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Russian Orthodox Church Outside of Russia's Diocese of Great Britain and Western Europe - Parishes in England to Reopen for Public Worship This Weekend

worship. The ever-benevolent hand of God, Who is wondrous in His Saints, is clearly present in this: Saturday is the feastday of St John the Wonderworker of Shanghai and San Francisco, for many years the Ruling Bishop of our Diocese and one of the great Wonderworkers of the modern age; and Sunday is the feastday of St Alban the Protomartyr of Britain, who first shed blood in these lands for the sake of our Saviour Jesus Christ.

In so re-opening their doors, the parishes of England will join the parishes of the vast majority of the other countries within our Diocese, where, in most cases, local Governments have allowed this already for several weeks (for example, public services resumed in Geneva already on Ascension). Regrettably, the change does not yet apply in other parts of the United Kingdom (e.g. Wales, and Scotland).

His Grace Bishop Irenei, having spoken with the Priest of each parish in England to confirm the assessments of the situation with each parish, to ensure that the new Government guidelines shall be adhered to within the unique circumstances of Orthodox liturgical worship, has confirmed that from this weekend all of the Diocese's parishes in England will serve the Divine Liturgy and that the doors — closed to public worship since mid-March on account of COVID-19-related Government restrictions — will be opened to the faithful, albeit with certain ongoing restrictions in place. There will be limits on the number of people each temple can accommodate, based on its size and the need to practice social distancing inside; additional hygiene measures will be in place; some modifications to the interior layout of the churches may be undertaken to provide more room for the faithful; and in some cases (such as at the Diocesan Cathedral in London), multiple Liturgies will be served on Sunday in order to provide the opportunity for more people to be in the church, since maximum numbers at any one service will have to be observed. It is therefore essential that faithful contact their parish priest during the days ahead, prior to the weekend, to learn of the specific steps being taken in your parish, so that you will know clearly what to do when you arrive for the Liturgy.

When asked about the challenges that remain with the restrictions in place as services are reopened to the public, Bishop Irenei noted: 'We are not troubled about these things, because we know — all of us — the love and diligence of our Orthodox people. Even before the closures took place, we had already put many of these measures in place ourselves, and so we are facing here not something new, but something we have been through before. And we saw, in those experiences, the nature of our faithful: how they took care for each other; how they willingly stood at a distance from each other despite the desire to be close, since this was

what was required; how many chose to stand outside, despite the cold, and pray there with the Divine Service communicated to them through speakers set outside our Cathedral, in order to provide a place, in the limited space inside, for the elderly or the children; how they looked after each other when communing in the Divine Mysteries. In all these things, we saw orderliness, piety, calm, and a willingness to do — not with resentfulness or fear, but with eagerness — all that is required in order that together we may do the thing most needful in this life: give worship to the true and living God, and receive the blessed grace of the Divine Services. This, I am certain, we will see again this weekend as the temples re-open their doors.'

[Source](#)