



Joint Statement from Ss. Peter & Paul's Parish, St. Anthony's Friary and St. Mary's Parish, Athlone regarding the Return to Public Worship

Issued Sunday 12th July, 2020

The Catholic faith communities of St. Mary's Parish, St. Anthony's Friary and Ss. Peter & Paul's Parish in Athlone met with their 'Return to Worship' committees during the week to review the latest government guidelines.

After four months, we are pleased to announce the latest government guidelines that permit more than fifty people to attend make it possible for us here in Athlone to have a safe return to public worship. We intend to re-commence the public celebration of the sacraments in all our churches from Monday, 20th July.

However, there is still reason to be cautious. The numbers permitted in each of our churches has been greatly limited and we must ensure that a two-metre social distance is maintained between individuals and groups from different households. This will severely restrict the previous seating capacity of our churches.

We will continue to broadcast Mass by means of local radio, social media and live-streaming. Those who are in the vulnerable category or people who have any flu-like symptoms or coughs are asked to stay at home. The obligation to attend Sunday Mass has been suspended for the time being, so we strongly encourage Mass-goers to come to Mass during the week instead of at the weekends. In order to give others the chance to attend Mass and depending on demand, we ask you to consider restricting your attendance to once a week.

The entrance doors of our churches will open twenty minutes before each Mass. We ask those wishing to attend the anniversary Mass of a loved one to come early. Hand-sanitisers are available, but to avoid congestion Mass-goers are encouraged to bring their own hand-sanitiser and tissues with them. The wearing of face masks in indoor settings has been strongly recommended. Toilet facilities will remain closed for the time being.

In each of our churches, there will be a one way system for entry and exit. Seats are cordoned off for social distancing purposes and the ushers will guide Mass-goers to the next available seats. For the distribution of Holy Communion, the celebrant will announce how to proceed, and the ushers will then direct Mass-goers when and where to come forward.

We ask for your co-operation and patience in following the direction of the ushers as movement within our churches needs to be kept to an absolute minimum.

After the final blessing, the ushers will direct the congregation on when and how to exit the church. We appeal to all Mass-goers to continue to observe social distance and not to congregate in the doorways, porches or at the church gates.

As collection baskets can no longer be used, a collection box will be available at all Masses at the doors on entry and exit for Mass-goers to make their offering.

The Mass schedule from 20th July for each church will be made available on their own website.

Once again, we want to thank our various committees and volunteers for all their help and you our parishioners for your understanding, support, and co-operation. We look forward to gradually returning to some form of normality but it is vitally important that we all must take personal responsibility for ourselves and for each other. May the good Lord continue to watch over us and protect us.

(Issued by Fr. Gabriel Kinahan, Fr. John Deignan and Fr. Declan Shannon - to be announced publically on the morning of Sunday, 12th July 2020 at 11.00 a.m. and posted on our respective Parish Websites and Social Media at 12.00 noon)