

Covid-19 Catholic Diocese of Auckland – UPDATE 20 March

My dear sisters and brothers in Christ,

We are living in a time of uncertainty and fear as COVID-19 spreads throughout the world. This is a serious public health emergency. In order to keep New Zealanders safe and limit the transmission of this virus the New Zealand Government has announced a number of measures to promote the common good and ensure that best practice is followed to mitigate the effect of this pandemic on human life. One of these measures was the announcement prohibiting gatherings of more than 100 people. This has significant implications for Sunday Mass and our Easter celebrations. Having carefully and calmly reviewed the advice from the Ministry of Health, the New Zealand Catholic Bishops Conference have agreed to **suspend all Masses including Sunday Mass** until further notice. I formally give you *dispensation from the obligation to participate at Mass on Sundays* and holy days of obligation (cc 87 #1, 1247).

Keeping the Lord's Day Holy

Although Mass will not be available on Sunday in this time people are encouraged to celebrate Sunday as domestic Church. Gathering to pray in small groups, particularly whānau groups. This might include -reading and pondering the Scriptures for Sunday, giving thanks for all that we are blessed with, praying for the needs of individuals, families, New Zealand and the world. You will also be able to pray Sunday Mass individually or in small groups through the diocesan website www.aucklandcatholic.org.nz/ where Sunday Mass will be available on the front page of the website from 6.00pm each Saturday.

The Door is Always Open

As far as possible Churches will remain open for private prayer – the door is always open. Guidelines for how this can be safely done will be provided by the diocese on the resource page.

A number of resources are being prepared by the Diocese to support you in the journey of faith in these times. Check regularly.

There are many pastoral implications to this difficult decision. I and others from the Diocese will regularly communicate with priests, parish leaders and you the People of God of the Auckland Diocese.

Let us hold each other, our world, all people in prayer as we look out for each other and our neighbours mindful of the love that God showers on us.

Yours sincerely in the Lord

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+ Patrick Dunn
Bishop Of Auckland