

# Government 5-Level Plan for Living with COVID-19

## *Resilience and Recovery 2020-2021*

### Guidance for Parishes & Chaplaincies of the Diocese

#### **Religious Services**

*This includes all Masses and Sacramental celebration, but excludes Weddings & Funerals*

Level 1: Public celebrations are permitted, observing current public health guidelines and existing Diocesan guidance; thus 50 people, or 50 people per “pod” in larger churches;

Level 2: Public celebrations are permitted, observing current public health guidelines and existing Diocesan guidance; thus 50 people, or 50 people per “pod” in larger churches;

Levels 3, 4, 5: Online religious services only.

#### **Private Prayer in Places of Worship**

It is envisaged that places of worship will remain open for private prayer on all levels of the 5-Level plan.

#### **Funerals**

*Funeral services are permitted at all Levels, but numbers restricted.*

Level 1: As per Religious Services generally, thus 50 people, or 50 people per “pod” in larger churches;

Level 2: As per Religious Services generally, thus 50 people or 50 people per “pod” in larger churches;

Level 3: 25 people only;

Level 4: 25 people only;

Level 5: 10 people only.

#### **Sacrament of Marriage**

*Wedding ceremonies are permitted at all Levels, but numbers restricted.*

Level 1: 100 people; provided church can accommodate this number with current restrictions;

Level 2: 50 people; provided church can accommodate this number with current restrictions;

Level 3: 25 people only;

Level 4: 6 people only;

Level 5: 6 people only.

#### **Other Sacraments**

There is no specific reference to other Sacraments. However, as they are “Religious Services”, they are, by definition, permitted at Levels 1 and 2 with numbers as per “Religious Services” generally (as above).

Any remaining First Communion and Confirmations for 2020 should proceed for now, taking into account the guidance already issued.

#### **Eucharistic Adoration**

To date we have no formal guidance on Eucharistic Adoration. Adoration plays an important part in the spiritual life of the Church in our Diocese and every effort should be made to sustain it. This will involve the temporary movement of scheduled adoration out of small, enclosed spaces.

It may be advisable to identify a zone in the main Church where people can maintain social distance and where a regime of cleaning – possibly each one cleaning his or her own place, can be put in place.

This may not seem possible or desirable in every parish, but it should at least be possible to designate a number of specific churches in each Deanery where the opportunity for Adoration is facilitated. Please consider carefully at local level.

### **Parish Meetings, etc.**

The guidance indicates that organised indoor events may take place, provided they are controlled environments with a named event organiser, owner or manager. In the context of a parish, this allows meetings and similar parish gatherings to take place.

Level 1: Up to 100 patrons (*possibility of 200 in larger venues but not really applicable to Parish setting*)

Level 2: Up to 50 patrons (*possibility of 100 in larger venues but not really applicable to Parish setting*)

Levels 3, 4 and 5 – no organised indoor gatherings of any kind.

As all counties in our Diocese are now at Level 2, consideration should be given to the safe resumption and regular holding of the following:~

- *Parish Pastoral Council Meetings*
- *Parish Finance Meetings*
- *Deanery Meetings*
- *Sacramental Preparation - Parents*
- *School Board of Management Meetings*
- *Other parish-type meetings*

While there is reference to “pods of up to 6” for indoor gatherings at Level 2, this is noted as being “where appropriate”. In the context of the above meetings, which may typically have an attendance in the order of 8-12 people, the pod system would not seem appropriate/ necessary and the basic 2m rule should apply.

The same principles governing interaction should be applied before and after the meeting. If possible, hold meetings at a venue other than the parochial house in order to protect the priest living in the house and also to avail of larger meeting places in the parish.

It would be important to be sensitive to concerns of volunteers who may not be comfortable attending any meetings at this time and consideration should be given as to how they could participate remotely or provide their views and input in advance of the meeting.

### **Outdoor Events/ Gatherings**

*This is unlikely to be a feature in parishes over the coming months.*

Level 1: Outdoor events/ gatherings are permitted depending on the size of the venue; limit of 200 for the majority of venues;

Level 2: Outdoor events/ gatherings are permitted depending on the size of the venue; limit of 100 for the majority of venues;

Levels 3 and 4: Outdoor events/ gatherings of 15 people only;

Level 5: No outdoor events/ gatherings.

### **Sick Calls to Private Homes and Nursing Homes**

#### **Calls to Private Homes:**

Level 1 and Level 2: As per current guidance;

Level 3: One priest only and he should be the only visitor to the household at the time;

Levels 4 and 5: Emergency sick calls only.

#### **Nursing Homes:**

Levels 1 and Level 2: Open for visits with protective measures (check locally);

Levels 3, 4 and 5: Critical and compassionate circumstances only.

### **School Visits**

Schools will remain open throughout each of the 5 Levels (Level 5 may be reviewed depending on the situation at the time). It should be noted that priests/ deacons who are chaplains or patron’s nominees on school boards are not simply visitors in the normal sense of the word. It would be helpful to discuss with the school principal the manner of your engagement.

### **Places of Work**

Level 3 and over – all are encouraged to work from home if possible.

### **Over 70s and the Medically Vulnerable**

Those aged 70 years and over and the medically vulnerable should continue to exercise their personal judgement regarding the extent to which they engage with others and in activities outside home.

### **Western Province Review Meeting**

The Western Bishops will meet again on 24<sup>th</sup> September when the situation will be further reviewed and any additional guidance will be issued, if required.