

COVID-19
DIRECTIVES FOR THE DIOCESE OF DOWN AND CONNOR
Effective Wednesday 18 March 2020, until further notice

Aware of growing public anxiety, out of particular concern for the more vulnerable members of our community and to avoid any confusion, we are updating our directives with effect from Wednesday 18 March 2020

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
- Self-isolation if you are unwell
- travel advice

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

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

The Public Celebration of Mass

Masses for the feast of St Patrick (17th March) should continue as planned.

From Wednesday 18 March, the public celebration of Mass is suspended in all Churches in the Diocese. This includes all religious houses where the public may attend and special gatherings of the faithful.

All the faithful are dispensed from the obligation to attend Mass on Sunday and Holy Days of obligation.

Parishes will do all they can to raise awareness of available opportunities to participate in Mass via radio, TV, and web streaming. Information will be shared on the Diocesan website (www.downandconnor.org) and through parish social media.

The celebration of Confirmation, First Confession and First Holy Communion

As previously advised, the programme of Confirmations, First Confessions and First Holy Communion remains suspended until further notice.

Weddings

Weddings may continue to be celebrated until further notice.

Couples and their guests are asked to adhere to public health advice, and we encourage them to limit those attending to immediate family and loved ones. Parishes and clergy will 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 in the accompanying document in place. Families are requested to restrict those attending to the parents and godparents of the child only. All are requested to adhere to public health advice. Parishes will liaise with parents who wish to postpone planned baptisms.

Funerals

Until further notice, funerals will continue. Bereaved families are requested to restrict attendees at the funeral to close family and loved ones only. We encourage those who wish to offer sympathy at the time of bereavement to exercise safe and appropriate ways to do so in these difficult circumstances.

Opening of Churches

Churches will continue to remain open for private personal prayer.

Meetings, seminars, courses and retreats

All non-essential meetings, courses, seminars and other pastoral gatherings should be cancelled. Where meetings are required, consideration should be given to using conference calls or web-based meetings.

These directives will be kept under regular review and any change will be notified as soon as possible