



1. **Our patronal feast.** This Sunday we celebrate the Feast of **Pentecost**, which was traditionally seen as the most important feast in the Church's year apart from Easter (more important even than Christmas). It is a special celebration for us, as our parish is dedicated to the Holy Ghost. We wish all our parishioners a very happy and holy Feast day!
2. **Changes to COVID measures in church.** As you all know, on May 17th the government announced a further relaxation of the lockdown which came into force when the COVID-19 pandemic took hold. This change in rules will affect our parish as well. The Catholic Bishops of England and Wales have issued guidance to help us move forward in this new phase of the pandemic, and we are following this guidance in our procedures here at Holy Ghost.
For the time being, many of the measures we put in place last year must remain in force. For example – those attending church must wear a face covering (unless under the age of 12, or exempt) – hand sanitiser should be used on entering and leaving church – and the 'track and trace' protocols must be followed. We are not yet permitted to have Holy Water at the doors of the church, nor to have congregational singing at Mass. However, you will also notice some changes.

Most notably, we are removing the strings cutting off access to every other pew, so that all our benches can be used. These strings were put up last summer when the

government guidance advised a two-metre distance between households. The rule now is 'one-meter plus' (i.e., one metre distancing plus wearing a face covering). Implementing the new guidance allows us to use all our benches and increase the capacity of our church – which is now very important since in recent weeks we have regularly been turning away people away from Sunday Mass, especially at the 11.30 and 6.00 Masses.

Secondly, we can reduce some of the cleaning and sanitising which we have been doing since re-opening the church last July. The Bishops advise that the church need not be cleaned more than once a day. Moreover, it is only necessary to clean 'touch points' – in other words areas touched by people with their bare skin. In effect, this means cleaning the backs of the pews where people rest their hands, but not the seats or kneelers. This change in procedure is a common-sense measure which will save our stewards considerable time and trouble.

Under the new guidance, up to thirty people may attend a baptism or a funeral. For a funeral, or for the celebration of Confirmation, the parish may permit a larger number, so long as the 'one-metre plus' rule is maintained.

Hopefully, we can look forward to a further relaxation of the rules when the government reviews its regulations again on June 21st. In the meantime, we would like to thank all our parishioners for their continuing loyalty and support, and once again to extend our special gratitude to our stewards, for making our church a safe place to worship in these present times.

3. **Stewarding.** In the light of the above, please don't forget that we still need your help with stewarding in church. Our churches are permitted by law to open and hold services during the lockdown, but they need to be safe places. If you value our open churches, and the ability to come to Mass, please do consider volunteering as a steward – we need your help.

We are now looking for stewards to help with Masses during May. Please follow the link below:

<https://doodle.com/poll/9yx5pqu9kp9zwbmk>

4. The Bishops of England and Wales have produced a **Pastoral Letter** to mark this Feast of Pentecost, copies of which are available in the church porch.
5. **Gift Aid.** For those of you who use the Gift Aid envelopes for your weekly donations, **the new boxes of envelopes have arrived.** They run from June when the old boxes run out (apart from some spares). During the restrictions many parishioners have

made out generous standing orders and these now make the larger part of the regular donations to the parish. However, for those who want to continue with envelopes and would like to get their new set, please contact the Gift Aid organiser, Denis Cross, balhamgac@rcaos.org.uk, tel. 020 8682 0988, to arrange delivery. Please also tell him if you have been an envelope member and now have decided to change to standing order/bankers' payments.

With prayers and best wishes,

Fr Richard and Fr Giovanni