

MEDIA RELEASE



Polding Centre
133 Liverpool Street
Sydney NSW 2000

14 May 2020

Catholic Churches reopen

Catholic churches across NSW will open tomorrow for private prayer, confession and small-scale Masses in a significant first stage of easing COVID-19 restrictions.

Churches have been closed to worshippers since 23 March, with Catholics only able to pray privately at home and via live-streamed Masses to help nurture their faith during this time of pandemic.

According to current new State Government directives, churches are allowed under Stage 1 to celebrate Masses with up to 10 worshippers. Outside of Mass times, churches may also open for private prayer, but must ensure that no more than 10 people are present at any one time. They must also record details of all those attending.

St Mary's Cathedral will open its doors at **6.30am TOMORROW (15 MAY)** with the first of 4 Masses for the day celebrated at 7am.

Archbishop of Sydney, the Most Rev. Anthony Fisher OP said as the number of COVID-19 infections continues to decline, many Catholics will welcome the prospect of returning to Mass after two-months.

"The celebration of Mass is the highest form of Catholic worship and to not be able to physically gather these past two months has been very difficult for Catholics," Archbishop Fisher said.

"Whilst livestreaming of Mass has helped people to continue to pray along at home it is no substitution for being able to be physically present and receiving the Eucharist. While it will take some time to return to larger celebrations, this first step will offer comfort to many Catholics who have been deeply missing attending Mass.

"The celebration of the Eucharist is an integral element of our faith and for many Catholics, especially those who have never missed the celebration of weekend Masses, these past months have been a real struggle. While it will take some time to return to larger celebrations, this first step will offer comfort to many Catholics who have been deeply missing the practice of their faith."

In line with the Federal Government's 3-step framework that says every religious gathering must record contact details, a national website (www.massregister.com.au) has been established for Catholic worshippers to register their attendance.

It will ensure that anyone who visits a Church will be notified if someone in the parish tests positive for COVID-19.

Note to Media:

Media are invited to the re-opening of St Mary's Cathedral at 6:30am tomorrow - Friday 15 May and to film the 7am Mass. If you wish to attend please contact Anita Quigley, Director of Communications & News Media at anita.quigley@sydneycatholic.org or 0421 612 978.

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