

Email from Archbishop's House
FURTHER ADVICE ON CORONAVIRUS SITUATION

Saturday 28 March 2020

1. The new norms require that **all** people over 70 or those who are particularly vulnerable be shielded or “cocooned”. This applies immediately to priests, deacons and all religious and lay staff of parishes. These categories must remain indoors at all times for the coming two weeks.

I would ask that each deanery coordinate back-up services for those who find themselves in this situation and ensure that they receive moral support and to see that their needs are met.

2. Others are urgently required to stay at home except in particular and determined situations.

3. **Should Churches remain open? There is no problem with Churches remaining open if they can guarantee social spacing and hygiene. In the current situation most Churches are not in a position to ensure that surfaces would be cleaned regularly and in that situation, it is best to close the church**

4. Funerals: the government guidance to me at this point is that the arrangements hitherto in place continue: funerals with small attendance and safe distancing. Further guidance will come on Monday.

5. Funerals of those who die from the virus. When someone dies from the virus the public health authorities will have carried out a thorough search of everyone who had close contact with them and these people will be in isolation. They will not be at the funeral. Indeed such funerals would probably be among the safest.

6. There is no reason why webcam Masses should not continue. Indeed web-based simple pastoral services should be enhanced. They could be used for talks and messages to inspire encouragement, hope and prayerfulness and not just liturgical services

7. Is the work of clergy and pastoral workers considered “essential”? At the moment, I am assured that they are included in the category “social care” in the provisional list. It is the intention of the authorities to make more specific reference to clergy and pastoral in the definitive list that may not be available until Monday.

+Diarmuid Martin

28 March 2020