



The Catholic Diocese of Lancaster

NORMS ON THE SACRAMENT OF RECONCILIATION

To Parish Priests & Parochial Administrators:

I have received concerns from some parishioners that the practice of giving general absolution is taking place in some of our parishes. I have to confess that I was surprised to discover this, as general absolution has largely fallen into disuse in England and Wales for many reasons, not least because it may be misleading to the penitents involved. To advertise a penitential service with general absolution or 'Rite 2.5' in the hope of attracting great numbers of people, and then saying that it is impossible for one priest to hear all those people's confessions, is a clear distortion of the conditions for general absolution.

The onus is on you and me to provide opportunities for individual confession both at penitential services and at times arranged to suit them. I wish to make it very clear that you may not celebrate the sacrament of penance with general absolution. Permission to give general absolution is reserved to your local Ordinary; and I do not see the necessity for its use in this Diocese. Shortly before the *Jubilee Year of Mercy* began the Bishops of England and Wales in conference agreed that the conditions were not met for the use of general absolution. Rather, the personal approach of one-to-one Confession most fully shows the loving kindness of the Father to his children, and in the spirit of *Amoris Laetitia*, it can be the first step in spiritual accompaniment for those of our people who have ambiguity in their lives.

There are many examples of good pastoral practice in our Diocese where the sacrament of penance is celebrated in services with individual confession that are attractive, prayerful and demonstrate how much God cares for us as we prepare for the great feasts of the calendar.

Some of you may have difficulty accepting my decision and I understand how difficult it is to change after many years. However, I encourage you to reflect on the Pastoral Norms for the Administration of General Sacramental Absolution, a document that you can find here:

http://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/congregations/cfaith/documents/rc_con_cfaith_doc_19720616_sacramentum-paenitentiae_en.html

N.B. A form of this notice will appear on the diocesan website on a regular basis for our people - so all can know the diocesan norm on this subject.

+Michael G Campbell OSA
Bishop of Lancaster

11 April 2017