

Ballineaspig Parish Bulletin

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SUNDAY MASSES UPDATE

Following the meeting of the Cabinet Committee on Covid 19 on Friday, 3rd July, 2020 on guidance with regard to places of worship, it is Bishop Fintan's wish that each parish can give careful consideration to its application in each church setting.

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.

Towards a New Normal

Many are anxious for a return to normal in the Autumn. There is a hopeful longing that the severest devastations of the pandemic will have abated by then. We could return to the way of living that we had with its usual certainties and its predictable difficulties that we call normal. Such a return is not going to happen. Change and uncertainty have come to stay. They will be constant in the new normal and we can be enriched by them as we adapt accordingly. Let God surprise you.

The pandemic is alerting us to our collective vulnerability and our shared responsibilities. It is reawakening within us a deeper appreciation of God's precious gift of daily life together with seeds of potential goodness that He sows in each of our hearts. Our choice is to decide what kind of normal we want for ourselves, our families, our communities, our church, our country and our planet.

COVID 19 has reinvigorated community spirit through intergenerational caring of the young and the not so young, of the less abled and the lonely, of the privileged and the poor. Neighbours are becoming closer friends. The simplest gestures of love are bearing fruit one hundredfold, fruit that must be harvested to enrich our new normal. Among our frontline workers, the insidiousness of the infection and the severity of the illness evoked marvellous courage, dedication, respect, generosity, understanding, endurance and team spirit in the height of the pandemic and since. May they continue to protect us and may their commitment sustain our challenged Health Services. The closure of churches reawakened the enriching practice of sharing prayer in many households towards the end of the day. A creative response that can enrich the future.

The wheat seed in Sunday's gospel is an image of the seeds of goodness and love that God implants in each of our hearts daily. Will these seeds be nurtured by communities of outreaching love or will they be choked by the thorns of self-centred self-fulfilment? What will the new normal be? The choice is yours and mine. May the Spirit of the living God guide all our choices.

Fr. Tom Clancy