

Statement of H.E. Cardinal Vincent Nichols.

Cardinal Vincent welcomed the Prime Minister's announcement on 23rd June that collective acts of worship can resume, saying: 'I welcome the statement by the Prime Minister earlier today, that places of worship are now able to resume collective acts of worship from 4th July. This is welcome news for members of all religions in England. I thank all who have worked hard to bring this about, not least my fellow religious leaders.

'As Catholics we now look forward to being able to celebrate Mass together again from 4th July. We have waited with patience and longing for this moment, understanding the importance of protecting the health of people in our society. Now we are full of anticipation that we will be able again to take part together in the Eucharist, which lies at the centre of our faith.

'It is important that we continue to abide by the guidance, given by the Government, on appropriate social distancing and the other measures to avoid all unnecessary risk. Our own detailed guidance will be distributed around dioceses and parishes so everyone can be confident that they may come to Mass securely and understand the part they are to play in protecting each other from any remaining risk of infection.

'The past few months have been a time of fashioning new patterns of prayer, new ways of exploring and enriching our faith and vigorous ways of reaching out to those in need. We can build on these, forgetting nothing of the graces we have been given. Yet now, with the experience of opening our churches for individual prayer already gained, this return to the more normal patterns of worship will be of great importance to all Catholics.

'This time of our "Eucharistic fast" has made our hearts grow in longing for that moment when we can come together and receive again the Body and Blood of Christ in the Eucharist. That moment is now very near and for that we thank God.'