
UK: Card. Nichols (Catholic primate), letter for Lent. “Pray at home. Bless each other by making the sign of the cross”

An invitation to British Catholics to stay home next week for Lent, and to celebrate Ash Wednesday with their family. In a pastoral letter that will be read out in all churches next Sunday, Catholic Primate Vincent Nichols asks the faithful to participate in a more domestic rite, that is to say, to bless each other by making the sign of the cross on each other's forehead and by reading the Gospel of the day taken from Saint Matthew chapter 6. The UK is now facing the third lockdown, but churches are still open and, as the Cardinal reminds in his letter, they are “safe environments”. “But we must all be very careful”, the Archbishop of Westminster writes, for travelling too far from home is dangerous. It is of paramount importance “to protect ourselves and to protect others. Some churches will of course be open for the celebration of Mass”, but “I have asked them not to make extra provision for Ash Wednesday”. “Celebrate Ash Wednesday at home”, Card. Nichols suggests, “with your family, in the household or ‘support bubble’ of which you are a part”. “Spend some time praying in a way that you know. Read out the prayer that I send you. Bless each other by making the sign of the cross on each other's forehead. Pray for God's mercy upon this world struggling to cope with this terrible pandemic”. The letter also provides detailed information on the Ash Wednesday rite to be celebrated at home.

Silvia Guzzetti