

Return to Public Celebration of Mass and the Sacraments

In welcoming the good news that public worship can re-commence in our churches **as and from this coming Monday, June 29th**, we all need to bear in mind that we will not be instantly returning to the 'normal' of three/four months ago but will begin with small and tentative steps.

Adhering to the **2 Metre Social Distancing** means that congregation size will be about **10% of the church building capacity**. **Every second seat will not be used. The remaining seats will adhere to the 2 Metre Social Distancing advice, except in the case of a family who may sit together.**

If we were to **depend solely on our 4 Weekend Masses** (Saturday Vigil plus 3 Sunday Masses) - the reduced capacity **would fall far short of what is needed.**

Hence we are proposing that **THE SUNDAY MASS GETS SPREAD ACROSS THE ENTIRE WEEK**. Instead of being **confined to the 4 Weekend Masses** – parishioners will have **9 MASSES TO CHOOSE FROM**, when we include the Monday to Friday **Weekday Masses in St. Patrick's Church.**

The **9 Masses** will read as follows (**beginning on Monday June 29th**) :

(1) Monday, 7.30pm. (2) Tuesday 9.30am (3) Wednesday 7.30pm
(4) Thursday 9.30am (5) Friday 7.30pm (6) Saturday Vigil 6.30pm
(7) Sunday Tullycorbet 9.30am (8) Sunday Ballintra 11am
(9) Sunday St. Patrick's 12.15pm.

Attendance at any 'one' of the Weekday Masses is the equivalent of going to Mass on a Sunday - as the Sunday obligation has been set-aside owing to the pandemic.

By way of making this a workable solution, we have made **a slight adjustment to the 'timing' of the Weekday Masses in St. Patrick's**, for a trial number of weeks. In addition to **Monday - Wednesdays & Fridays** will also have Mass in **the evening at 7.30pm** (with **NO 9.30am Mass** on Mon. Wed. & Fri). **Tuesdays & Thursdays** will continue to have Mass at 9.30am.

We are asking that parishioners make an earnest effort **to spread Mass attendance ‘across the seven days’** - with as many as possible opting to go to ‘one’ of the weekday Masses. It would be particularly helpful if **as many families as possible** (from Ballintra, Tullycorbet and the Town) **would choose to go together to ‘one’ of the 3 Weekday Evening Masses in St Patrick’s** - thus alleviating the pressure around the Weekend Masses.

A TEAM of parishioners has been planning for this for a number of weeks and we thank them for taking on this work on our behalf. They will be assisting at each of the Masses to ensure that our churches remain ‘safe places’, thus preventing any further spread of the Coronavirus.

As people gather for Mass, the TEAM will monitor the seating capacity and will be on hand to inform people when the restricted seating capacity has been reached. Again, to avoid this happening, in so far as is possible, **I am asking as many parishioners as possible to make good use of ‘one’ of the Weekdays Masses in St. Patrick’s. This is the best way to ensure that most people can be accommodated – if Mass attendance is spread over the entire week.**

There is no easy solution here, but our patience with one another will be key as we take these small and tentative steps back to Mass in the weeks ahead, not forgetting that our priority here is about protecting all of us from the Coronavirus.

It is important that people who are vulnerable or unwell, and especially those with any symptoms that might suggest Covid-19 infection stay at home and, if possible, participate via webcam, social media, television or radio. **We will continue to live-stream the Sunday 12.15pm Mass.**

The link is : **<https://www.churchservices.tv/tullycorbet>**

Clean Cut Cleaning Services (Rory McAtavie and his team) have carried out a deep clean of our three churches and sprayed all surfaces with the appropriate disinfectant.

I appreciate and thank you for your co-operation.

Yours in Christ, Fr Owen J. McEneaney.

