

## Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs)

### ***From training webinars on the Irish Bishops' Framework Document for a Return to the Public Celebration of Mass and the Sacraments***

#### **Version 2 – 14<sup>th</sup> July 2020**

*\*The information contained in Version 2 of this document is up to date on the 14<sup>th</sup> of July 2020. A new version will be created to reflect any change in guidance from the Bishops' Conference, the Government and/or the HSE.*

### General Questions

**1. Will there be a letter provided for parishioners explaining the new routines from the Diocesan Centre or will the local Churches compile their own following guidelines?**

The guidelines are standard for all parishes, local communication is down to the parishes as you know your own parishioners best, signage will be important. The Diocesan Centre will support communications by making the guidance and supporting information available through our website and Facebook page (see link below).

**2. Is all training to be completed before Monday 29th June?**

The advice is that no Church should open until they have everything in place. Parishes can set their own pace of re-opening. Briefing of stewarding and cleaning teams will be essential before Churches open. All training materials and aids are available on the Diocesan website and can be used locally. Here is the link: <https://www.limerickdiocese.org/resources/category/resources/framework-document/>

**3. Is it recommended that all attending Church should sign in? Is it necessary to take temperatures on entry to Church?**

No, there is no Public Health advice, at the moment, that information on people attending should be gathered or that temperatures should be taken. To gather personal information without the necessary authority to do so has data protection (GDPR) implications.

**4. Will parishioners who volunteer in the Church (cleaners, readers...) have to complete back to work protocols / fill in forms / questionnaires to confirm they are COVID free?**

Employed Church workers need to follow the return-to-work protocol.

All volunteers (stewards, cleaners, readers etc) should complete a Volunteer Application form (this may already be in place for existing volunteers). Anyone considering a volunteer role should always consider if they are well enough to volunteer. Anyone, who feels sick in any way, has been in contact with a case of COVID-19, or has recently returned from being abroad should not volunteer. People who are in an 'at risk' category should also not volunteer.

A Limerick Diocese Volunteer Application form can be downloaded here:

[https://www.limerickdiocesefeguarding.com/index.cfm/\\_api/render/file/?method=inline&fileID=6845F7E5-DE74-4733-97361F467545305E](https://www.limerickdiocesefeguarding.com/index.cfm/_api/render/file/?method=inline&fileID=6845F7E5-DE74-4733-97361F467545305E)

**5. Will the Diocese have a nominated person/people carrying out an audit of each parish to ensure all guidelines / sanitising are being followed correctly and signed off by the Diocese?**

The parish is responsible for putting local arrangements in place to comply with Government and Public Health guidelines. The checklist is a useful tool to work through the requirements and will be helpful in meeting the requirements of your insurer. The Diocese has issued the Framework Document and has requested a copy of the completed checklist to be returned to the Diocesan Centre as part of our role in overseeing the implementation of the guidelines. The Diocesan team are happy to help in any way we can, such as in providing the training/briefing webinars; however, this will be in a supportive role not an auditing role.

## Physical / Social Distancing

**6. Does the maximum capacity number of 50 in the Church include stewards, clergy, sacristan, readers etc?**

The maximum of 50 people must include all people in the Church, including priest(s), sacristan, reader, stewards etc.

UPDATE 3<sup>rd</sup> July 2020:

The Cabinet Committee has decided that where the size of a Church allows for a capacity of greater than 50 this may be permitted only where:

- Social distancing guidelines are adhered to
- The premises can be subdivided into distinct sections (cordoned or marked appropriately) of not more than 50 persons in each section
- There is a minimum of 4m between sections
- Each section has its own entrance/exit route
- There are separate arrangements for elements of the service involving close contact, e.g. the distribution of Holy Communion
- There is strictly no movement of people between sections before, during or after the service
- The premises is well-ventilated.

**7. Is a family of four counted as one or four individuals?**

The family of four is counted as four individuals in respect of the upper limit of 50 people.

**8. What happens when more than 50 people arrive at the Church?**

People should be advised by the steward(s) that the Church has reached capacity. If the Church has an external loudspeaker, they may be able to stay outside (if this is possible within the 2-metre social distancing requirement) or sit in their car, if no external speaker is available they could be advised to attend the next Mass, or to participate in one of many online liturgy options. One suggestion offered is that a parish might wish to print a little card or note that can be given to anyone who is not able to get into a particular Mass. The following text could be edited for such a card or note:

*Dear friend*

*In order to comply with Public Health guidance, this church has now reached capacity.*

*Your cooperation with Stewards in helping to keep everyone safe and ensure we can stay open is appreciated.*

*Details of Mass times and other liturgies in this parish are posted on the door and on local websites and Facebook pages. Details of online and radio masses are available for Churches across the Diocese on either parish websites or on the Diocesan website: <https://www.limerickdiocese.org>*

**9. Do we need a booking system for the Masses available in the Church throughout the week?**

Parishes are taking different approaches to this, some require people to phone the parish office to book a place, others give out tickets which need to be brought to Mass, others operate a first-come, first-served system, there are also online booking systems available. It is down to each parish to consider what will work best in their local setting.

Parishes need to consider the general data protection regulation (GDPR) when recording personal data, personal data can only be used for the purposes for which it is collected. The parishioners should be advised as to the purpose of giving this information at the time they give it. E.g. "we will need you to give us your name and number for the purposes of booking you for a place at Mass. We will delete the information within 1 month". The information should be stored securely, with only those who need to view it for work purposes, being given access to it. It should only be retained for as long as is necessary.

**10. Does a Church have to monitor / marshal its car park re social distancing?**

The Church car park is part of the Church property, and the responsibility of the Church/parish, and therefore needs stewarding.

**11. Is the Diocese providing signage and stickers or is it down to each parish to source? If so, will there be standard templates available?**

It is up to each parish to source Covid-19 signage; most Covid-19 signage is standardised. The Diocesan Centre has information on suppliers which is available to parishes. The Diocesan Centre has sent a standard 'Welcome Back' poster for Churches across the Diocese.

**12. Do stewards need to wear high visibility jackets?**

A high visibility jacket is recommended for stewards inside the Church to assist parishioners in identifying who is offering guidance to them within the Church. For stewards guiding outside the Church e.g. in the car park, a high visibility jacket is essential.

**13. Should stewards wear a facemask?**

It is highly recommended that stewards wear a facemask for the dual purpose of protecting themselves and others and also to enhance the message that we are taking every possible step to provide a safe environment for parishioners.

*Please note single-use facemasks should be carefully placed in a bag or disposed of in a bin immediately after being removed. Masks should be only removed using the elastic straps, the front of the mask should not be touched as it may be contaminated. Multi-use masks should be placed in a bag and washed at 60° after use.*

## Maintenance of Hygiene

**14. Does a Church have to wait an hour before commencing cleaning the Church after a service?**

No, you do not have to wait an hour. Initial advice suggested this might be the case, however it has been clarified that as the Covid-19 virus is dispersed through droplets rather than being airborne, therefore there is no requirement for a 'settling' period before cleaning.

**15. Will blocked off areas, still require cleaning once Mass has finished?**

It is advised that as the virus could be spread to the empty seat in front of where a person is sitting should they cough or sneeze, then this should also be cleaned.

**16. If we make our toilet available, do we have to clean the area after each use?**

If the toilet facility is used during a service, it would need to be cleaned after each service. A written record should be kept of the cleaning and sanitisation of the toilet(s).

**17. Should volunteers be trained to sanitise the Church and are they putting themselves at risk?**

Each parish will need to brief their volunteers on sanitising protocols and the necessary safety measures, including the wearing of Personal Protective Equipment as recommended in the sanitising protocol. Further information on cleaning in non-healthcare settings is available from the ECDC at: [https://www.ecdc.europa.eu/sites/default/files/documents/Environmental-persistence-of-SARS\\_CoV\\_2-virus-Options-for-cleaning2020-03-26\\_0.pdf](https://www.ecdc.europa.eu/sites/default/files/documents/Environmental-persistence-of-SARS_CoV_2-virus-Options-for-cleaning2020-03-26_0.pdf)

*Please note the advice on handling facemasks in the answer to Question 13.*

**18. Should everyone wear masks?**

In a Church context, where 2-metre distancing is being observed, it is up to individual choice. The Public Health guidance states if it is not feasible to maintain a 2-metre distance in a place where people are gathered, then a facemask should be worn.

*Please note the advice on handling facemasks in the answer to Question 13.*

**19. How do we choose people to clean the Church so as not to put vulnerable people at risk?**

As previously indicated in the answer to question 4, anyone in a vulnerable position or age group should be not be encouraged to be involved in the cleaning of the Church. The opportunity involving younger people in the parish in this role could be explored.

## Liturgical Matters

**20. Would it be possible to give out Communion at the end of Mass and then people leave? Is it ok from a liturgical point of view?**

It is not considered good liturgical practice to give Communion after Mass. There is also a risk that it could become a de facto practice post Covid-19. The time required to distribute Communion, whilst maintaining social distancing, may become an issue as time goes on, particularly when the maximum number increases to 100. Parishes will need to make a judgment on how best to manage this at that time.

**21. Will people waiting outside Church be able to receive Holy Communion?**

Yes, if people are listening outside on the Church loudspeaker, someone will bring Communion outside. A steward will be needed to accompany the Priest/Eucharist Minister, in order to ensure the 2-metre distancing is maintained.

22. **Do stewards have to be present at baptisms, weddings, funerals?**  
This will very much depend on the numbers present, if the numbers are significant (within the current limits), stewarding will be advisable. If a small group of just immediate family are attending, e.g. for a Baptism, then stewarding may not be necessary.
23. **Will Anniversary Masses cause unexpected increases in the number of people attending Mass and potentially cause difficulty with social distancing?**  
Anniversary Masses can bring in a larger crowd of people so parishes may wish to avoid having too many Anniversary Masses over a given weekend. Parishes may also wish to consider reserving a number of pews to seat relatives together, as family members from the same household will be able to sit together.
24. **Someone has read that speaking in unison holds greater risk of spreading droplets, also loud speaking e.g. Homily. Is this true?**  
In a Church setting, with normal voice projection, and the 2-metre distance between people, unison responses and group prayer are possible. The droplet projection issue relates more to singing than speaking. *Please note the need to sanitise microphones after services as droplets may have fallen onto the microphone.*
25. **Is there a protocol for giving a blessing for a child that has not yet received their First Holy Communion?**  
A blessing, without touching of the child's forehead, can be given whilst respecting the 2-metre distance.
26. **Could visors be worn instead of facemasks when giving out Holy Communion?**  
Facemasks are required as droplets could still fall with a visor. Equally, even if there is a screen, a facemask is still required.  
*Please note the advice on handling facemasks in the answer to Question 13.*
27. **Are older clergy who have been cocooning allowed to celebrate Mass?**  
Bishop Brendan is in ongoing discussion with clergy who have been shielding/cocooning. It will be up to each individual priest as to when, and to what extent, they return to active ministry. No priest will be under pressure to return to ministry until they are ready to. This equally applies to lay people in ministry, no person should feel under obligation to return to ministry until they feel it is safe to do so.