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## **COVID-19 Coronavirus: Scotland, Masses without faithful from tomorrow. Churches open, new guidelines for sacraments**

(London) By a decision that they call “unprecedented”, the Catholic Bishops of Scotland have decided to suspend Holy Mass in public for the time being from tomorrow, 19 March. This was announced by the Bishops’ Conference in a statement that specifies that “priests will continue to celebrate Holy Mass in private with the particular intention of praying for those suffering from Covid-19 and for those who care for them”. “Churches will remain open for personal prayer”, and parish priests are encouraged to “welcome individuals who seek consolation and encouragement from the Lord”. The bishops also ask priests to “be available for the reception of the sacraments of reconciliation, anointing of the sick and holy communion as and when they are needed, especially for the sick and housebound. For the celebration of baptisms, funeral Masses and weddings, we would ask that only close family are invited”. The bishops encourage the about 800,000 Scottish Catholics - 15% of the entire population - to access the live streaming of Holy Mass, if their parishes offer this service, and announce that Holy Week celebrations might be curtailed this year. The bishops join with the bishops of other Christian Churches in declaring this coming Sunday, 22 March (Mothering Sunday), a national day of prayer “for our country and our world in this time of need”.

Valentina Bombelli