

## Covid 19 additional safety guidelines

Following the guidelines issued by the Catholic Bishop's Conference of England and Wales, and from the Diocese of Salford, as well as civil requirements, the Catholic Priests of Hyndburn have agreed a common policy to be observed for the celebration of Funerals and Requiem Masses within Catholic churches. This policy covers the churches of St Anne, Accrington; St Joseph, Accrington; St Mary, Oswaldtwistle; Our Lady and St Hubert, Great Harwood; St Wulstan, Great Harwood and St Mary, Clayton-le-Moors.

- There is a legal requirement at present that churches do not exceed a maximum of 30 people for funerals.
- It is a requirement of the Bishop's Conference and the Diocese of Salford that whenever a service takes place in church, two designated Stewards are assigned to ensure compliance and safety. It may not be possible on certain days for the Parish Priest to provide the two mandatory Stewards necessary, therefore the Funeral, if in church, would need to take place on a day when the Priest can provide the two Stewards.
- There can be no congregational singing or music in church at this time. This means that organists or instrumentalists cannot be booked for Funerals in church, and no recorded music can be played. This is to avoid the risk of people spreading 'droplets' through singing, to avoid complications which may arise in terms of social distancing and operation of sound production systems to avoid difficulties over copyright and decisions regarding the appropriateness of music and to ensure that the service in church is not lengthened unnecessarily. Music can be played at the Crematorium or graveside following the service in church.
- No-one besides the Priest will be permitted to speak at the lectern of the church. This means there will be no readers (the Priest will read) and no eulogies given by the families. If the family wish for a eulogy to be read by the Priest, it is to be submitted to the Priest not less than 24 hours before the Funeral is due to take place. The eulogy should be limited to one side of A4 typed.
- For the celebration of Requiem Mass, Holy Communion will be distributed after the Mass has finished to those who wish to receive. After the coffin has been carried from the church to the hearse, the Priest will remain inside the church and distribute Holy Communion. Those family members and friends who are not receiving Holy Communion may follow the coffin to the hearse. Those who are receiving Holy Communion will leave straight after reception and make their way to the hearse. The Priest will then come and bless the coffin inside the hearse before travelling either to the Crematorium or the Cemetery.

The Bishop of Salford, Rt Rev. John Arnold, is presently very cautious about Priests celebrating any services inside the church because of the risk of infection. In fact, he has explicitly stated that if we are in any doubt about being able to ensure the necessary safety measures inside the church, we should remain closed at the present time. He has also advised us to continue encouraging families to celebrate Funerals at the Crematorium and the graveside rather than in church. However, we as Priests in Hyndburn recognise how important it is to families to be able to celebrate the Funeral of a loved one in church, and especially a Requiem Mass. For this reason, we want to ensure that people can return as soon as possible to celebrating Funerals in our churches, safely. Because of the strictness of the guidelines issued by the Catholic Bishop's Conference and the Diocese of Salford, it is not possible for any Parish Priest in Hyndburn to deviate from the conditions and guidelines set out above for any reason, otherwise there is the very real risk that our churches could be closed again.

Thank you again for your cooperation in these matters, and for your care for our parishioners during this unprecedented time.

Yours faithfully,

Father Simon D Stamp  
Parish Priest of St Anne and St Joseph, Accrington  
Rural Dean of St John Vianney Deanery