will be restored on **1st Sunday of Advent (28th November 2021)** as we begin a new Liturgical Year. Please read the letter from the Catholic Bishops **"Sunday – it is our day"**: <https://www.cbcew.org.uk/sunday-it-is-our-day/>

From 19th July 2021, our **Public Mass** schedule will be:

Sundays:

St Mary Magdalene Church, Town Centre: 6pm (Sat), 11am & 6pm
St Martha's, Little Common: 9am.

Weekdays: (at St Mary Magdalene).

10am on Tuesdays, Fridays, and Saturdays,
and 6.30pm on Thursdays.

Confessions: (at St Mary Magdalene).

10.30am & 5.15pm on Saturdays, and by appointment.

Adoration of the Blessed Sacrament: (at St Mary Magdalene).

10.30-11am & 7pm-8pm on Fridays
and 10.30-11am on Saturdays.

The full Step 4 guidance from the Bishops Conference can be found here:

<https://www.cbcew.org.uk/covid-guidance-collective-worship/>

In the guidance, we are asked to ensure that *‘the general principles of continuing to create safe environments in places of worship and their ancillary buildings are not abandoned’*..., meaning that *‘certain preventative practices will still be required’*. In addition, *‘all places of worship should always consider the prevailing local conditions for the virus.’* In summary:

Restrictions that have been lifted:

- There will no longer be formal stewarding or marshalling at Mass or other liturgies, but each community should consider having welcomers on duty.
- There is no longer a need to stay at least 1 metre apart from others*.
- There is no longer a prohibition on congregational singing¹.
- One-way systems around the Church.

Precautions that remain:

- Track and Trace via QR code or by the paper register.
- Hand sanitiser on entry.
- Ventilation: The Church doors will remain open throughout liturgies.
- Face coverings. The Bishops Conference says, ***‘face coverings are strongly recommended to be worn by those in church’***. Bishop Richard says, ***‘the wearing of face coverings is a protection for others, I urge most strongly that face coverings continue to be worn during the course of celebrations, in accord with the now well-established practice.’***
- Holy Communion will continue to be distributed under one kind only but will be distributed in the normal place within the Liturgy.
- The Physical Sign of Peace remains suspended.
- Holy Water remains unavailable.
- Offertory boxes will remain static, at the Church exit.

¹ However, this may not return overnight as we need musicians to make it a reality and they should make themselves known to the Parish Priest before resuming. As the Bishops says, this should be phased in gently, especially as people will still be wearing face coverings for some time to come.

Local Considerations:

***Church Capacities:** Although, the formal requirement of social distancing has been lifted, we recommend the following Church capacities based on the number of benches that are open for use in each Church and a cautious capacity of four people per bench:

- St Martha's: 112 people.
- St Mary Magdalene: 150 people.

In both Churches, there remains some closed benches either as '*fire breaks*' or because of other health and safety considerations. Both the capacities and closed benches will allow people to leave some space from one another.

Cleaning: the responsibility for cleaning the Church now belongs to parishioners and not to paid contractors. Both communities of St Mary Magdalene and St Martha's will need to nominate and establish cleaning teams for the weekend liturgies. On weekdays, each individual will need to clean their own seat / bench afterwards.

Newsletter: this will continue to be an on-line resource at least to the end of the year. It costs over £2,500 a year to print the newsletter and is an expense that cannot be justified in this year's budget.

Extraordinary Ministers of Holy Communion: those ministers who are able to resume visits to the Sick and the Housebound may do so. Please let the Parish Office know your availability. Please note that the regular use of lateral flow testing is recommended to ensure that they are not potential vectors of infection to those who are sick and / or medically vulnerable. These can be obtained from:

<http://www.gov.uk/find-covid-19-lateral-flow-test-site>

It will take time to rebuild our social, spiritual, liturgical, and pastoral services and resources, especially as we are now in the summer holiday period.

Guidance for Baptisms, Marriages, Funerals etc will be provided to families as and when required.