

Coronavirus COVID-19

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

Below is the latest press release compiled by the four Archbishops on behalf of the Irish Episcopal Conference. It is the case, as we are hearing in all media outlets, that gatherings are being greatly restricted. There will be many enquiries regarding Sunday Mass. In order to follow the guidelines and adhere to the norms, I have reluctantly decided that because it is simply not possible to guarantee a congregation of less than 100 people at any Sunday Mass there will be no public Masses in our Diocese this Sunday, St Patrick's Day or the following Sunday. Masses will be celebrated via webcam from a number of parishes in the Diocese. We will publish these details tomorrow. I strongly urge the use of webcam and local radio broadcasts and RTÉ services also, to encourage the faithful to enter into spiritual communion through these means. It is strange that at a time when we are being invited to pull together as a people and as a diocese the wisdom of staying apart and following health authority guidelines is of the utmost importance. I am also very conscious that this is a time when there is a great need for prayer, and I welcome the fact that all our churches will be open for quiet prayer and reflection.

Funerals, baptisms & weddings may continue, again adhering to the norms set out below.

An Act of Spiritual Communion

My Jesus,

I believe that You
are present in the Most Holy Sacrament.

I love You above all things,
and I desire to receive You into my soul.

Since I cannot at this moment
receive You sacramentally,
come at least spiritually into my heart.

I embrace You as if You were already there and unite myself wholly to You.

Never permit me to be separated from You.

Amen.

It is imperative that we care for the more vulnerable amongst us, and care for ourselves at this time. Every blessing,

+Denis

'Care for one another during the Coronavirus pandemic' - Further advice of the Irish Bishops in response to the COVID-19 Coronavirus

12. MAR, 2020

Please see below further advice published on behalf of the Irish Episcopal Conference by Archbishop Eamon Martin, Archbishop Diarmuid Martin, Archbishop Kieran O'Reilly SMA and Archbishop Michael Neary:

The following instructions take into consideration the new norms issued by the Irish government to be in force at 18.00 today. Bishops are asked to promulgate these instructions in their dioceses as soon as possible. These instructions complement the advice issued yesterday by the Irish Episcopal Conference and remain in place until 29 March 2020. It is likely that these restrictions will continue for some time after that, and instructions regarding the celebration of Holy Week will be issued in due course. The motivation for these new restrictive measures is a sense of care for the common good and especially for those most vulnerable. Each Christian community should be acutely aware of the responsibility to care for those who are most at risk. For example, even where it may not be appropriate to visit the elderly, a simple telephone call to enquire about their needs could mean so much to them.

Norms

1. All non-essential pastoral gatherings and meetings, such as formation gatherings, retreats and seminars are cancelled.
2. All Confirmations are postponed until further notice.
3. Every Catholic is entitled to a dignified Christian burial. Attendance at Funeral services and Masses should be limited to close relatives and must not exceed 100 attendees within the church building.
4. Similarly, Church weddings and baptisms may be celebrated on condition that the attendance in church does not exceed 100 people.
5. In these difficult and uncertain times, people find strength, consolation and hope in prayer. Churches should remain open for prayer each day.
6. In the current emergency situation, all are dispensed from the obligation to physically attend Sunday Mass. Parishes should inform parishioners of the local possibilities to participate in Mass via local radio and online. It may be possible for some parishes to facilitate attendance at Mass while still observing the health authority's limit of 100 people.
7. This is an occasion for all of us - especially in families - to pray more intensely for each other and especially for those who have succumbed to the illness. We should pray also for those at the frontlines - especially doctors, nurses and medical staff and other carers, including clergy - that the Lord will protect them as they place their own wellbeing at risk in the service of all.

Archbishop Eamon Martin is Archbishop of Armagh and Apostolic Administrator of the Diocese of Dromore; Archbishop Diarmuid Martin is Archbishop of Dublin; Archbishop Kieran O'Reilly SMA is Archbishop of Cashel & Emlly; and Archbishop Michael Neary is Archbishop of Tuam