

FURTHER NOTICE CONCERNING THE PASTORAL SITUATION IN COUNTY DUBLIN UNDER CHANGED CORONAVIRUS NORMS

18 September 2020 – Evening

Confirmation has been received that, in the light of the very worrying increase in infection in the Dublin area, the entire County Dublin will be placed on Level 3 of the Government's *COVID-19 Resilience and National Recovery Plan*, beginning at midnight tonight and for at least a three-week period.

The norms apply to all places of worship within County Dublin, including those of religious houses that are generally open to the public. They do not apply to the Churches of the Archdiocese of Dublin in Counties Wicklow, Wexford, Kildare and Laois.

Places of worship will **have to remain closed** from midnight tonight, except for private prayer, weddings and funerals. Attendance at wedding liturgies and funerals will be limited to 25.

Religious services can be transmitted online with no public presence. As was the case in the past, parishes should make known as soon as possible the times of the transmission of Masses online. Where an individual parish does not have the ability to transmit online, details of neighbouring parishes can be supplied. The Masses from the Pro-Cathedral are accessible on www.dublindiocese.ie and www.procathedral.ie

While online transmissions can play a vital role in reaching out to the sick and where it is not possible to hold public liturgies, we have to remember that no broadcast can replace personal participation with our brothers and sisters in the Eucharistic assembly that has the church building as its home. We must pray intensely that we will be able to return to public worship at the earliest possible date.

Confirmation and First Communion services (including those planned for tomorrow, Saturday) will therefore not be possible during this period and will have to be postponed. Permissions already granted to priests to celebrate Confirmations remain valid for a rescheduled date. Any celebration of these Sacraments -such as in schools or other places - constitutes public worship and is covered by this restriction and should not take place. I understand the concerns that this may bring to many families.

I am aware of the fact that these measures will be painful for many. The decisions are made to respond in the best possible way to an unforeseen and complex situation. The Holy See's Congregation for Divine Worship in a recent letter, approved by Pope Francis, noted that restrictions should be limited in time and that as soon as circumstances permit it is urgent to return to the normality of Christian life. It also stressed unambiguously the gratitude of the Congregation to Bishops who "in listening to and collaborating with civil authorities and experts... have been prompt to make difficult and painful decisions even to the point of suspending the participation of the faithful in the celebration of the Eucharist for a long period"

Today, we find ourselves sadly in that situation once again and we are called to make painful sacrifice for the common good. The Holy See's Letter stresses that "Aware that God never abandons the humanity He has created, and that even in the hardest trials can bear fruits of grace, we [should accept] our distance from the Lord's altar as a time of Eucharistic fasting, useful for us to rediscover its vital importance, beauty and immeasurable preciousness".

I appeal to all to enter into this difficult period with that spirit. We must pray that we can soon return to the Eucharist "with a purified heart, with a renewed amazement, with an increased desire to meet the Lord, to be with him, to receive him and to bring him to our brothers and sisters with a life full of faith, love and hope."

As you are aware the annual collection for Crosscare was planned to take place over this weekend. Please encourage people not to overlook this important collection. Donations can be made online at www.crosscare.ie

+Diarmuid Martin

18th September 2020