

DIOCESE OF CORK AND ROSS

28th January 2021

Statement on Funerals from the Bishops of the Cashel Province

During the recent meeting of the Catholic Bishops of the Cashel Province the bishops, in a desire to support all entrusted with the care of bereaved families at this time, we wished to highlight some points that we consider important in relation to the implementation of public health guidelines in the context of bereavements and funerals in parishes.

A shared understanding of good practice around funerals is aimed at keeping people safe from the virus. This will benefit all concerned – mourners, undertakers, neighbours and friends – as well as priests and public authorities.

1. Public health guidelines are clear: attendance at funerals is restricted to 10 (mourners). We appreciate there are some who believe that for the sake of accommodating the immediate family it would be better to allow a number higher than 10 for the funeral liturgy in a church. We too look forward to when that number can be increased. However, it is important that undertakers and priests clarify with bereaved families as early as possible regarding the limit of 10 mourners in the church.
2. As recommended in our statement last March, there should be no removal to the church the evening before.
3. People not attending the funeral liturgy should avoid congregating immediately outside the church building or around the hearse. For the sake of the great majority trying to keep to the public health guidelines, we ask people, difficult as it is, not to approach the bereaved in the church grounds or cemetery to sympathise.
4. As per the public health guidelines regarding social and family gatherings, there should be no wakes or large gatherings for prayers in the house of the deceased nor gatherings in cemeteries.
5. Support for the bereaved can be expressed through social media as an alternative to attending the funeral. Often it is possible to link to a local church for a funeral ceremony via a webcam/Facebook Live. We invite people to pray for the deceased and family of the deceased in their own homes at the time of the funeral Mass.

In offering these points I recognise the great efforts that Catholics are making to observe the public health guidelines especially in these difficult circumstances.

I thank the priests and sacristans as well as the many volunteers in our churches who ensure that the requirements around the sanitising of our churches are observed. I also acknowledge with gratitude the care and help of undertakers in implementing the restrictions.

May our deceased loved ones rest in peace and may the bereaved be comforted.


✠ Fintan Gavin
Bishop of Cork and Ross

