

Reopening of Churches

Dear Parishioners,

I want to give you a further update on the ongoing preparation for reopening the Church of the Holy Rosary for public Masses and other sacraments, in particular Baptisms, Confirmations and Confessions. As I remind you each week, we are also planning for what will be possible in Breaffy and Ballyheane and we are in the process of installing a webcam in each church which we hope will enable more people from these areas to be able to take part in their Masses when they resume in their churches.

I remind you yet again that even though churches were allowed to open on June 29th, they were only allowed to do so if they had systems in place to ensure social distancing both outside and inside the church as well as a cleaning regime after each Mass. To do this we needed a minimum of 5 people who are willing to steward for every public Mass. We can still use more volunteers for this task. Please contact the Parish Office tel. 094 9021844 or email cbarpres@eircom.net Training is taking place these evenings for those who have volunteered. On my own and your behalf, I thank them for the generous commitment of their time, and also their suggestions.

I think we have plenty of volunteers for the cleaning rota and we thank those people also, without whom the church could not be opened. We will contact you to arrange training in the coming weeks.

Up until Monday, July 20th, the maximum number of people allowed in a church is 50 for any public ceremony. In effect, this means that only 40 people at most could be allowed into the church because ushers, cleaners, singers, readers and priests must be included in the 50. That would mean excluding far more people who would turn up for Mass than welcoming those lucky enough to be allowed in. For that reason we will not open the church until the weekend of July 18th/19th when we will use those Masses of 50 to help us prepare for the 100 who will be allowed in from Monday July 20th. I will have more details for you next weekend.

We have quite a backlog of children awaiting Baptism and we look forward to celebrating with all of them in the coming weeks. You will be contacted in relation to when that will be. The normal rota will resume in August.

Confirmation details are not available yet for Castlebar. This is due to the huge number of candidates in our Parish allied to the restriction of 100 in the church which, at present, would mean 6 or 7 ceremonies for the Archbishop. The minute we know when the Confirmations will be, you will know also so there is no point in ringing to find out when it will be. We do not know.

First Holy Communions will take place as soon as possible after school resumes in September.

Confessions will be available from 12 noon to 1pm next Saturday July 11th.

Visits to the housebound can resume from now on. You will be contacted beforehand to see if you are happy for the priest to visit you in the present circumstances. If you or your family are uneasy about a visit please say so. Please don't feel under any obligation to say yes. We understand why you may feel it would be safer not to have a priest visit at the moment.

As always, thank you for your prayers, your good wishes and your patience. So much is completely out of our control. I can assure you we are doing our utmost with what we are allowed to do. We are looking forward to having at least some of you with us at Mass when we reopen, but we are also anxious at the prospect of all the inconvenience for you and the inevitable disappointment of not being able to attend Mass as often as you were used to. What a strange situation we find ourselves in when priests are asking people to restrict the number of times they come to Mass to once a week – or once a month even – instead of encouraging them to come as often as they could!

Fr. Conal Eustace P.P.