

# Return to Public Worship Guidance Notes

Issued 5<sup>th</sup> May 2021

## **Public Worship Generally**

From Monday 10<sup>th</sup>, public attendance at regular daily and weekend masses can resume, subject to all of the same protocols that have been in place during the first (*summer 2020*) and second (*Christmas 2020*) easing of restrictions. This means numbers are limited to 50, or “pods” of 50 in churches which can facilitate a “pod” system.

## **Weddings**

From Monday 10<sup>th</sup>, up to 50 guests can attend a wedding ceremony, subject to all of the usual protocols on social distancing, etc. This is a confirmed maximum number in all churches, thus the use of a “pod” system for a wedding is not permitted.

## **Funerals**

From Monday 10<sup>th</sup>, up to 50 mourners can attend a funeral service, subject to all of the usual protocols on social distancing, etc. This is a confirmed maximum number in all churches, thus the use of a “pod” system for a funeral is not permitted.

Notwithstanding the increase in numbers permitted, funerals are still considered private family events and arrangements should not be advertised in newspapers or on-line. Funeral services should continue to be live streamed to help reduce numbers attending.

Attendance at wakes in private homes and at Funeral Homes remains unchanged i.e. immediate family only and people should be discouraged from queuing to pay respects.

## **Baptisms**

While not expressly covered in the guidance issued by Government, it would appear appropriate for baptisms to proceed but with limited numbers in attendance. Priests should use their discretion in this regard but it would be important that the numbers attending would be limited to a very small number of households (2-3), noting that this figure may be adjusted slightly if fully vaccinated people are part of the attendees. Again, the concern is not around the ceremony itself, but the potential for a large, multi-household gathering later, which is not currently permitted and would pose a significant risk to public health.

## **Communions and Confirmations**

The guidance published by the Government makes specific reference to First Communions and Confirmations, noting that these ceremonies should not take place at this time. This reflects the concerns, which are perhaps justified in some cases, that such ceremonies have the potential to lead to significant multi-household gatherings taking-place after the event.

By way of some further guidance, and in an effort to have a uniform approach, the Diocesan Office is advising that First Communions and Confirmations should not be scheduled until August, at the earliest. Furthermore, if First Communions or Confirmations are scheduled for August onwards, this should be deemed “provisional” at this time and noted to be subject to review in early July. At that time, it would be expected that a much clearer picture would be emerging on the relative success of the vaccine roll-out and the resultant general public health situation.

## **Singing**

As with previous reopening for religious services, congregational singing and choir singing is not permitted. Solo singing with accompanist is permitted subject to compliance with detailed guidance contained in [HSE Covid-19 Guidance for Religious Services](#)

## **Other Points of Note**

Outdoor worship is not permitted in line with current Government restrictions on organised outdoor gatherings.

Drive-in Religious Services may take place outside places of worship (e.g. church carpark) where all attendees remain in their vehicles and there is no sharing of vehicles outside of family unit.

Use of religious/ parish premises for any other purposes (parochial activities/ community meetings, etc.) is not permitted in line with current Government restrictions on organised indoor gatherings.