

Dear Brothers,

You will already have received a copy of the message from the Metropolitan Archbishops of England and Wales on the current situation with regard to the closure of churches. This has also been posted Archdiocese of Cardiff website. It would be good to circulate and publicise this message in whatever ways possible to you and your parishioners.

There are occasional insistent demands that churches should be open in order that people might visit them for private prayer. Despite criticism from certain quarters at the lack of action of the bishops in not persuading the government that this should be allowed, there is a great deal of work being undertaken 'through the usual channels' with government and health officials. The purpose of this is that some relaxation in the lockdown legislation should be afforded to churches.

If and when this happens, the health and hygiene regulations with which we have become familiar will need to be implemented as rigorously as in other buildings. Social distancing. Numbers allowed in to the church at any one time. Handwashing and sanitising. Some measure of barrier clothing. No Holy Water. The need for volunteers. Every parish priest could add to that list I am sure.

Nonetheless, the diocese is in contact with [www.churchmarketplace.org.uk](http://www.churchmarketplace.org.uk) with which many parishes already have accounts. The diocese is currently sourcing Hand Sanitiser and large Alcohol Wipes for use in the curial offices. Hopefully, this can be expanded to allow for some degree of accessibility to our churches at the appropriate time with the appropriate measures in place.

We all know of the many additional pressures which families are experiencing as a result of the current pandemic. One of these is child poverty. The number of children who are undernourished is frightening and a challenge to us all. The diocese is engaging in a Food vouchers scheme which can be redeemed through certain supermarkets. Using money from the Poor Parishes Fund, these vouchers will be sent to parish priests shortly for distribution to whichever families you know who are struggling at this difficult time. No doubt the scheme will need to be administered and refined. At this stage, however, if you would email me at the above address indicating your desire to participate in this scheme and the number of vouchers you would like to receive in the first instance.

Congratulations and thanks to those parishes which have undertaken the Live Streaming of Mass and other devotions during the lockdown. I receive on a regular basis emails and letters expressing the gratitude of our people for the efforts being made to ensure that although we are physically separated we are spiritually united. I have been Live Streamed myself from a number of churches on different Sundays and know something of the care which is being put into this new form of outreach. The number of viewers is a phenomenon in its own right and is surely teaching us lessons for the future.

This letter is longer and more business like than I had intended. I hope you will find it helpful in dealing with any enquiries you may be having. Needless to say, I hope you are all keeping as well as can be expected during these difficult times. I pay particular tribute to our hospital chaplains and those priests who have had to conduct funerals in the most difficult of circumstances. I have to conduct the funeral of a friend of mine next week in similar circumstances.

With Easter Blessings.

+George Stack

Archbishop of Cardiff