

CONSIDERATIONS FOR AN ONLINE REMEMBRANCE SERVICE IN NOVEMBER 2020

Firstly, you need to decide whether this is going to be a standalone Prayer Service or a Celebration of the Eucharist for all who died in the past year?

How does your Church appear online? How does it sound?

What unnecessary visual clutter do we need to remove?

What colours and symbols should be present?

The Paschal candle? Purple altar cloths?

Do you have a Parish Book of Remembrance of the Dead which could be placed at the foot of the altar?

If this prayer goes well, you may draw a whole new group of people to worship with your parish online. If poorly prepared, it may have the opposite effect.

Please script every part of the ceremony, including pre-prayer introductions, words of welcome and brief words of thanks. People's attention span online is around 45 minutes, so prune back to just the essential words. No need to try to say everything. Remember the power of visuals done well.

How are we going to invite people to participate, to pray with us online?

Write out to those bereaved in the past year.

Include a November 2020 Prayer leaflet – with sample prayers for the dead at home at bedtime, in a church, in a graveyard

(This attractive PDF will be available from the downloads section of litmus.dublindiocese.ie in the final week of October thanks to our friends in the Kildare and Leighlin Diocesan Commission for Liturgical Formation).

The Invitation could be in the form of a card assuring the bereaved of remembrance in prayer throughout the month of November, the kind of card that can stand on a sideboard or mantelpiece.

You might also consider including a bulb, which could be planted in memory of the deceased *[the kind of plant that can also be grown in a pot for those who have no garden]*.

Use your parish noticeboard, website, facebook, newsletter, local shop notice boards or local radio to promote your Remembrance service.

What actions can we do as we remember deceased parishioners by name?

It can be such an important moment for the bereaved to hear their loved one's name read out during the service, without rush, and pronounced correctly.

Funeral Team members who assisted at the funeral might be able to help with this.

Often these are read out month by month. It can be helpful to use two voices here (*one female, one male? At two separate microphones for proper distancing. A large printed text for each person and the use of coloured highlighter markers may be useful*). If using very gentle instrumental music beneath this, rehearse this to ensure that the names can be clearly heard. Some parishes light a candle (nightlight) for each person. Where can these be safely placed so as to be clearly visible to those watching online? Will these have the name of the deceased on them? Some parishes do this at a collective Month's Mind already and invite members of the bereaved family to collect the candle with their loved one's name from the back of the church at a later date.

Some communities have so many funerals, it would be impossible to have a candle for each one without this becoming a fire hazard, especially when we are currently using so much alcohol based hand sanitizers. In these cases, perhaps one large candle for each month can be lit for e.g. those who died in December 2019, and placed in front of the altar. How can this be done reverently and safely?

Alternatively, at the end of each month's list of names a spoonful of incense could be burnt in an incense bowl or opened thurible in front of the altar (it would be best if this is raised up off ground level on a low stand). Powdered incense works best for a visible plume of smoke. Make sure smoke alarms are safely deactivated beforehand and reactivated after the event.

Another possible visual would be to use a Remembrance Tree, the kind you might already have for a Jesse Tree during Advent. As each name is called out a coloured ribbon with the deceased's name is hung upon the tree by members of the parish Funeral Team. What colour ribbon would you use? Purple for November remembering? Gold for precious memories? Make sure the name is clearly and neatly written (*who is good at Calligraphy?*), as families might want to collect it in the weeks ahead. If the ribbon has been pre tied it will be easier to place on the branches quickly.