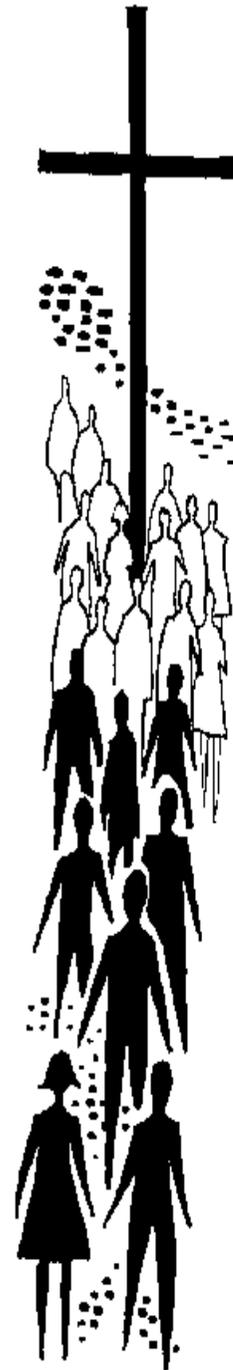


## Participating in the Liturgy: Some Guidelines

- Liturgy is the celebration of the whole community and needs the active participation of everyone present. Ministers of the Word and Ministers of the Eucharist are encouraged to take up their roles if they feel able to do so. Ministers will be made aware of any specific arrangements that apply to their role beforehand.
- One exception to this is that Church choirs are not able to participate at this time, due to the danger of droplets from voice projection. However, a soloist/cantor or a small schola and instrumentalist are permitted. All are encouraged to join in any singing at the liturgy but invited to do so softly (so as not to propel droplets).
- Health protocols will not allow the passing around of baskets for the collection during the Preparation of the Gifts. Contributions to parish collection may be placed in a box or basket provided in a designated place at the end of the Church.
- The handshake for the Sign of Peace is still suspended. However, the gesture can be replaced by a moment to pause and pray in silence for the gift of peace.
- Each church will make arrangements for the distribution of Holy Communion observing social distancing. This will take time to do in a dignified way. In some places this will mean standing and waiting for Holy Communion to be brought to your seat. In other places, it will mean processing two metres apart to the altar and returning to your seat by a different aisle. Local arrangements will be made according to what is possible in each Church.
- Some are asking 'is it safe to receive the Eucharist?' Our advice is that it is safe. The following steps will be taken to ensure that everyone is protected:
  - ⇒ Priests/Ministers will sanitise their hands beforehand and wear a face covering—a mask or visor
  - ⇒ Holy Communion will be distributed only in the hand.
  - ⇒ A table with hand sanitiser will be placed beside each Communion Station. Should the Priest or Minister come in contact with any communicant, they will sanitise their hands before continuing.



Killaloe  
Diocese

**Keeping Safe  
as We Gather**

*Gathered as one  
in Jesus your Son,  
lifting our voices  
in praise,  
We know and believe  
and long to receive  
the bread that is  
strength for our days,  
Gathered as one!  
(Paul Tate)*



## A Message from Bishop Fintan

For us as Christians, some things are foundational. From earliest times, Christians have gathered to celebrate the Eucharist on Sunday, the Lord's Day, the first day of the week, the day of resurrection.

It's now almost four months since we last gathered together for community celebrations of the Eucharist. We have missed coming together. We have missed the sense of belonging to a community. We have missed celebrating the presence of Christ in our gathering.

It is a great joy that we can prepare for a return to community celebrations of the Eucharist. Individual parishes are doing this at their own pace. Adhering to the 2-metre social distancing restriction, will mean that capacity will be limited in our churches. I ask that we are generous in spirit in enabling as many as possible to participate in our liturgies, with no one monopolising the available spaces.

I am conscious that some people are fearful of gatherings of any sort at this time. This is understandable. One possibility might be to attend on a weekday rather than Sunday to avoid bigger numbers.

Those who are vulnerable health-wise need not rush back to Mass until you feel well and safe to do so. There is no obligation to attend. If you feel unwell, please protect the community by staying at home.

I thank the priests, pastoral councils, COVID committees and volunteers for putting procedures in place to ensure everyone's safety.

I ask that you support them in implementing the necessary protocols. We are all in this together. Each of us is responsible for playing our part in keeping each other safe.

Things may feel different and strange when you return to Mass. These pages give you a sense of what you can expect as well as suggested guidelines for the celebration of the liturgy.

These arrangements are new to all of us. I ask your patience as we begin again. And let us greet each other with blessing and peace.

*Fintan Mahan*

## What can you expect when you arrive at the church?

- Numbers participating will depend on how many can be accommodated in the church, when two-metre social distancing is applied. We ask your understanding of the constraints this places on us. Some churches will not be able to accommodate everybody. We are truly sorry that this is so, but safety must be our first priority.
- Seating arrangements will be different from what we have known. Seats may be blocked-off to create two metres distance between people. We may not be able to sit in our usual seat. We understand that this will be difficult for some but it is necessary to ensure safety. Members of the same household will be able to sit together. Others will be seated at a two metre distance from each other.
- Holy water fonts will be empty until the advice on this changes.
- In most churches entry will be through the main door only. The stewards will advise on this and show us where to go. They will also indicate how to exit the church at the end of Mass.
- We will be asked to sanitise our hands on entering the church. Those wearing gloves will need to remove them and place them in the bin provided before sanitising their hands.
- We are asked to remain in our seats before the liturgy begins and not to engage in devotional practices such as Stations of the Cross, visiting shrines or the lighting of candles. (Note: The sanitiser on our hands is a highly flammable product and is a fire hazard when lighting candles with a match, lighter or from a lighted candle).
- Some churches may have designated seating for Ministers of the Word or Ministers of the Eucharist. The stewards will inform you about this.
- Everyone is asked to arrive a little earlier than usual to facilitate the implementation of all safety procedures.
- After the liturgy, we are asked to ensure that we leave nothing which might carry infection behind us, including leaflets, prayer cards etc.