

IMPORTANT LETTER FROM ARCHBISHOP DIARMUID MARTIN ON CORONAVIRUS SPECIAL MEASURES

Please read carefully the advice issued Thursday afternoon 12 March by the Irish Bishops.

Whereas I realise that many of these restrictive measures will make pastoral life more difficult, we have to remember that as a society we have a duty of care to protect ourselves and above all to protect others.

- In the current emergency, all are dispensed from the obligation to physically attend Sunday Mass.
- All Confirmations are postponed until further notice. This applies with immediate effect.
- Are Masses cancelled? Not absolutely. Where normal attendance on Sundays or Weekdays is less than 100, there is no reason not to hold public Mass. Mass with limited congregations can be celebrated to permit participation by web-cam. Pope Francis does this himself every morning. Attention can be drawn for those who cannot attend Mass to the traditional practice of Spiritual Communion.
- Funerals: Funeral Masses can be celebrated but limited to close relatives or friends with at most 100 people inside the Church. Larger gatherings of up to 500 could take place outside after Mass or at a graveyard.
- Similarly Church Weddings and Baptisms can take place on condition that attendance does not exceed 100 people inside the Church.
- Within Churches it is necessary that people observe a distance of at least one metre from each other. This is because one of the easiest ways in which the virus is transmitted is through close contact.
- It is not permitted to pass baskets or collection bags from person to person. Arrangements must be made for closely monitored collection points at entrances to Churches, with distinction between the first and second collections. There is also an on-line payment facility for the Common Fund and Share collections on the front page of the diocesan website. Click on "Donate".

The situation of isolation that many will feel with the current restrictions challenges the Christian community to be attentive to and remember those in our communities who live alone and especially families carrying extra burdens.