

## Thoughts about St Wilfrid's

St Wilfrid's has been closed, as we know since March and is being missed by our friendly community who love the church and have been attending for years. In answer to the question 'When is St Wilfrid's going to open?' I would like us all to think about some things we need to look at together:

- We all want to get back to normal. But the new normal will not be the same as the old. Sadly, some of our folks won't return for a variety of reasons and some of our activities will be different.
- Churches have been opening in groups. Initially we asked the Bishop for permission to open St Mary's and to learn from how we gradually open up to admit a congregation and keep everyone safe.
- Safety is a requirement for us all. Social distancing and sanitising, mask wearing and changes in how we celebrate Mass are now standard features. The Sunday obligation has been relaxed but everyone is encouraged to express our worship and love of the Lord in whatever way we can. Computer technology and equipment in St Mary's has meant many can follow Mass online.
- We began to open up for a congregation at a Saturday Vigil Mass and this has been successful. Now every Mass at St Mary's is open for all who wish to attend and the Masses are streamed online.
- For St Wilfrid's to open, we need to apply to the Bishop to be included in the next group. There are some requirements before this can go ahead.
  1. We need people who will deep clean the church
  2. We need stewards to maintain safety and clean after each Mass
  3. Social distancing will limit the numbers the church can accommodate. St Mary's can take only 50, St Wilfrid's will be less
- Many things are done in our churches by a small group of willing people. I'd like more to be involved if possible. Many of the folks who see to things for us are in the vulnerable age band – it's a feature of our aging congregations. Let's see how many of us can help. Remember I'm in the same age group too!
- Please bear in mind that Masses with lower numbers in each church have a very different feel from what we've been used to at weekends. Public liturgy is about the community coming together not just individual duty. Ideally we hope for reasonable numbers in both churches.
- One of the big reasons people give for attending church is the support they get from seeing and meeting one another. It's an important feature of our communities and the communities lose out as attendance declines.
- Please let me know your thoughts. I'll apply for St Wilfrid's to open with the next group of permissions. We need to make it function in as best a fashion as we are able. It depends on each person. We all make a difference and we rely on one another to be involved. Think about how your presence can help. Big thanks, as always.

Fr Dennis

17 October 2020