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## France, United Kingdom, Ireland, Belgium, Switzerland. Places of worship in Europe still in lockdown

France, United Kingdom, Ireland, Belgium, Switzerland. While the doors of Italian parishes today reopened to the faithful after more than two months of lockdown, governments in Europe are more cautious and requested not only Bishops' Conferences but also leaders of various faith communities to wait until the end of the month - if not the summer - before allowing public access to religious services. However, Europe's Catholic Churches submitted comprehensive plans to governments envisaging protective and safety measures, so as not to lower the guard against the Coronavirus. Nevertheless, talks and meetings are still in progress. It is hoped, at least from a Catholic perspective, to be able to celebrate Pentecost at church with the faithful.



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[albeit "partial", from May 16th for individual pilgrims from the region, for a maximum distance of 100 km, came as a positive signal in France. The Rector of the Shrine, Monsignor Olivier Ribadeau Dumas, hailed the decision as "a sign of great hope."](#)



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"We would like to remind them that the Catholic Church certainly has put forward already detailed protocols, agreed with Public Health England about how we can start the process, step by step, of making churches available for people."



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On 14 May the leaders of the Catholic Church, Archbishop Eamon Martin, Archbishop Diarmuid Martin and Archbishop Kieran O'Reilly (respectively President, Vice-President and Secretary of the Irish Bishops' Conference) met with the Taoiseach (the Prime Minister of the Republic of Ireland) Leo Eric Varadkar for an exchange of "ideas on the reopening of places of worship during the summer." The three bishops briefed the government on the efforts being made at all levels to draw up a national plan, pledging to do their utmost to implement and guarantee public health protection measures.



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with the President of the Swiss Bishops' Conference, the Archbishop of Basel, Msgr Felix Gmür, representing them. In a letter sent on 12 May last, the archbishop "suggested" to the Federal Council, to resume public religious services starting with the Solemnity of the Ascension (21 May) or, at the latest, at Pentecost (31 May), and declared that the Swiss Bishops' Conference has published a "framework plan" that provides for all safety measures. Criticism was voiced also here: "While many activities have been resumed as of 11 May - underlined the President of the bishops - religious services are still forbidden. This is no longer tolerable," said the Archbishop. "For hundreds of thousands of faithful, weekly services are an existential necessity. They need a long-term vision."

