

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. He also announced that Baptisms, Weddings and Funerals would be permitted for the time being, but on condition that couples and families significantly reduce the number of people in attendance. This provision may have to be reviewed.

Given this unprecedented situation, here in the Parish of Carrickfergus and Whitehead the following arrangements will obtain from the weekend of 21st / 22nd March:

1. OPENING OF CHURCHES FOR PRIVATE PRAYER

St. Nicholas' Carrickfergus

Saturday evenings 5.30 pm – 6.30 pm

Sunday mornings 11.00 am – 12.30 pm

Our Lady of Lourdes Whitehead

Sunday mornings 9.30 am – 11.00 am

These periods are intended as opportunities for private prayer (NOT PUBLIC COMMUNAL WORSHIP), with parishioners being requested to observe a distance of two metres from others (apart from family) and to use the hand sanitisers and wipes provided.

2. BAPTISMS, WEDDINGS AND FUNERALS

These can be organised and discussed with Fr Peter Owens or with our parish secretary Natalie Gallagher (Tel: 028 93363269 or Email: carrickfergus@downandconnor.org).

Please remember the requirement to limit the numbers attending – this is of the utmost importance.

3. 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).

4. 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.

5. FINANCIAL OFFERINGS

Following the house – by – house delivery of the Offertory Promise Envelopes, these can be placed in secure marked boxes located at the back of both our churches and

which will be accessible during the periods of Private Prayer on Saturday evenings and Sunday mornings.

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.