

A PASTORAL RESPONSE TO THE PRESENT CORONAVIRUS CRISIS IN OUR PARISH

On Monday 16th March Bishop Noel Treanor announced that from Wednesday 18th March all weekday and Sunday Masses in the Diocese of Down and Connor were being suspended indefinitely. The provision for Baptisms, Weddings and Funerals has now been updated below regarding the latest D&C Directives dated 25th March 2020.

Given this unprecedented situation, here in the Parish of Carrickfergus and Whitehead the following arrangements are now in place from 26th March 2020:

1. CHURCHES

All churches are now closed to the Public, as per government guidelines.

2. FUNERALS

From the 25th March, by Diocesan Directive, there will be no funeral liturgies in our churches. This is with a view to reducing the risk of infection as the pandemic intensifies.

Rites of committal at graves are still permitted, under the restrictions determined by civil authorities.

We recognise that that this will be a difficult and painful change for our faithful and Bishop Noel has addressed this in his pastoral letter dated 25th March and video to the faithful. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=TIQcHNb-q-g>

For further information please contact Fr Peter Owens or our parish secretary Natalie Gallagher (Tel: 028 93363269 or Email: carrickfergus@downandconnor.org).

3. BAPTISMS AND WEDDINGS

No Baptisms or Weddings will take place.

If you had a Baptism or Wedding due to take place in the near future, please make contact Fr Peter Owens or with our parish secretary Natalie Gallagher (Tel: 028 93363269 or Email: carrickfergus@downandconnor.org).

4. EMERGENCIES

All emergency calls will be answered in the normal way by Fr Peter or one of the other priests from our Loughshore Region Pastoral Community (Emergency Tel: 07940 002830).

5. MATERIAL ASSISTANCE

This will be managed by our two Conferences of the Society of St Vincent de Paul, by members of our Parish Pastoral Council and by representatives of the Food Banks in Carrickfergus and Whitehead – all these can be contacted via the parish office Tel: 028 93363269 or SVdP Tel: 028 90351561.

6. FINANCIAL OFFERINGS

The issuing of the Offertory Promise Envelopes to households has now had to be postponed in light of recent developments.

Alternatively, parishioners may decide to set up Standing Orders and this can be done in consultation with our parish secretary or with Patrick Quinn from the Parish Finance Committee (Tel: 07891 114892).

IN CONCLUSION

Although all our lives are being dramatically changed by the present crisis, one reality does not change: the unconditional love of God for each of us personally and His call to all of us to reflect that love in how we treat ourselves and each other, not least in times of suffering, fear and anxiety. The words "Go, the Mass is ended" have a poignant resonance, now that all public worship has been suspended, but the Mass is still being celebrated privately, the Blessed Sacrament is still being adored publicly, and every man and woman is our brother and sister in Christ both in company and in isolation.

We make the words of St Patrick our own:

St. Patrick's Breastplate

Christ with me,
Christ before me,
Christ behind me,
Christ within me,
Christ below me,
Christ above me,
Christ on my right hand,
Christ on my left hand,
Christ in my sleeping,
Christ in my waking,
Christ in the heart of all who think of me,
Christ in every eye that looks at me,
Christ in every ear that listens to me.