

Webcam Broadcast C-19 21

Hello Everyone! I hope you continue to be safe and well.

It's Monday 10th August 2020.

It is very reassuring to see how people turn up for Mass wearing facemasks. This is one of the measures recommended by the Health Authorities to help keep us all safe during the Covid-19 Pandemic, and a measure whereby together we will help send our much unwanted companion, Covid-19, away.

The other measures being repeated to us are all simple: hand and respiratory hygiene, keeping the 2 metre social distance, minimising contacts. We also have the Covid Tracker App.

Last week I had the privilege of administering the Sacrament of Confirmation to the Candidates from St Kilian's Senior School. The Ceremony was marked by straightforward simplicity. I get the impression that all involved found the simplicity of the Ceremony both relieving and refreshing. Despite the restrictions, the occasion will be remembered as special in a good way.

I congratulate all the Candidates and I ask you all to keep them all in your prayers as they prepare to take the significant step into second level education.

During the week ahead I will administer the Sacrament of Confirmation to the Candidates in St Kevin's Girls' and Boys' Schools.

As well as the 2 metre waltz that we have been learning these past months, there's another magic number that we also have to dance with, namely 50.

I offered some clarity on this in my Monday Message of 13th July, and I wish to do so again.

On the previous week's Monday Message of 6th July, at the time of reopening of churches throughout the country, I gave the number for St Kevin's as 66 and St Kilian's as 54.

These numbers were based on what was the instruction at that time, namely, that the number 50 had been superseded by the 2 metre distancing. So, if a church building could accommodate more than 50 with 2 metre distancing, then that was the number allowed. Some days later there was further clarification from Government.

I am now going to read the statement from the Government Press Office following the Cabinet Committee Review where the matter was discussed and decided on 3rd July 2020.

I quote:

“Places of Worship:

Detailed Covid-19 Guidance has been developed for religious services. The Cabinet Committee reviewed the guidance, which state that an assessment should be carried out for each premises to determine how many can attend within the requirements of social distancing.

The Cabinet Committee decided that where the size of the premises 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 having its own entrance/exit route**
- **There are separate arrangements for elements of the service involving close contact, e.g. the distribution of Holy Communion**
- **Strictly no movement of people between sections before, during or after the service**
- **The premises is well-ventilated.**

Account must also be taken regarding the risk of congregation by people outside before and after any services, having regard to outdoor overall limits on mass gatherings and arrangements for staggered exiting after ceremonies. The use of face coverings is strongly recommended for such indoor settings.”

End of quote.

Applying those guidelines to our situation means, as I said previously, that our numbers are set at 50. In the case of very large churches and cathedrals, these guidelines may mean that more than 50 can be accommodated. There are many churches where the number is far less than 50.

We also need to note that Parish Insurance is conditional on applying whatever public health norms are in place every time church buildings are open.

At this time, these norms also include effective stewarding and sanitising.

I appreciate very much those Volunteers who have signed up to steward and clean. Without these Volunteers, our churches would not be open for Confirmation this coming week. There are churches throughout the country that have not reopened because they do not have enough Volunteers to steward and clean.

I believe that we in the Parish of Kilnamanagh and Castlevew are responding very well to what is a very grim situation not of our own making. My sincere thanks to all those who are doing their best to make the most of what is a very difficult situation for all of us.

Until next time.

Keep safe and avoid situations of risk regarding your health.

Slán agus beannacht.