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Dear Fathers and Deacons,

Following my note to you yesterday evening, I have now received the attached National Lockdown Guidance from the Bishops' Conference. Please ensure that this guidance is followed in its entirety. The rate of infection being so high, these measures are necessary to ensure that our churches are as safe as possible.

The fact that our churches may remain open and Mass and the Sacraments celebrated will be a great comfort to all whom we serve. I would ask you to remind the faithful that the Sunday Obligation continues to be suspended and that livestreamed Masses are available in many places. Please also offer a reminder that it is not advisable for people from different families to gather socially before and after Mass.

I would, however, wish to re-iterate my advice of yesterday morning (4th January) that in cases where a priest is required to self-isolate, a supply for the parish should not be sought. The reason for this lies in the fact that many priests who offer supply are particularly vulnerable to the virus. Where Masses cannot be celebrated publicly in such cases, please ensure that information about Mass times across the Deanery is made available, with the proviso that local booking-in arrangements will need to be followed.

With the assurance of my prayers and with every Blessing,

+Richard