

ARCHBISHOP'S HOUSE

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3 June 2021

Dear Parishioner,

In the last fifteen months, we have been unable to do the things we normally do to express our faith and our solidarity with each other. This is not to say that the life of prayer and charity have ceased, but life's usual patterns have been disrupted, as have the deep practices that nourish our faith, empower our social solidarity, and animate the mission of the Church towards the poor and disadvantaged. Along with the countries of the developed world, our country has been fortunate that people have been supported during the significant economic upheaval and hardship of the pandemic. Even in our grief and loss, we have much to be thankful for.

Communities and parishes have shown resilience and imagination in their responses to the challenges of the pandemic. For many this has revealed new ways of collaboration and involvement. We also have to acknowledge that certain aspects of Church life have been severely impacted. One of these is parish finances, and while we eagerly long for a return to the life that we knew, we also have to act to ensure that our parishes have the financial minimum they need to survive.

The necessary restriction of public worship has profoundly affected the two essential Sunday Mass collections on which parish funds depend. The first collection—as you know—supports clergy ministering throughout the diocese as well as sick and retired priests and priests working in other ministries throughout the diocese. The second collection—the 'Share' collection—supports diocesan services to parishes especially disadvantaged parishes. In the last financial year, the clergy collection decreased by 54% and the 'Share' collection decreased by 65%. This year the situation is even more grave—with a decrease of 80% and 86% respectively for the first quarter (January to March 2021). That this would have happened, given the character of the necessary lockdowns, is not surprising. I am grateful to all who have continued to give so generously in the past 15 months.

This generosity cannot be expected to address the deeper financial challenges which the Archdiocese faces. I have therefore approved the proposal to hold a new Summer Dues collection to support priests of the diocese. This initiative will follow the pattern of the Christmas and Easter dues collections giving parishioners an opportunity to contribute to the income that supports priests.

The Summer Offering collection will be launched on the weekend of the 20th June. In making this appeal, I ask you to remember that the greatest resource of the Church is its people—both laity and clergy—working hand-in-hand. The age profile of the priest is rapidly increasing, and there are few vocations to priesthood and religious life. Yet the priests we have in the diocese continue to serve quietly week-in-week-out while more is being asked of fewer and fewer. The ministry and mission of our Church cannot continue without this humble, generous service.

I thank you for continuing to support our parishes and the clergy who work among you. Your generosity to this new initiative of Summer Dues will provide much needed practical and moral support for priests working quietly and effectively at the heart of every local community of faith.

While great strides have been made in getting the virus under control, there is still a way to go before our country and other nations are out of the woods. We are facing the summer with its the brighter mornings and long evenings. May the change of pace that summer brings provide a break from the darkness of the difficult winter we have endured. May the Holy Spirit lift our hearts, and renew our hope so that in 'our common home' we may share the life for which God created us (see Gen 1:3 1, 2:18, and John 10:10).

Yours sincerely,



†Dermot Farrell
Archbishop of Dublin