



16<sup>th</sup> March 2020

Dear Parishioners,

Hello! I hope you are well.

We are experiencing unprecedented times. While there is no cause for undue alarm, you would appreciate that as a big parish who loves and cares for so many people, your spiritual and physical health and wellbeing is of great concern to us. As I said at Masses over the weekend, our overriding concern is for those who are most vulnerable.

To help make appropriate decisions for the wellbeing of all parishioners, I have created a reference group of four parishioners who are medical doctors, to provide advice to us in light of the Government's recommendations.

**After consulting this group this morning, I have decided to restrict our parish events to celebrations of the Sacraments; that is, to Mass, Reconciliation (Confession), Baptisms and Funerals.**

This decision is based on the following:

- i) "Social distancing" is the most effective way to limit the spread of Covid-19. One way to facilitate social distancing is to cancel any non-essential events where the virus may be transmitted to others.
- ii) All non-sacramental events in the parish are deemed to be non-essential in these circumstances.
- iii) The sacraments provide the most important spiritual nourishment available to us. We will continue to provide the sacraments until we are directed to do otherwise by the archdiocese.

So at this stage, we will maintain our usual Mass schedule.

The Sacrament of Reconciliation will be available:

- Friday 20 March from 8 pm to midnight;
- Saturday 21 March from 8.30 am to 9 am;
- Saturday 21 March from 5 pm to 5.30 pm.

The **Second Rite of Reconciliation on Monday March 23 is cancelled**. However, the **First Rite** of Reconciliation (individual confession and absolution) will be offered on Monday March 23 from 7.30 pm to 8.30 pm.

#### **CANCELLATIONS:**

The following upcoming events are **cancelled until further notice**:

- Choir practices
- Rehearsals for children involved in the Easter Sunday Mass
- Lenten Discipleship groups (morning and night)
- Alpha (evening and daytime)
- Stations of the Cross
- Junior Youth Group
- Senior Youth Group
- Declancraft
- Safeguarding Training
- Little Church (Children's Liturgy during the 9 am Mass)

## PARISH OFFICE:

The Parish Office will be closed to the public from tomorrow (Tuesday) for the rest of the week. The staff will largely be working remotely. If you need to contact the parish, please email or phone the office and leave a message. Emails and phone calls will be regularly checked and responded to.

## SHOPPING FOR PENSIONERS:

Woolworths will be opening its stores from tomorrow (Tuesday) morning 7.00 - 8.00 am to concession cardholders only, in an attempt to assist elderly people to avoid the crowds and be able to buy essential items. The SBS report is [here](#).

## FOR THOSE WHO ARE ILL:

Please stay home if you are unwell or have travelled overseas in the past fourteen days.

The obligation to attend Sunday Mass does not apply if you are sick. You can watch the livestream of Mass from St Mary's Cathedral on YouTube [here](#). You can also pray in other ways, including making a [spiritual communion](#).

Fr Adam, Fr Tony, and I want to reassure you that we will anoint, give communion, and pray with those who are seriously ill, including any who might contract COVID-19. If you are ill, please call the parish number (95801310) and follow the prompt (option 2) to the parish emergency line.

As I mentioned at Masses on the weekend, the Gospel of Jesus calls us to think of others and to put others' needs before our own. This is the *agape* (or self-giving) love of Jesus. It is Jesus' model of self-giving love that should determine all of our interactions with others.

This is not a time for panic, but we shouldn't be blasé about this situation either. It's understandable to be afraid, but it is also important to recognise that we worship Jesus, who is Lord of both the living and the dead, and he is Lord of this situation too. Let's renew our trust and hope in Jesus and respond as people of faith to this pandemic. Let's respond with love of one another because of our love for Jesus.

Yours in Christ,

*Chris*

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Fr Chris Ryan MGL

Parish Priest