

THE RE-OPENING OF OUR CHURCHES FOR PRIVATE PRAYER

MONDAY JUNE 15TH

Statement from Cardinal Nichols

I am grateful to the Prime Minister for his decision that our churches may now open again for individual prayer. I thank the Secretary of State for Communities, Mr Robert Jenrick and the Minister of State, Lord Stephen Greenhalgh, for their leadership of the Task Force which helped bring about this important step.

This is a first, measured step in restoring the more normal practice of our faith and will be welcomed by so many, who have waited with great patience since 23 March when our churches were closed, by Government decision, as part of the fight against this pandemic.

I thank everyone for that patience. It is important that every care is taken to ensure that the Guidance given for this limited opening is fully observed, not least by those entering our churches. Our preparation is taking place with thoroughness. Visiting a church for individual prayer, benefitting from the sacredness of that space, can be done safely and confidently.

Not every Catholic Church will be open on 15 June. Local decisions and provision have to lead this process. But it is a great blessing, for individuals and for the benefit of all in society, that church doors will again be open to all who long to pray there for the peace and grace we need today.

This first step enables us to learn and prepare for those that will take us to a fuller use of our churches, for the celebration of Mass and other sacraments. We await that time with deep longing but patient understanding that the protection of the health of our society, especially of the most vulnerable, is a proper cause for caution and care.

Cardinal Vincent Nichols

President, Catholic Bishops' Conference of England and Wales