



20 March, 2020

### Message for the Priests of the Archdiocese of Brisbane

In light of the Archbishop's Message, I offer some further clarification and commentary on the provisions that are now in place as of today: [My comments are in italics]. The situation is changing rapidly and further changes should be expected. We will keep you updated.

- The celebration of Mass on Sundays (including the Saturday vigil) is suspended with immediate effect and until further notice, and all the faithful are dispensed from the Sunday obligation.
- Priests will continue to celebrate Mass (the *Mass for the people*) on Sundays without a congregation, with people able to follow Masses live-streamed from the Cathedral at [archbne.org/bzw](http://archbne.org/bzw) on Sundays and weekdays.

*It is advised that you should make it known to parishioners at what time you are celebrating the Missa pro populo so that the community can join you in prayer at the same time. It is desirable that at least one adult accompany you at this celebration to be lector/server.*

- For the time being, weekday Masses may be celebrated as scheduled, with the current restrictions and precautions to be observed.

*We are mindful of public health guidance of no more than 100 people in a nonessential indoor gathering. We know that our indoor Masses generally do not reach this threshold.*

- The Sacrament of Reconciliation should in general be celebrated only by appointment with the priest, with the current precautions to be observed.

*This recommendation acknowledges the difficulty of being in a confined space [i.e. a confessional] and the need to practice of social distancing of 1.5 metres. This would also preclude the 2nd Rite of Penance.*

- Any Church celebration or event where more than 100 people are expected should be cancelled or postponed.

*This refers to indoor events. The limit on outdoor events is 500 people.*

- All attending any Church celebration or event should respect the requirements of physical distancing.

*This may require encouraging people to create space between themselves within the church.*



- All ministers of Holy Communion, including the priest, should disinfect their hands before and after distributing.

*At weekday Masses the need for additional ministers is unlikely. It is important that the congregation see the presider wash his hands.*

- In the Ordinary Form of the Latin Rite, the Body of Christ should be administered only in the hand and the chalice should be received by the celebrant alone.
- The Sign of Peace should be limited to saying “Peace be with you” with a nod or bow; no hand-shaking or hand-holding should occur here or at the Our Father.
- Hymn books should not be used.
- As far as possible, churches should remain open to allow private prayer; the Blessed Sacrament might be exposed in the monstrance for this purpose (as long as fewer than 100 are attending and with the usual provisions for reverence and security of the Sacrament).

*It is important that Pastors encourage the faithful to keep the Lord’s Day holy and celebrate Sunday as the domestic church by taking time to pray together as a household.*

- Communion to the sick should be taken by priests alone and in general be restricted to Viaticum to the dying, with the current restrictions and precautions to be observed.

*Visitation of hospitals should be limited to the designated hospital chaplain. Under the current health directives, a priest who chooses to minister to a confirmed COVID 19 case would be obliged to self-quarantine for 14 days unless health authorities advise otherwise.*

- Prayers of intercession for an end to the pandemic and for the safety of all should be included in Masses, in the Liturgy of the Hours and in private prayer; houses of consecrated religious are asked to intensify their intercessory prayer also.
- Baptisms, weddings and funerals may be celebrated, but restricted if necessary to immediate family; baptisms and weddings can always be postponed.

*In certain cases it may be preferable to baptise one child per ceremony.*

*The Archbishop has dispensed the minister from performing the Anointing of Exorcism at the Baptismal ceremony. The prayer would be used without anointing. The Anointing with Chrism will continue.*

*Before a public funeral it is necessary that the family understand the implications of the limitation of numbers.*

- Preparation for and celebration of First Penance, Confirmation and First Communion should be postponed until further notice.
- Priests should ensure that parishioners can contact them in emergencies.



*The situation regarding Holy Week ceremonies will be on people's minds. This also includes the processes of the Catechumenate which is significant to this time of year. Because of the uncertainty surrounding the continual unfolding of these situations, a decision will be made within the next week as to how these concerns could be managed. This will include alternative arrangements for the Chrism Mass.*

*The Archbishop and the Archdiocese are well aware of the impact of these decisions on the financial wellbeing of Parishes. Before decisions are taken to reduce staffing please consult the People and Culture Office of the Archdiocese. A great deal of discussion is underway by the Executives and the Archdiocesan Finance Council to help manage the impact of these issues. We will be in contact with further information when available. No doubt, Parish Finance Councils will begin to look at ways of asking their parishioners to continue to support the Parish through this time.*

*We are very conscious of the impact of these decisions on the lives of our priests and deacons. The Sunday Eucharistic encounter is a vital part of our ministry with our parishioners. There will be an understandable grieving that will accompany us in these days. We will offer support and encouragement to our ordained ministers as we deal with these extraordinary circumstances.*

*With prayer filled best wishes,*

**Bishop Ken Howell**  
Auxiliary Bishop of Brisbane