



THE ARCHBISHOP OF BRISBANE

23 March 2020

TO THE PASTORS AND PEOPLE OF THE ARCHDIOCESE OF BRISBANE

Last night the Federal Government suspended all non-essential gatherings for an initial 4 weeks to reduce the spread of coronavirus (COVID-19) and to give the community time to understand fully social distancing requirements. The ruling applies from noon today (23 March).

The ruling includes a suspension of *all religious gatherings, places of worship or funerals (in enclosed spaces and other than very small groups and where the 1 person per 4 square metre rule applies)*.

Therefore, all parishes in the Archdiocese of Brisbane are required to suspend with immediate effect all Masses, including weekday Masses.

Parish churches should close immediately until further notice. Mass will not be celebrated publicly; nor will there be other celebrations such as Adoration of the Blessed Sacrament and Stations of the Cross. However, the Cathedral of St Stephen will for the time being remain open for private prayer, with the current restrictions and precautions applying. This is because, in a way not possible for parish churches, the Cathedral is able to ensure a supply of the necessary cleaning materials and the staff to ensure that the space and its furnishings are properly cleaned on a regular basis. It is also a symbolic way, at the heart of the city, of pointing to the necessity of prayer at a time when prayer is more needed than ever.

Funerals

Funerals should be a private event strictly limited in size and in line with Queensland Health guidelines. The 4 square meter rule shall be adhered to and social distancing of 1.5 metres observed throughout. If you need advice in this matter please contact aomail@bne.catholic.net.au.

Other Sacraments

The Sacrament of Reconciliation should not be celebrated until further notice. The Holy See has given permission for the celebration of the Third Rite in exceptional circumstances which are unlikely to apply in this country. Approval should be sought from me or Bishop Howell for any proposed celebration of the Third Rite.

Baptism and weddings should be delayed if at all possible. If these celebrations need to proceed, attendance should again be strictly limited, with the 4 square metre rule and social distancing of 1.5 metres observed in line with the advice I gave last week.

First Reconciliation, Confirmation and First Communion should be postponed until the pandemic is over.

The Most Reverend Mark Coleridge
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Other events

All other parish events, both outdoor and indoor, should be cancelled. This would include events such as outdoor Stations of the Cross on Good Friday.

Meetings should be conducted by phone or skype wherever possible, and where held in person, need to be conducted in line with the 4 square metre rule and social distancing of 1.5 metres throughout.

In days to come, I will provide Archdiocesan directives for the celebration of Holy Week, which will be based upon the guidelines already produced by the Holy See. The Australian Catholic Bishops Conference is submitting to the Holy See texts for a Mass in Time of Pandemic, which we hope to have approved in the near future.

I conclude with the Collect of that Mass:

O God, healer of all our ills,
to whom we turn in this time of distress,
grant, we pray in the power of faith,
eternal rest to the dead and comfort to those who mourn,
health to the sick and peace to the dying,
strength to medical workers, wisdom to our leaders
and a spirit of kindness to us all.
Through our Lord Jesus Christ, your Son,
who lives and reigns with you in the unity of the Holy Spirit,
one God, for ever and ever.
Amen.

As always in the Lord,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'F. Brascary'.

Archbishop of Brisbane