



Re-opening of our Churches in the Archdiocese of Cashel and Emly:

The Bishops of the Munster Province took the decision to close church buildings in March of this year. The decision was made as an act of solidarity and commitment to the national effort required to suppress the Covid-19 virus.

At that time, it went beyond the letter of the law, demonstrating the depth of commitment (not just compliance) required to safeguard the health of all in our society, both the vulnerable and the strong. We fully recognise the huge sacrifice that closing churches has been for parishioners and priests alike.

The Bishops of the province now believe it is time to reopen our churches in a responsible manner for a minimum time each day for private prayer. It is planned to do this beginning from the 18th May.

In the Archdiocese of Cashel and Emly I invite each parish – Priests, Parish Pastoral Council and all Staff involved with the Church to plan for that event in order to ensure a safe environment for all. This will require looking at the geography/layout of the church and putting in place measures that will help facilitate *social distancing* and *hygiene*.

In order for churches throughout the Archdiocese to re-open in a responsible manner from May 18th the following must be considered:

- Availability of hand sanitisers (alcohol based) in appropriate locations in the church.
- Access to and flow of people within the building: If there are two entry points, could one be designated as an entrance and the other as an exit? How will social distancing be facilitated in the space? Can doors be left open to minimise the amount of touching? It may be wise to mark off designated seating.
- Signage: reminding people of distancing, hand hygiene, minimum touching of surfaces etc.
- Care must be taken with the cleaning of candle stands, use of disposable tapers etc.
- Cleaning of the church: Can measures be put in place to ensure that surfaces are cleaned at least once a day? Who will do this? Can this be done by our parish staff or volunteers? Might the parish enlist the help of extra volunteers? (Ensuring

that they are under 70). Do volunteers need to be present throughout the opening times?

Masses will continue to be celebrated behind closed doors, but I look forward to a later stage in the roadmap where it will be possible to recommence weekday Masses.

I invite you then over the coming days- leading up to the 18th May, to reflect on how the re-opening of the church/es in your parish can be achieved. Each parish will approach the re-opening by addressing its own unique situation.

This important stage of re-opening responds to the deep need of our parishioners to visit their local church to pray.

The journey ahead is uncertain and there is still so much that must be recommenced within our churches.

For now, let us prepare well for this first stage so that the other stages will follow without any difficulty.

With every good wish,
In Christ,

+ Kieran O'Reilly

7th May 2020

