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## **UK: Bishops on Government's lockdown easing plan, "it fails to recognise the spiritual needs" of the Catholic community**

(London) Prime Minister Boris Johnson's document for the re-opening of Catholic churches "fails to recognise" the "profound sensitivities and spiritual needs" of the Catholic community. The Bishops of England and Wales used these harsh words in a statement in reply to the UK prime minister's plan for the re-opening of churches which will remain closed until 4 July. In the statement, the Bishops' Conference of England expressed disappointment and hope that churches could be re-opened for at least private prayer in front of the Tabernacle "as a first safe step towards their use for public worship". "The timing and the manner of the opening of churches touches profound sensitivities and spiritual needs", the Bishops wrote. "The Government's document and statements fail to recognise this". The Bishops' Conference, however, will continue its cooperation with the Government to ensure churches can be re-opened "as soon as possible". The measures taken include the establishment of a task force that works closely with parish priests in the different parishes to ensure the premises are safe for the faithful. The Bishops also want to learn from the "experience of other countries". "The Catholic Church - the statement reads - will continue its engagement in this process and has already submitted a detailed plan, in full accordance with public health guidelines, for churches to be opened for private prayer".

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