

Dear Parish Priests and Parish Lourdes Representatives,

We have received some follow up questions regarding the upcoming Parish Collection and the status of the Pilgrimage for this year with the uncertainty of travel due to the current lockdown.

In order to help with any questions that may arise in your parish, I attach some letters which hopefully explain the best case for this year, God willing. As you can see, sadly these arrangements will not involve Assisted Pilgrims for obvious reasons which is a great disappointment for us all.

These notes were sent out to the various groups this week following decisions made in consultation with Bishop Richard.

The group we hopefully take, who will carry the prayers and intentions of many in our diocese with them, will include some families and young people, including Redshirts. Having said this, we are realistic, and expect the numbers to be far lower than usual in all areas.

In normal years, we give away to those who need financial support more than we collect in the parish 2nd collection, and although the money collected on the 13th/14th February will not be used in 2021, we are confident that it will be used for what we hope to be a large pilgrimage in 2022. (For the avoidance of doubt, all 2nd collection money sits in a Restricted Diocesan account and can only be used to help parishioners get to Lourdes.)

So, in short, we are asking parishioners to support our fund which, through various fund-raising activities throughout each year, helps hundreds of pilgrims achieve their dreams to join us in Lourdes in normal times. In past collections, we have never suggested in which year we will use the 2nd collection funds, only the purpose for which they are being collected, so hopefully your parishioners will understand the message and contribute as generously as they can afford this year too.

As you will see in the attached notes, we will be using some of our reserves to help NHS and Care Home clinicians join us for a well-earned physical and spiritual rest. Whilst the money used will not be from the 2nd collection – as that is not the purpose for which it is collected, hopefully your parishioners will agree that this is a worthy cause and should receive our support in 2021.

The other point to mention is that, as we are in lockdown for this year's collection, our receipts will be down substantially on normal years, and it is likely that our parishes will take some time to rebuild, once the lockdown is over, so this lower attendance, with lower receipts as a result, may continue for some time. Any help your parishioners can provide to the future support of sick pilgrims and those that care for them would be very welcome indeed, as collections for this year and next will inevitably be smaller than usual, due to our lower Mass attendance.

Many thanks for tweaking the message that you normally give to your parishes on our 2nd collection weekend, if you feel it is necessary. I am truly grateful for your support.

Best wishes,

Mike