

Telephone: 028 9066 5409
Email: stbrigids@downandconnor.org
Website: www.stbrigidsparishbelfast.org

ST BRIGID'S PARISH
40 DERRYVOLGIE AVENUE
BELFAST BT9 6FP

12th May 2020

Dear Parishioners,

"I pray that all is going well with you, and that you are every bit as healthy physically as you are spiritually". (3John 1:2).

These unfamiliar and uncertain times have been difficult for us all, and for some, more than difficult. Some weeks ago, as the pandemic reached our shores, few of us realised that "lockdown" would endure for so long - and it seems likely that it will continue for some time. As I write to you, I am very conscious of the parishioners who have died in the last weeks, and the heartbreak of their families who, as they grieve for their loved ones, have been deprived of the important support of family and friends, and the consolation of the Church's funeral rites. It saddens me greatly that the limited pastoral support I was able to offer was prayers at the graveside.

I am aware of our elderly and sick parishioners "cocooned" in their homes, or in care homes, isolated from their families and friends. I think also of families worried for relatives living in such isolation; those anxious about the education of their children; and those struggling with work and financial concerns. All of us are mindful too of those in the NHS and the caring professions who professionally and compassionately care for the sick - and not only them, but also all those who provide our essential services; we owe them our gratitude and admiration.

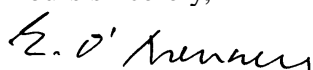
The closure of churches and the suspension of public Mass has been a particular trial for us. Like so many of those things which take for granted, this, perhaps, is a time to grow in appreciation of the gift of the Mass and allow our yearning for it to become our present spiritual sacrifice. Each day, Fr Dominic McGrattan and myself celebrate Mass in St Brigid's Church, as does Canon McCluskey in his home. In each Mass we remember the intentions of our parishioners and in this way, we hope to continue to give spiritual support.

Frequently, parishioners have contacted me inquiring as to how to continue their financial giving to the parish. I have advised that they should continue to use their Parish Envelopes but only return them to the parish when the health crisis had passed - this advice still stands. But as the "lockdown" has continued beyond what we originally imagined; other parishioners have contacted me regarding setting up a "Standing Order" with the parish. There is considerable merit and convenience in this method of giving as, today, monetary transactions are becoming "contactless". However, setting up a system to accommodate the different collections is not as straight forward as it may appear, nevertheless, I believe we have found solution.

I shall write shortly to our contributors enclosing the necessary paperwork, together with information regarding electronic banking, for their consideration. However, I wish to emphasis two things: (1) moving to a "Standing Order" arrangement is entirely voluntary - there is no reason why parishioners cannot continue to use the Parish Envelopes; (2) I recognise that this is a time of financial worry for many, and for that reason giving to the parish should be secondary to their own particular needs.

I, like you, long for the day when the church doors are open once again! Meanwhile, let us not lose hope, but continue to pray for one another that all stay safe and keep well.

Yours sincerely,



Fr Eddie O'Donnell,
Parish Priest.