

## WALKING WITH THE BEREAVED: A CALL TO SERVICE

The Third Sunday of Easter 2026

Dear Parishioners,

Each of us, by virtue of our Baptism, has been called to serve the Lord Jesus in some way or other. Some are called to visible service, others to quiet works of mercy and prayer. Yet all are joined together by the same Spirit, to live the mission of Christ by sharing the Good News with those around us.

In parishes this calling is lived out in liturgical ministries such as extraordinary ministers of Holy Communion and of the Word, through service to the most vulnerable in our communities by fulfilling safeguarding roles, through teaching the young, through care for the sick, and, for the majority, through participation in the worship of the Church. These ministries are not simply tasks; they are expressions of faith and love, offered for the good of all and in thanksgiving to God.

One area where there is an emerging opportunity for greater service is in providing assistance to families at the time of a bereavement. The Church recommends that when no priest or deacon is available to lead the prayers at the funeral home or the home of the deceased, and graveside prayers in the cemetery, then a lay person may lead the appropriate rites. The Diocesan Funeral Ministry Team has been working with priests and parishes to pilot a training program to prepare for this possibility, and it has begun in two deaneries.

This ministry is not about taking over the role of the priest. There are aspects of Funeral Ministry, specifically the celebration of the Funeral Mass, that can only be carried out by a priest. In the context of Funeral Ministry in the Archdiocese of Tuam, it is envisaged that laypersons will work alongside their priest, who will serve as a mentor and guide. Eventually, having become familiar with the rites and competent in their celebration, they will be ready to assist in this way on behalf of the community, when required.

It is widely recognised that the Irish do funerals well. This developing ministry is intended to supplement what is already there. Like everything new, there can be a sense of both eagerness and trepidation. Let us walk together in faith, trusting that God will lead us in all that we do in His service and that of His people.

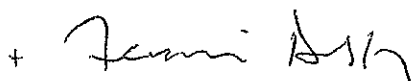
I ask all parishes to consider if this is a ministry which would be of assistance to you at this time. There are brochures available in your Church with more

information about the ministry and what is involved in training. I invite Parish Pastoral Councils to discuss Funeral Ministry at their upcoming meeting and to begin to discern the needs of their parish in this context. I also encourage those who feel drawn to this work of compassion to consider offering their gifts through this ministry to the parish and to those who mourn.

Let us invoke the intercession of St. John Henry Newman on this important initiative as we allow his words to speak to us:

*Lord, may you support us all the day long, until the shadows lengthen, and the evening falls, and the busy world is hushed, and the fever of life is over, and our work is done. Then, in your mercy, grant us a safe lodging, a holy rest, and peace at last.*

With every good wish and blessing,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Francis Duffy", with a small cross symbol to its left.

**Most Reverend Francis Duffy**

**19 April 2026**

*Archbishop of Tuam  
Bishop Elect of Killala*