



Back to Church

An outline of what's happening and when

St. Joseph's, Carterton

This is an outline and intended timetable for all the parishioners of St Joseph's, Carterton, and for those who attend Mass in Bampton.

I am sure there will be many questions about elements of this (rough) guide, and it may be that some answers are already available on the Parish Website, stjosephscarterton.uk

The site has some Newsletters for the Parish, and information from the five Archbishops, and a Pastoral letter.

For those of you who would like further reading on the topics covered in this letter, there is also a great deal of information on the Diocesan website, birminghamdiocese.org.uk

Like all roadmaps, it is a good idea to know where we are starting from, as well as where we are going.

In this guide, I will update you on what has been happening in the Parish, and let you know how we hope and expect to get back into Church, to join together as a Community once more, united in Mass, and in the receiving of the Holy Sacrament.

I know that it has been very difficult for you all to be away from Church for so long, perhaps longer than we had first imagined. So, as we head towards a time when we can, with the right precautions in place, come together again, let us be thankful, but let us also remember the real suffering that this pandemic has brought.

Fr. Andrew Foster

email: andrewjamesfoster1956@ntlworld.com

phone: 01993 842-463

Address: St Joseph's Church,

Arkell Avenue

Carterton

Oxfordshire OX18 3BS

Since 'lockdown' began, and it seems so long ago, Mass has been said each day in St Joseph's.

It is in some ways strange to celebrate Mass without any voices to respond, and without all those attentive faces during the sermon. Nevertheless, the Mass has been said, with the special intention each day for the sick, for those who serve them, and for the Parish. It may be said that a community that has not been able to be together in St Joseph's has been together in the intention of the daily Mass.

This routine was slightly interrupted when I fell from a ladder (I was guiding a swift from the Church at the time) and dislocated my shoulder, and broke some bones in

my left wrist and hand. The NHS have been wonderful (though I found it hard to clap for them) and I am very much on the mend, and am certainly able to celebrate Mass. During this period, it has been difficult to near-impossible to make visits to Parishioners, but I have been able to talk to some of you, and have been very touched by the many acts of kindness and generosity that run through our community, even if we can't get together as a body.

There have been a number of funerals that I have taken, that have perhaps, with restrictions and distancing measures, been more difficult even than usual. I ask you all to remember in your prayers those who mourn for loved ones during the lockdown.

I know that many of you - indeed, I hope all of you - have been able to join in with Mass through the many on-line services that have become available. As a smaller Parish, we have not yet arrived at a point where we have the necessary (and relatively expensive) equipment to be able to broadcast Masses. We really hope to be able to do this, and are working towards delivering a virtual St Joseph's through the internet. Updates will appear in Newsletters and on the Parish website.

How do we get from here to being back in St Joseph's (or in Bampton)?

There are a series of steps that we need to go through. Some of these I must organise, some require your help but together we can plot a route back to Church.

As from Monday 15th June, Churches have been allowed to open for 'private prayer', subject to a series of restrictions and the necessary oversight. The relaxing of the Church closure is currently for private prayer only, and no priest or lay person is allowed to lead devotions.

What we need to do:

- St Joseph's needs to complete (and file with the Diocese) a Risk Assessment form.

I have completed this, and it is being filed

- St Joseph's needs to be 'deep-cleaned' before opening, and then fully cleaned every day

This is in hand, with thanks to many volunteers, and the deep-clean is to be completed during the week of the 15th

- We need to remove all shared books (Missals, hymn books, pamphlets etc)

This is done.

- There must be at least two Stewards on duty whenever the Church is open

The role of Stewards is to ensure that social distancing (currently the 2m rule) is followed, and that movement in and out of the Church (since we are too small to have a one-way system) does not put Parishioners at risk.

*Stewards are volunteers, but must be **under the age of 70**. This is a Government restriction, not St Joseph's!*

Please let me know if you are able to offer your services as a Steward, or if you would like more detail on the responsibilities. Without Stewards, we cannot open the Church.

- We hope to open St Joseph's for one hour a day, alternating morning and evening, and for two hours on Sundays. You will be able to light candles and the Blessed Sacrament will be present. It may be that we look to restrict one or more 'sessions' to those who are especially vulnerable, to offer extra protection

The seating is already blocked off so that only the front pews on either side of the aisle are available. The Church in this state can accommodate between two and four people at any one time (or a family that will fit into a pew). It may be that, depending on demand, the amount of time that you can take over your prayers is limited, so that others may use the Church. I am sure you will understand if this happens.

While all this is going on, we are preparing for the next stage of reopening, which is to be able to open the Church to celebrate Mass.

The *expected* date for this is at the start of July, though there has been no official confirmation of exactly when.

Church cleaning and social distancing will remain as for the 'private prayer' restrictions. Stewards will need to be present also at Mass, to help with the management of the movements of people, particularly getting into and out of the Church.

With a 2m distancing rule, St Joseph's can hold 10 people, perhaps one or two more if in family groups. We intend to (and are currently working on) delivering Mass via a cable into the Hall at the same time, so that a further 12 (again, perhaps a few more) can be present and follow the Mass. Over time, we hope that we might be able to stream our Mass on the internet, so that those at home can also feel a part of our Community, and join with us.

These numbers will alter if there is a change to a 1m distancing rule.

For those who attend Mass in Bampton, it is my intention to celebrate Mass as normal on Sunday mornings at (or close to) 9 o'clock. I have been in contact with the Vicar, Janice Collier, and there seems to be no reason why, once St Mary the Virgin reopens, the regular congregation should not be able to attend as normal. Social distancing will need to be observed, of course, so numbers may be restricted. We will need to have Stewards in Bampton, also.

As we get closer to having a date for Masses to restart in the Parish, I will update the website, so please check regularly.

Communicating with parishioners has proven quite tricky these last few months. It would be very helpful if you felt able to equip us with an email address, as well as your physical address, so that we can get better at bringing you news of changes and developments.

I know that for some of you there has been an apparent silence from St Joseph's, but I can assure you that your well-being, spiritual and physical has been at the heart of my prayers and with me in the Mass.

I hope this note allows you to see where we are and where we are going. Do let me know if you need clarification on anything, and (if I can!) I will put out more details.

Don't forget to keep an eye on the website, and don't forget that we need Stewards.

God Bless,

Fr. Andrew Foster