



**Vicar General & Moderator of the Curia
Diocese of Parramatta**

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Dear brothers and sisters in Christ,

Re: COVID-19 (Coronavirus) Update

As you will be aware from Friday 15 May, 2020 in New South Wales we will move to Stage 1 of a three stage process that will ease some of the restrictions that have been in place for several weeks. It will mean that some opportunities for limited ministry will be available and that will present some challenges as we move forward. However, the following still applies:

1. COVID-19 remains present in the community and highly infectious, though in small numbers at present. With the relaxation of isolation measures and the approach of winter, an increase in cases is expected.
2. Churches may reopen for private prayer and Reconciliation, as long as no more than 10 people are in the church at once, which does not include the priest.
3. Religious gatherings are permitted with congregations of up to 10, which does not include the clergy and other ministers, for Masses, Weddings, Baptisms and Eucharistic Adoration.
4. 20 mourners indoors or 30 mourners outdoors are permitted for funerals, in addition to clergy and funeral directors.
5. Even for private prayer or for a formal gathering in a church, contact details of the attendees must be recorded and physical distancing must be observed.

Penance

1. Confessions can be celebrated in the church.
2. When recording details of attendance, there should be no reference as to why the person is attending.
3. A virus-proof barrier between the penitent and the confessor is recommended.
4. Hand sanitiser at the doors of confessionals will help to ensure that the doorknobs do not become high risk sites; frequent sanitising of confessionals is recommended.

Masses

1. There should be no procession of gifts, no passing of hymn books or collection plates.

2. The priest should sanitise his hands before distributing Holy Communion.
3. The Sign of Peace should be omitted or given without any hand-to-hand contact.
4. In the Ordinary Form of the Latin Rite, Holy Communion can only be distributed and received on the hand only.

Sacraments of initiation

1. Baptism should be celebrated when a family is happy to be limited to 10 attendees.
2. Fresh baptismal water should be used for each candidate (i.e. water that has already been used to baptise one candidate should not be reused for another.)
3. Baptismal anointings should be hygienic (e.g. use hand sanitiser before and after contact with skin.)

Weddings

1. Up to 10 persons plus the couple, the celebrant and assisting ministers are permitted.

In those parishes where weekday Masses typically involve fewer than 10 people, it may be possible to resume these Masses without rationing places. Other parishes might explore a booking or lottery system to identify 10 people for each gathering. Every appearance of favouritism or elitism should be avoided.

Priests must exercise judgment in deciding whether it is practicable to conduct one or more public Sunday Masses for 10 people. Even were Sunday Masses multiplied, the majority of the faithful will be unable to attend. All but priests therefore continue to be dispensed from attending Sunday Mass.

As a reminder, live-streamed Masses from across Western Sydney and the Blue Mountains are available on the Diocesan website at parracatholic.org/covid19.

We all long for the day when we can resume our normal parish activities and the People of God can once again gather to celebrate the Eucharist.

With prayers this Eastertide,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Peter G. Williams', with a horizontal line underneath.

Very Rev Peter G. Williams
Vicar General & Moderator of the Curia