

DIOCESE OF DOWN AND CONNOR



THE PUBLIC CELEBRATION OF MASS AND THE SACRAMENTS

This document is intended to support parishes in their return to the public celebration of Mass and the sacraments. It is based on the Irish Episcopal Conference Framework Document (9 June 2020) and incorporates advice received from the NI Chief Medical Officer and Chief Scientific Advisor. **These guidelines should be read in conjunction with the IEC Framework Document and the Risk Assessment document provided by our insurers.** This document will be updated and reissued as and when required.

The current circumstances do not permit for *any* return to ‘normal practice’ at this time and you are encouraged to remind parishioners that parishes have an obligation to ensure the safety and wellbeing of all people. The advice, guidance and measures put in place are to mitigate against the transmission of the virus which is still present in the community and will continue to be so for some time to come. This justifies and necessitates the significant restrictions to the liturgical life of our community.

Parishes are required to complete the Risk Management Matrix and Checklist and should return a copy of these to: property@downandconnor.org before commencing the public liturgies. You should also carefully retain other documentation such as cleaning schedules etc. as indicated in the Risk Assessment.

1. While Churches are open for public celebrations, you are reminded that the obligation to attend Mass on Sunday and Holy Days remains suspended. Parishioners who can, should be encouraged to attend on other days, and at this time, be discouraged from attending Mass more than once a week to allow for others to attend. There should be no increase in the number of scheduled Masses, particularly on a Sunday.
2. In common with other northern Dioceses, a social distancing measure of 2 metres should be observed for the time being. The capacity of the Church should be calculated on this basis and noted as required in the Risk Assessment.
3. Members of the same household are permitted to sit together without the need to observe 2 metre distancing.
4. Where toilet facilities are provided, these must be regularly cleaned and appropriately restocked with handwash, disposable towels etc. Signage should be put in place recommending that 5 minutes be left between use.
5. Doors and windows should be left open and mechanical ventilation systems (where available) operated, before, during and after celebrations to improve ventilation.

6. Reusable pew missals/misalettes, hymnbooks and leaflets should not be used. Single use missalettes and newsletters should be taken home by the user, or safely collected and disposed after each Mass.
7. In order to keep the length of celebrations to a minimum, liturgies should be simple. Homilies and prayer of the faithful should be kept brief.
8. Concelebration is strongly discouraged. If necessary, for pastoral reasons, concelebrants should receive under both species using individual chalices and patens.
9. Holy Communion is not to be administered under both species; the Sacred Host is to be received on the hand only. Liturgical norms require that the communicant should not self-communicate.
10. As it is not possible to keep 2 metres distance at Communion time, face coverings must be worn by priests, deacons and extraordinary ministers while distributing Holy Communion.
11. Access to the sacristy should be strictly limited to clergy, sacristan (and where appropriate, servers). Where it is not possible to observe 2 metre distancing in sacristies, mitigations such as face coverings must be used.
12. Only one Child should be Baptised at any one ceremony.
13. Devotional practices such as communal recitation of the Divine Office, Rosary, Divine Mercy devotion should be scheduled during the published opening times of the Church and not immediately after liturgical celebrations.
14. The social distancing and other hygiene guidance should be applied to all liturgical/prayer gatherings
15. Further guidance regarding 'First Friday' visits, routine pastoral visits and weekly visits by extraordinary ministers will be issued in due course. Until then, house visits should be restricted to cases of urgency only.

You are reminded of the obligation to observe Public Health Regulations and follow carefully all advice issued by Public Health Officials.

