



**Vicar General & Moderator of the Curia  
Diocese of Parramatta**  
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1 July 2020

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

**Re: COVID-19 (Coronavirus) Update**

On 30 June 2020, NSW Health issued revised COVID-19 guidelines for places of worship, effective 1 July 2020.

The following information has today been shared with clergy in the Diocese of Parramatta in order to adhere to these guidelines.

**Dispensation**

As advised in Ad Clerum (5/20) Catholics from the Diocese of Parramatta are from 20 March 2020 dispensed from their Sunday Mass obligation until further notice (Canon 1248 §2 and Catechism 2181.) There is no change to this dispensation at this stage.

**Contact Details**

Places of worship must record the contact details of people attending a religious service.

If attending as a family group from the same household, one adult contact name and number or email is sufficient.

This applies to Masses, weddings, funerals, memorial services, rosary groups, and all other events held at the parish.

**Masses**

Public Masses are permitted. Capacity of the Mass must not exceed one person per 4 square metre of space (excluding people assisting with the service).

In calculating the space available for each person on any premises the following areas are to be included in the calculations. If the size of the premises is not more than 200 square metres of floor space, the entire premises. If the size of the premises is more than 200 square metres of floor space, only those areas that are open to the public can be used. There is no upper limit on the number of people that can attend, provided the 4 square metres are observed.

1.5 metres physical distance should be kept between people in the Church. However, members of the same household may sit together.

For example, at St Andrew the Apostle Parish, Marayong, the internal church floor space is 800 square metres. This means that under the new guidelines, 200 people may attend Mass at any one time, provided adequate social distancing is observed. Family groups may sit together and are to observe a 1.5 metre distance between other family groups and/or individuals.

Outdoor spaces can be used in the aforementioned space calculations provided the space is used during Mass. Parishes which can accommodate people outdoors during a Mass, in addition to the internal church space, must continue to adhere to the 1.5 metres physical distance per person.

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

The priest should sanitise his hands before distributing Holy Communion. The Sign of Peace should be omitted or given without any hand-to-hand contact.

In the Ordinary Form of the Latin Rite, Holy Communion can only be distributed and received on the hand.

### **Use of Music**

Use of music recording or a small choir is permitted. However, the choir should ensure that they have a 3-metre distance between them and the congregation. Congregational singing should be avoided. Parish priests are encouraged to assess the individual circumstances at their parishes and act prudently.

### **Live streaming of Masses**

Parishes are encouraged to continue live streaming of Masses even though public Masses are available again.

### **Distribution of Holy Communion**

Holy Communion for the time being can only be administered in the hand. There are no exceptions to this rule.

### **Holy Water**

Holy Water receptacles should be emptied. Holy Water can be blessed and used for adult and infant baptism but will need to be disposed of and fresh water blessed each time for sacramental use.

### **Funerals**

For churches, chapels, and crematoriums that are less than 200 square metres, a maximum of 50 people are permitted to attend a funeral.

For churches, chapels, and crematoriums that greater than 200 square metres, there is no upper limit on the number of people attending, provided at least 4 square metres of space for each person is observed.

### **Weddings**

Marriages are permitted to take place, provided at least 4 square metres of space for each person is observed.

### **Anointing of Sick**

Individual request for the Sacrament of the Sick should be attended to in the manner described in the previous Ad Clerum (5/20).

### **Penance**

Confessions can be celebrated in the church. When recording details of attendance, there should be no reference as to why the person is attending.

A virus-proof barrier between the penitent and the confessor is recommended. 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.

### **Sacraments of Initiation**

Baptisms can be celebrated provided at least 4 square metres of space for each person is observed. Fresh baptismal water is to be used for each candidate (i.e. water that has already been used to baptise one candidate should not be reused for another.)

Baptismal anointings should be hygienic (e.g. use hand sanitiser before and after contact with skin.)

### **Sacramental and Educational Programs**

Educational programs such as children's liturgy can be conducted. Students at these programs do not need to follow the strict 1.5 metre physical distancing guidelines applicable to adults. However, good hygiene practices will need to be maintained. Volunteers and staff assisting with the programs must continue to maintain the 1.5 metre physical distance from students.

With my prayers during these troubling times,

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

