

DIRECTIVES FOR THE DIOCESE OF DOWN AND CONNOR
Advice Relating to Churches and Liturgical Celebrations
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

Church Premises

These simple steps will help parishioners and staff adhere to the good hygiene practices being recommended:

- Provide tissues and alcohol-based hand sanitizers at entrances to the church.
- Provide bins for the disposal of tissues.
- Ensure that your toilet areas and hand-washing facilities (in sacristies etc) are regularly cleaned and well maintained, including the provision of hot water, soap and **disposable** handtowels.
- Ensure that hard surfaces that are frequently touched, such as door handles, handrails, taps etc are cleaned regularly with a household detergent.
- Drain and clean your holy water fonts. They should be left empty until advised otherwise.
- Display the posters/information notices provided by the HR team in workplaces, sacristies and at entrances to Churches and Parish facilities

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.

Physical interaction during liturgies

The practice of sharing a sign of peace should be suspended until further notice.

The Collection basket/plate should not be passed from person to person during the offertory. We suggest that your collectors stand at the door of the church at the end of Mass to collect offerings. Please ensure that collectors and those who count the offerings have access to and are encouraged to use hand washing facilities.

The distribution and reception of Holy Communion

Having received Holy Communion and immediately **before** and **after** distributing Communion the priest and ministers should sanitize their hands. Please ensure there are appropriate facilities available for this (alcohol hand sanitizer or access to water, soap and disposable towels.)

Only the principal celebrant should receive from the chalice. If concelebration is necessary, the Irish Bishops' Conference have granted permission for concelebrants to receive the host only.

Members of the faithful are asked to receive Holy Communion in the hand. Please take time to explain this, offer reassurance that this request is temporary and made in response to the current situation. It is appropriate to demonstrate the correct and reverential way to receive Communion in the hand.

We are aware that there are those who do not wish to receive Holy Communion in the hand, such cases should be treated with sensitivity. When speaking about this change during Mass we suggest that you invite anyone who has concerns about this to speak to you after Mass, thus avoiding an altercation at the sanctuary.

Administration of Baptism

- Sign the child with the Cross without touching.
- Where there is more than one Child to be baptised, use a single jug of fresh water for each child.
- Administer the Holy oils with cotton wool/cotton bud, a fresh one each time.

Administration of the Sacrament of the Sick

- Use a cotton bud or surgical glove for the anointing, do not place your thumb or cotton bud back in the oil between anointing the head and hands. Dispose of the glove or bud appropriately.

If you have queries or need further support or assistance, please do not hesitate to contact the Diocesan Office.

These directives will be kept under regular review