



CATHOLIC ARCHDIOCESE  
OF MELBOURNE

## GENERAL GUIDELINES COVID-19 Implications for the Catholic Archdiocese of Melbourne

**As at: Wednesday 25 March 2020, 12.00 pm**

The following Guidelines are approved by Most Rev Peter A Comensoli, Archbishop of Melbourne, to assist Clergy and Faithful with questions pertaining to specific areas of liturgy and ministry in the Archdiocese of Melbourne during this time of the COVID-19 pandemic.

<b>Masses and church buildings</b>	<p>Except for the exemptions noted below, all public Masses, Liturgies and communal devotions (whether indoors or outdoors) are temporarily suspended until further notice.</p> <p>Also affected by this closure are church buildings, adoration chapels and other church buildings used for public prayer and religious services.</p> <p>Priests may celebrate Mass privately in a closed church for the purposes of live streaming. In doing so all precautions such as physical distancing and hygiene measures must be modelled and met.</p> <p>This is not an opportunity to bring select groupings of people together, and numbers can only be extended to a Server and a Reader with the possible inclusion of a camera/iPad operator and a musician.</p> <p>Prison Masses are currently suspended – although Chaplaincy continues until further notice.</p>
<b>Priests Daily Mass</b>	<p>Daily Mass should be offered for all God's people, the faithful in Melbourne, and the wider community.</p> <p>The Bishops Conference is hoping to have a specific "Mass in Time of Pandemic" approved for use soon. (<i>Awaiting approval of the Holy See.</i>)</p>
<b>Home Masses</b>	<p>Masses in family homes or other such private or domestic locations are not permitted until further notice.</p>

<p><b>Private Prayer</b></p>	<p>Except for exemptions noted below, churches are to be closed under all circumstances until further notice. This includes for private prayer.</p> <p>This directive includes people being able to visit and access churches and chapels.</p>
<p><b>Baptisms</b></p>	<p>Baptisms are to be postponed, unless there is an urgent and grave pastoral need. (Can. 857; 860)</p> <p>All guidelines must be followed regarding:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- limited numbers (no more than 5 persons, including celebrant);</li> <li>- physical distancing measures;</li> <li>- hygiene precautions (with particular attention to the use of water and cotton buds or swabs for anointing as per previous correspondence);</li> <li>- doors must remain closed to prevent public access.</li> </ul> <p>Baptism by immersion or baptisms using already blessed water is to be avoided. Fresh water is to be used in every individual instance of baptism, and immediately drained afterwards.</p> <p>In emergency situations priests and deacons should make themselves available for Baptism. In extreme circumstances any lay person can validly baptise using water and the Trinitarian formula. (Can 861 §2)</p>
<p><b>Weddings</b></p>	<p>Weddings are to be postponed, where possible.</p> <p>If urgent, all guidelines must be followed regarding:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- limited numbers (no more than 5 persons, including celebrant);</li> <li>- physical distancing measures;</li> <li>- hygiene precautions;</li> <li>- doors must remain closed to prevent public access.</li> <li>- no lingering outside the church following the wedding.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Funerals</b></p>	<p>If urgent all guidelines must be followed regarding:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- limited numbers (no more than 10 persons, including celebrant);</li> <li>- physical distancing;</li> <li>- hygiene precautions;</li> <li>- doors must remain closed to prevent public access.</li> </ul> <p>It will not be possible to organise any refreshments in the Parish hall or centre after the funeral is concluded.</p> <p>Permission is granted to hold the funeral Liturgy in a funeral parlour, if the family so wish.</p>

	Families may wish to arrange a Memorial Mass at a later date, and after the public emergency and relevant social restrictions have passed.
<b>Penance</b>	<p>Only the First Rite of Penance (individual confession and absolution) can be celebrated, because of the restrictions on numbers.</p> <p>Priests will do their best to respond to individual requests for the Sacrament, but it is not possible to establish and publicise particular times when the sacrament will be available.</p> <p>The location for the individual celebration of the Sacrament can be adapted to ensure the required health needs.</p> <p>People who identify within themselves the need for Confession should contact their Parish clergy directly.</p> <p>If there arises an urgent need to impart sacramental absolution to several people together out of grave necessity (eg. to a group of persons in a hospital setting who are dying from Coronavirus), then permission is to be sought from the Regional Vicar. The provisions of Can.961 and 962 are to be met and applied for validity.</p>
<b>Confirmations</b>	<p>All Confirmations are hereby suspended, unless a grave and urgent pastoral need arises.</p> <p>Individual application must be sought and directed through the Parish Priest to the Regional Vicar.</p>
<b>Communion to, and Anointing of, the Sick</b>	<p>It is important that the Sacrament of Anointing be available to those seriously ill and in danger of death.</p> <p>Holy Communion is not to be given to anyone, including the sick and Homebound, except as <i>Viaticum</i> for the dying.</p> <p>Only Priests are to offer <i>Viaticum</i> and Anointing to the sick and dying, complying with the protocols of the relevant hospitals or aged-care facilities (washing hands, etc.)</p> <p>If more Oil of the Sick is required, please make contact with the Cathedral office.</p> <p>In general circumstances, if a Priest is requested to visit the home of a sick and dying person, he must take every precaution in relation to those who may be contagious.</p> <p>As previously communicated, when Anointing the Sick, priests are given permission to lay on hands by holding them above, rather than upon the head, so as to avoid physical contact. The anointing is to be carried out by dipping a cotton wool ball, cotton bud into the bottle of</p>

	<p>Oil (do not use an Oil Stock). Protective gloves could also be used, which can be disposed of appropriately after a single use. Anointing the head would be sufficient.</p> <p>If <i>Viaticum</i> is to be administered, follow the guidelines below</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Wash hands or use a hand sanitiser once you enter the home</li> <li>- Avoid any physical contact with the person or family during the visit</li> <li>- Use a hand sanitiser again before distributing Communion</li> <li>- If the communicant usually receives Communion on the tongue, strongly encourage him or her, for your safety as well as his / hers, to receive Communion in the hand</li> <li>- Wash or sanitise your hands after the visit.</li> <li>- Maintain optimum physical distance with everyone in the room, except the patient.</li> <li>- Do not offer comfort through any physical contact</li> </ul> <p>It is encouraged that those Priests who are in a vulnerable age category or with health concerns contact a neighbouring Priest or their Regional Vicar to discuss who might be available to support them.</p> <p>Physical distancing to the extent possible, disinfecting hands before and after pastoral encounters, and other current measures should be applied at all times.</p>
<b>Ministering Sacraments to a confirmed COVID-19 Patient</b>	<p>The Archdiocese will be establishing a small group of authorised Priests dedicated to attending to such eventualities. More information will be available soon.</p>
<b>Holy Week and Easter Triduum</b>	<p>A decree was issued from the Congregation for Divine Worship and the Discipline of the Sacraments concerning the liturgical celebrations during Holy Week (the documentation accompanies these guidelines).</p> <p>Liturgies may be celebrated by Clergy and streamed if applicable to their communities. Except for the very minimum of ministerial assistance (a server, a reader, a musician/cantor, a videographer), no faithful are to be present. Further details are below.</p>
<b>Chrism Mass</b>	<p>The Chrism Mass will be rescheduled to a later date following the end of the present crisis.</p> <p>If possible, the Mass of the Oils might be the first expression of our whole Church when we can physically gather once again as a People.</p>
<b>Palm Sunday</b>	<p>There is to be no distribution of blessed palms.</p>

	<p>However, a Priest may bless palms privately on Palm Sunday to be reserved for distribution at a later date after the crisis has abated.</p>
Holy Thursday	<p>Where possible, the Priest can celebrate the evening Mass of the Lord's Supper – without the faithful.</p> <p>The <i>Mandatum</i> is to be omitted. The procession of the Blessed Sacrament is to be omitted. The Blessed Sacrament is to be reposed in the Tabernacle.</p> <p>Priests unable to celebrate should pray Vespers of the day (<i>cf Liturgia Horarum</i>)</p>
Good Friday	<p>Public celebration of the Stations of the Cross is not permitted.</p> <p>The Priest is to celebrate the afternoon Celebration of the Passion of the Lord – without the faithful.</p> <p>In the Universal Prayer, a special intention is to be included for the sick, the dead, and for those feeling lost or dismayed (<i>cf. Missale Romanum</i> pg 314 n13)</p> <p>An example might be as follows:</p> <p><i>Let us pray for our cities and suburbs of Melbourne and Geelong, the wider regions, and our world at this time. That sickness, fear and societal disorder may be avoided as we pray and work to counter the effects of coronavirus.</i></p> <p><i>Almighty and ever living God, Grant to your people at this time Courage in facing uncertainty Strength in facing adversity and change Healing in the place of illness, and eternal peace to those who have died. Bless and sustain all who bring medical, spiritual and civic care. May we ever more place our hope and trust in you. Through Christ our Lord. Amen.</i></p>
Easter Vigil	<p>The Priest is to celebrate the Easter Vigil– without the faithful.</p> <p>At the Solemn Beginning of the Vigil or <i>Lucernarium</i>, the preparation and lighting of the fire is to be omitted.</p> <p>The Paschal Candle is lit, the procession is omitted and the Easter Proclamation (<i>Exsultet</i>) follows.</p>

	<p>For the “Baptismal Liturgy” the “Renewal of Baptismal Promises” alone is necessary (cf <i>Missale Romanum</i> pg 371, n55).</p> <p>The “Liturgy of the Eucharist” then follows.</p> <p>Those unable to unite themselves should pray the Office of the Readings for Easter Sunday.</p>
Easter Sunday	Easter Masses can be celebrated without the faithful.
RCIA - Easter	Easter sacraments for RCIA candidates and catechumens are to be postponed. Guidance will be provided at a later date as to when they might be celebrated after this crisis subsides.
<b>Religious Communities, Monasteries</b>	<p>Request that our religious communities should hold our people in special prayer during this time.</p> <p>‘Household’ chapels and oratories of monasteries and religious communities are not to be open for public access. They may continue to hold community prayer and liturgy following the health and precautionary gathering restrictions as directed by government.</p>
<b>Popular Piety</b>	<p>Personal piety and devotions are strongly encouraged. People may undertake this in their own homes. They are discouraged from bringing others to physically gather together.</p> <p>Public expressions of popular piety and processions which enrich the days of Holy Week and the Paschal Triduum can be transferred to other suitable dates following the abatement of the crisis.</p>
<b>Parish Staff</b>	Communications will be forthcoming regarding working arrangements for Parish Staff.
<b>Supporting Families</b>	The Mission and Communications Teams are building resources to support families, particularly those with young children, during this time. This should be encouraged as an opportunity for nourishment and formation.
<b>Sacramental Preparation for Children</b>	Work is being undertaken to look into online opportunities for Sacramental preparation, encouraging families to take on this responsibility in meaningful ways during this time together at home.
<b>Supporting those isolated</b>	A comprehensive list of support and resources is being constantly updated. These are being shared via the Archdiocesan website and Facebook pages and through emails to Parishes.

	<p>It is encouraged that communities find ways to share this information and to build ready phone or mailbox drop networks to those who may become isolated from regular contact.</p> <p>CatholicCare is continuing many of its support and counselling programs now by video and teleconferencing where possible.</p>
<p><b>Supporting Parishes and Clergy with financial hardship due to COVID_19</b></p>	<p>The Office for Stewardship and CDF will be in communication directly with Clergy and Parishes around financial concerns and matters.</p>
<p><b>Clergy care</b></p>	<p>For any personal concerns or issues that this time is raising for you, please be in contact with Fr Thang for further support. Be in regular contact with your neighbours. Find digital opportunities to pray together.</p> <p>Ministry for Priests will keep in in touch with you regularly, and have sent out information.</p> <p>Some key points for retired Clergy to note:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Restrict your travel at all times to only essential – Pharmacy, Supermarket, GP</li> <li>- Arrange your annual flu vaccinations now</li> <li>- Document your Advanced Care Plan</li> <li>- Contact the Clergy Care Team about your personal health</li> </ul>