

DIRECTIVES FOR THE DIOCESE OF DOWN AND CONNOR
Effective 12 Noon Friday 13 March 2020 until further Notice

These directives are issued in accordance with the advice issued by Public Health Authorities in Northern Ireland. We continue to monitor this advice closely and will update these directives accordingly.

Public Health Advice

All members of our parishes, clergy and diocesan employees should adhere to the public health advice, which includes:

- good hand and respiratory hygiene,
- Public Health instructions to be followed if you think you are at risk,
- travel advice,
- the latest advice concerning staying at home issued on Thursday 12 March.

Updated advice for diocesan employees and their line managers will be issued as and when required.

The latest Government advice can be found at www.gov.uk/coronavirus

The obligation to attend Mass

Considering the current situation, all the faithful are dispensed from the obligation to attend Mass on Sunday and Holy Days of Obligation. Parishes should do all they can to raise awareness of available opportunities to participate in Mass via radio, TV, webcam etc.

Mass will continue to be celebrated publicly until advice from the public health authorities indicates that we should determine otherwise.

We advise all those who are unwell, those who have underlying medical conditions or are otherwise vulnerable to infection to stay at home. We are particularly mindful that many of our regular daily Mass goers are more vulnerable and we encourage them to consider carefully whether they should attend Mass at this time.

The celebration of Confirmation, First Confession and First Holy Communion

Recognising that these are important milestones in the faith journey of our children and a cause for family and community celebration, and that the current situation may overshadow that celebration, we are suspending the programme of Confirmations, First Confessions and First Holy Communion until further notice.

Weddings

Weddings may continue to be celebrated until further notice, couples and their guests should adhere to the Public Health advice. Parishes should do all they can to facilitate those couples who wish to discuss the arrangements for their marriage ceremony or postpone it to a later date.

Baptisms

Baptisms will continue to be celebrated until further notice, with the modifications to the liturgy set out in the accompanying document in place. Families are requested to restrict the number of guests attending the Church to a minimum and to adhere to the public health advice.

Funerals

Every Catholic is entitled to a Christian funeral. Until further notice, funerals will continue. Bereaved families, mourners and those who wish to offer sympathy should adhere to public health advice and consider (in the case of mourners who are not family members) whether their attendance at the Funeral is essential.

Opening of Churches

Churches will continue to remain open for private personal prayer.

Meetings, seminars, courses and retreats

Organisers should consider whether such events are essential at this time, if not they should be cancelled. For essential meetings consider the possibility of using conference calling or web-based meetings. Persons vulnerable to infection should not be required to attend such meetings.

These directives will be kept under regular review