

Preparing for a Funeral Mass during the Covid-19 Pandemic

Losing somebody we love is never an easy experience and in this time of the pandemic, it can be even more daunting. None of us want our remembrance of a loved one to be an event in which Covid-19 might spread and lead to more suffering. The Parish has prepared a Covid-19 response plan to create the safest possible environment for those who visit our church at this difficult moment, both in our country and especially in our families. The following advice may be of assistance to families as they prepare for the Funeral Mass of their loved one:

- volunteer stewards are present at every Mass to help people to find a seat and to ensure that the 50 people invited by the family are admitted to the church building;
- volunteer cleaners will sanitise the seats, door handles and other surfaces before and after the Funeral Mass;
- families are encouraged to pick one person to do the readings (or the priest can do them for you if you would prefer). The ambo (lectern) has been identified as a place where infection can spread. In our Masses, we try to keep to just one person approaching the ambo in any liturgy, and the ambo is sanitised before the Mass;
- we are encouraged to minimise movement and contact of people in the church at this, so any symbols that you might like to place in the sanctuary should be placed on a table before the Mass. The priest can make reference to the symbols at the time of the homily – please let him know in advance of the Mass. The bread and the wine will be placed at the altar before Mass begins;
- one musician and one cantor are permitted at Funeral Masses. The priest can help you to select a singer. Music at Mass is a prayer to God for the deceased and should be sung by the cantor and selected to reflect our Christian hope in Christ's promise of Heaven;
- 50 mourners are permitted to gather in the church building for funerals and masks should be worn throughout the Mass, except when reading. Outdoor gatherings are currently prohibited under Covid-19 regulations. The Funeral Mass will be broadcast by webcam, through the telephone (by dialling 018477740 and selecting option 6) for those who may not have internet access, and by parish radio. Families are asked to invite those who they would like to attend and to provide a list of names to the parish so that the volunteer stewards can be sure that those invited by the family are admitted to the church;
- household groups can sit together. A social distance of 2m is maintained between household units. There are special 'guardian angel' signs on the seats in the church to help people to find a seat that is 2m from the nearest person;
- Holy Communion can be distributed at Mass and low-gluten hosts are available for those with a Coeliac condition. Mourners will be asked to approach the altar by the central aisle, to sanitise their hands, and to stand at the two-metre markers at the foot of the sanctuary.