

Re-opening of Churches for Personal Prayer

We all remain very aware of and compliant with Government advice and HSE guidance in regard to Covid-19 – which may change at short notice. With this in mind, from Monday May 18th, churches in the Diocese of Cork and Ross will be opened for personal prayer only. This forms part of a phased plan towards being able to celebrate the sacraments with a congregation at a later date. Parishes are encouraged to initially open at least one church and to reopen the other church(es) on a phased basis depending on local circumstances.

Many of our clergy and people who serve in key roles in our churches are restricted in what they can do due to government regulations. So it is important to plan this with the help of the Parish Assembly / Pastoral Council / Church carers.

It is essential to ensure the following minimum requirements are in place before a church can be opened safely.

1. **CLEANLINESS:** It is important that churches are kept clean. Churches which have been used recently should be cleaned using disinfectant and by people wearing suitable gloves, gowns and masks. The parish should ensure that disinfectant and cleaning materials, gloves and masks are available to those cleaning the Church.
2. **INFORMATION:** The entrance to the church should have public health information clearly displayed. (Signs are being prepared and will be bulk-printed. These will be provided by the diocese in soft-copy and printed versions.)
3. **ONE-WAY:** Where possible, only one door is designated as the entrance; another door is designated as the exit. People should be guided by signs and tape/ribbon to follow a one-way path through the church. If possible, the doors should be kept open.
4. **SANITISE:** Hand sanitiser must be available at the entrance and at the exit of the church. Everyone must sanitise coming in and going out. A pedal-bin for discarded tissues may be placed at the exit. (Information on suppliers of sanitisers and dispensers and other cleaning supplies will be available from the Cathedral for anyone who needs assistance.)
5. **DISTANCE:** Physical distance of 2m in every direction from the next person to be maintained (not required by members of the same household, e.g. a parent with children may sit in the same pew).
6. **VOTIVE LIGHTS:** Remove all lighters, tapers, etc. and leave one or two candles lighting which others can then light their individual candles from. Churches that have electric votive lights must provide disposable plastic gloves so a person can use a glove, light a candle and then dispose of the glove safely.
7. **STEWARDS:** Arrange a roster of stewards to assist people's compliance with these requirements. During an initial phase, at least one steward should be present while the church is open. Churches may specify their opening times. The stewards can also assist with ongoing and regular cleaning.
8. **SPACE:** One section of the church (size varying according to local circumstances) to be made available for people to sit apart and pray. Two of every three pews (2m) are closed off with tape / ribbon. The rest of the church is cordoned off with tape/ribbon.
9. **SECURITY:** Be aware of the need for vigilance around security and arrange for regular emptying of money boxes at shrines, etc.
10. **WELCOME:** Please let people know that the church is a place of welcome, reverence and prayer.

Materials you need: Posters, cordon tape or ribbon, hand sanitiser and dispensers, pedal-bin with liners, cleaning materials (incl. disinfectant, gloves, masks, aprons).