**Archbishop of Southwark’s Advice on National Lockdown**

Dear Priests,

Dear Deacons,

Dear Parish Administrators and Secretaries,

The attached guidance has been issued by the Bishops’ Conference, which offers particular clarification to points raised in the email of 21:15 last evening.

***Communal worship, including prayers, devotions or meditations led by a Minister of Religion or lay person***

*Mass and other acts of worship can continue as normal following the covid-security guidance that has been published by the Bishops’ Conference after consultation with officials from Public Health England and MHCLG.*

***Marriage ceremonies***

*As national lockdown is essentially Tier 5, only 6 people can attend a marriage (apart from anyone working as part of the ceremony) and these should only occur in exceptional circumstances. Weddings planned for the next 6 weeks should be deferred.*

***Funerals***

*In all areas, there must be no more than 30 people attending. Anyone working is not included as part of the 30 person limit. Attendees should socially distance from anyone they do not live with (unless they are in their support bubble).*

*As national lockdown is essentially Tier 5, only 6 people can attend a commemorative event which would include the interment of ashes after a cremation. The immediate burial of a coffin after a church or crematorium-based service would be subject to 30 people or the restrictions imposed locally by the graveyard or crematorium authorities.*

***Significant life cycle events, outside of marriage ceremonies and funerals***

*This means that the numbers of people permitted to attend life-cycle events such as****baptisms****,****confirmations****and other significant sacramental celebrations are subject to the covid-security determined limits of the church.*

***Small prayer and study groups***

*As national lockdown is essentially Tier 5, in person prayer or study groups (which would include catechesis for the celebration of the sacraments) should not take place physically, but only using online means.*

***Face Coverings***

*Face coverings must be worn in places of worship, unless you are exempt. This is now law.*

***Summary***

*It is important that during this time all places of worship continue to provide hand sanitiser at points of access and egress, there should be stewarding and managed social distancing within the church space and that full cleaning of the space should be done immediately after the church has been in use.*

*The time that people are in the church should be minimised (so the use of liturgical choices should reflect this, including a short homily, the omission of the prayers of the faithful and any other permitted mitigations) and the church must be well ventilated even during the liturgical celebrations. There should be no congregational singing as part of the liturgical celebrations and if a choir or cantors sing, the choices of music should be such that the exposure time is not excessively prolonged.*

*It is very important to encourage all who attend our churches to abide by these covidsecurity restrictions and to protect themselves and those around them. It is also an opportunity to thank those who clean and steward our churches for their generosity of service to the local community.*

**Sent by Archbishop’s Private Secretary on 5 Jan 21**