

Dear Brothers and Sisters,

I wish to thank you all for your ongoing prayers during this Pandemic. We continue to pray for those who have died and all for all who have been bereaved.

One of the sacrifices in this Pandemic is not having funeral services in Church. As our churches begin to re-open safely, with the help of volunteers, those that do open, may from Monday 22nd June host funeral services in accordance with the Guidelines that have been shared with clergy and with the co-operation of undertakers.

These funeral services will necessarily involve volunteers to assist in cleaning churches after each funeral. The decision as to whether a funeral service may take place rests with the Parish Priest/Priest in charge. Not all churches will be able to comply with the guidelines at present, so please be aware that may be the case and please respect that situation.

The Government does not permit the celebration of public Mass at present. So these funeral services may not be funeral Masses. I realise that will cause upset to mourners and clergy alike. The Bishops' Conference is co-operating with the Government and we all hope that guidelines for the safe celebration of Mass will be agreed by the Government soon.

At a different time to the funeral service, priests are encouraged to celebrate Mass alone for those who have died. This Mass may be live-streamed for mourners, if the Church has that capacity. A Mass *in Memoriam* may be offered for the deceased with the family present at a later date, when we are able to gather again for Mass.

I anticipate that there will be further guidance agreed by the Government concerning Baptisms, Marriages and Mass in the future. These will be shared with our clergy in a timely manner.

Be assured of my prayers for you all,

Yours devotedly in Christ.

Archbishop Bernard Longley