

WELCOMING PEOPLE BACK TO MASS in the parish of Dromore

At their Conference meeting this week, the Bishops of Ireland discussed the ending of restrictions that were put in place during the Covid-19 pandemic.

In the coming days and weeks we will gradually lift the restrictions and mitigations that were introduced during the pandemic. We should, however, remain sensitive and respectful towards those who may still feel vulnerable or anxious.

Conscious that levels of infection still remain high, in the parish of Dromore we will:

- Ensure a good church cleaning regime, with the continuing use of hand-sanitising stations.
- Encourage people to continue to wear masks for now (but this is not compulsory).
- Welcome more people by gradually opening up more seats, while maintaining responsible social distancing between groups.
- Encourage people to continue to receive the sacred host in the hand (although this is not compulsory).
- Resume the 'Sign of Peace' as a greeting of peace ("Peace be with you") rather than the traditional handshake.
- All servers and other contributors to ministry may return.
- During the Season of Lent, everyone (except those whose health is vulnerable or those who are unwell) are encouraged to return to Sunday and weekday Mass. From Easter Sunday, 17 April, this will once again be deemed an essential expression of faith for all in our Church in Ireland.
- Holy Week ceremonies will be planned as normal.

The Bishops stated this week:

"As the remaining Covid-19 restrictions have been lifted, it is encouraging to see a return to full public worship in our parishes, and the resumption of all aspects of Church and community life. At the heart of the life of our parish communities is the Sunday Mass. When we gather for the Eucharist on the Lord's Day, we do so to express our joy in the Risen Lord and to unite with our brothers and sisters in the Church in thanksgiving and praise to God. This is a communal celebration which shapes us as a community of faith, life and charity.

"During the Season of Lent, we encourage everyone to return to Sunday and weekday Mass in our churches, welcoming each other back as we gather once more together. From Easter Sunday, 17 April, this will once again be deemed an essential expression of faith for all in our Church in Ireland. As always, those whose health is vulnerable or who are unwell will not be under any obligation to attend Mass and should keep themselves safe and pray at home until they are better.

"We should however remain sensitive and respectful (by way of responsible social distancing and optional wearing of masks) towards those who may still feel vulnerable or anxious.

"We remain grateful to all those who risked their lives and made sacrifices in hospitals and other settings to keep us safe during the pandemic. We appreciate the commitment of priests who continued to minister the sacraments to the best of their ability, notwithstanding the risk this posed to their own life and health. In doing so, priests gave powerful witness to the faith. We also give thanks for the many people in our parishes who worked so hard to maintain our worship and parish life in the safest way possible. We keep in our prayers all who have been impacted in any way during the pandemic, especially the bereaved."