



## Guidance for Lent and Easter 2022

### Introduction

As the Government has now lifted most of the covid-19 restrictions and exhorted all people to adopt the recommendations of the “Covid Response: Living with covid-19” document, the principal means of protecting people who attend Catholic Churches in England and Wales is through participation in the Government vaccination programme. Those who are fully vaccinated (i.e. two routine vaccinations plus booster) will have significant personal resilience against major illness from the covid-19 virus and its variants. The Catholic Church has promoted the participation of all in the vaccination programme as part of its mitigation of virus transmission in church and ancillary buildings.

Alongside the positive effects of covid vaccination, it should be stressed that any people displaying symptoms of Covid-19 should stay at home and not participate in acts of worship in church. This is good practice for any transmissible illness. Medical advice should be sought as appropriate for those who are ill.

The following points are suggested as methods of good practice against the transmission of the virus in our churches:

- Hand sanitiser should be available for all to use at places of entry and exit to our churches.
- The necessity for social distancing is removed so churches should operate up to their normal capacity figures.
- Those who wish to wear a face covering may do so during the celebration of Mass.
- The use of hymn books and other worship aids are permitted as part of the liturgy. Servers and their various ministries (acolyte, book-bearer, incense) are to be encouraged to return.
- The vessels containing the altar breads for consecration at Mass should remain covered until the moment of distribution of Holy Communion to the faithful.
- Holy Communion is to be distributed to the faithful under one kind only (i.e. the Sacred Host). At concelebrations involving a number of priests, communion for them should be by intinction of the Sacred Host in the Precious Blood.
- Those who distribute Holy Communion should wear a face covering and sanitise their hands before doing so.
- Singing can occur and there is a general encouragement to wear face coverings while singing. However, it is recognised that not everyone will feel able to do this.
- Contact tracing ended on 24<sup>th</sup> February and so there is no need for track and trace QR codes or other means (e.g. Mass booking systems) in our churches from now on.

### Specific notes for Lent and Easter

On *Ash Wednesday*, the imposition of ashes should take place at the normal point in the liturgy. These can be administered in two ways:

- The traditional way in these countries of daubing a cross on the forehead of the person.
- The “continental” manner of sprinkling the ashes on the crown of the penitent.

In either case, the person distributing the ashes should sanitise their hands before and wash them afterwards and wear a face covering.

On *Holy Thursday*, the Washing of the Feet as part of the rite of the *Mandatum* is restored. The celebrant should wear a face covering whilst performing this rite.

On *Good Friday*, the Veneration of the Cross is also restored. Those who approach the Cross, after making the customary reverence before it, can either touch the Cross in a devotional way or kiss the Cross provided that an alcoholic wipe is used to clean the place that is venerated after each kiss by the faithful.

The *Easter Vigil* is restored in its full Rite. The faithful gathering for the ceremonies can have candles and the baptismal liturgy can take place along with any associated confirmations. For the anointings as part of this, the thumb or a cotton bud can be used, with the celebrant taking care to cleanse his hands appropriately. The sprinkling of the faithful during the *vidi aquam* is permitted.

### **Conclusion**

Whilst the circulation of the virus continues in society, the clear direction of the UK Government is that after two years of restrictions and following the successful roll-out of the vaccination programme, the usual patterns of life should return. This is true for the life of the Church in England in Wales in all of its activities. Whilst recognising this principle, there should be vigilance at the local level in terms of viral infection and transmission and local adaptations should be put in place.

Rev. Canon Christopher Thomas

28<sup>th</sup> February 2022

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