



Dear Father,

The following statement has been prepared by the Bishops of the Cashel Province to assist priests, people and undertakers in the organising of funerals at this challenging time of the COVID-19 Pandemic.

“We express our closeness in prayer and support for those with the Covid-19 virus and those impacted in any way by it in what are very difficult circumstances. We want to highlight some points that we consider important in relation to the implementation of public health guidelines in the context of bereavements and funerals. We do so for the benefit of all concerned – mourners, undertakers, neighbours and friends as well as priests and public authorities that we might have a common understanding of good practice around funerals aimed at keeping people safe from the virus. In offering these points, we recognise and thank the vast majority of Catholics for their careful observance of the public health guidelines.

1. Public health guidelines are clear: attendance at funerals is to be restricted to 10. 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 in the preparations for the funeral regarding the limit of 10 people 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 are asked to 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 sympathize.
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.

We wish to express our thanks to priests and sacristans as well as the many volunteers in our churches who ensure that all the requirements around the sanitising of our churches are observed. We 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.

Archbishop Kieran O'Reilly

25.1.2021

