



DECREE

Following the announcements of the President and Vice-President of the Catholic Bishops' Conference of England and Wales on 18th March 2020 about Covid-19, and subsequent to the Prime Minister's public announcement on 23rd March 2020*, I am formally introducing the following special pastoral measures, effective immediately and until further notice.

- 1) Following the government's ordinance, all churches and chapels, as well as all other places where regular Sunday and weekday public Masses are celebrated, are to be closed.
- 2) Baptisms and receptions into the Church, must be deferred, except in danger of death* *. First Holy Communions and Confirmations must also be deferred at this time.
- 3) Funerals are to take place at a crematorium or at the graveside (or in accordance with whatever government requirements are in place at a given time or location).
- 4) I dispense the lay faithful from the obligation to attend Mass on Sundays and Holydays. Whilst granting this dispensation, I remind them to properly observe the third commandment, 'Keep holy the Sabbath Day' (which is Sunday for Christians). Catholics who do not attend Mass should seek to sanctify every Sunday with personal prayers, or as a family praying together. Examples of these prayers might be making a Spiritual Communion, The Holy Rosary, Stations of the Cross, reading the scriptures or Sunday readings, reciting suitable hymns, or praying the Mass whilst watching it on-line, listening to it on the radio, or watching on television.
- 5) I dispense the faithful from the requirement to abstain from meat on Friday, with the exception of Good Friday, 10th April 2020, which should still be kept as a solemn day of prayer, fasting and abstinence, subject to the usual fasting rules regarding age, etc.
- 6) I dispense the faithful from the requirements of canon 920, which says 'each of the faithful is obliged to receive holy communion at least once a year. This precept must be fulfilled during the Easter season unless it is fulfilled for a just cause at another time during the year'. At the same time, I urge all the faithful in my diocese to make a perfect act of contrition at this time, noting that perfect contrition is true and real sorrow for our sins, which is created when we realise the immense love of God for each one of us. We express this contrition when we realise how we offend God by our sinful words, deeds and omissions in contrast to the immeasurable love and mercy that he continually shows us. This requires us to be contrite of heart for what we have done, know and be overwhelmed by the love and mercy of God for his children, and to approach this grace with humility and resolution not to sin again. The following or similar formula should be used:

My God, I am sorry for my sins with all my heart In choosing to do wrong and failing to do good, I have sinned against you whom I should love above all things. I firmly intend, with your help, to do penance, to sin no more, and to avoid whatever leads me to sin. Our Saviour Jesus Christ suffered and died for us. In his name, my God, have mercy.

Given at Morecambe on 26th March 2020.

Signed

Bishop of Lancaster Chancellor



*Government guidance from the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (24.03.20), allows churches to be open for a limited number of activities. The C.B.C.E.W. guidance of 26th March 2020 says that churches are to remain closed for funerals and prayer and worship at this time.

** At this time, I remind you of the provisions for baptism in danger of death, which involves immersion or the actual pouring of water using the Trinitarian formula "I baptise you in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit." See Canon 861.