



Catholic Diocese of Sale

Diocesan Administrator's Office

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Guidance for Liturgy and Pastoral Care while Public Liturgies are suspended Updated at 5.00pm Monday 23rd March, 2020

Dear brothers and sisters in the Diocese of Sale,

Things continue to move apace in regard to the impact of COVID-19. Thank you for your patience. There is a lot of competing and at times conflicting information around at the moment.

We have needed to wait to gain a clearer picture around the implications of the most recent Government directives on our particular circumstances before emailing you.

I have been reliant on the Archdiocese of Melbourne who have been in direct communication with our civil authorities over the course of today. Not every question can be answered immediately, but the basic picture is now clear. Therefore, I can now inform you of the following directives, noting that further changes are likely in coming days. Please share this information with as many people as possible in your Parish.

CHURCHES, MASSES and LITURGIES:

We have been directed by Government (State and Federal) to close all places of worship and religious gathering. Right now this means the closing of our church doors for all activities that would involve the presence of a number of people for a period of time, not just for the celebration of public Mass and other liturgies. Therefore, I ask that you now immediately close the doors of your Church(es), if you have not already done so, and place appropriate signage on doors to this effect.

There are a couple of exceptions to this directive:

1. **1. Funerals and Weddings.**
 1. These may still take place, but only with very small groups and where the '1 person per 4 square metres' rule applies.
 2. All hygiene precautions must be adhered to and every encouragement should be given for the elderly and health-compromised not to be present.
 3. Doors must be closed to further public access.
 4. Spacing could be designated with a sheet of paper where one sits or alternate pews could be used for seating.

5. All surfaces must be properly disinfected before and after the liturgy; this is the responsibility of the church.
6. There must be a clear statement of specifics about social distancing, i.e., no kissing, no hugging, no embraces, no touches, and two (2) metres apart.
7. The newspaper or other announcement should state that this is a “small, closed family service.”
8. If there is a condolence book, disposable pens must be provided (one pen is not permitted), or a staff member records attendees on a laptop, or guests bring their own pen.
9. The Family should instruct attendees to bring their own wipes for before and after.
10. (The Australian Funeral Directors Association have provided some points which may be helpful. You might work with your local Funeral Director in this case.)

What impact on private Prayer in a Church?

1. We are still waiting for clarity on this directive.
2. NSW has closed its churches to private prayer. Until we hear further from the Victorian Government, it may well be prudent that we do the same to ensure that we are not ‘encouraging’ gathering of any sort. Remembering there are now hefty fines in place for breaking these protocols.

Live-Streamed Masses:

1. These may go ahead if your Parish is able to do this via your website, YouTube or Facebook channels etc.
2. Adherence to good hygiene and distancing regulations need to be observed at all times.
3. Remember this will be telecast out to a public audience and so you need to model responsibility in all areas.
4. Only the very minimum of authorised ministers/assistants should be present. Preferably only one other.
5. The doors are to remain closed to any other participants.

I am mindful of the already many creative ways in which priests and laity, Parishes and communities, are sustaining faith and encouraging hope. I want to commend you for this, and encourage you to share ideas and know-how with one another.

Please assure your people in every way that the measures being put in place are for their safety, for the safety of the most vulnerable, and for the safety of all whom they love most dearly. I extend my deepest gratitude to you all helping our people find new ways to prayer through these difficult days.

I continue to draw your attention to the Diocesan website for up-to-date information and resources.

This is indeed a sad time for us all. With you, I am finding this 'closure' of the normal life of faith hard to fathom. Yet, we are a people of hope in Christ Jesus, and he will not abandon us.

May this great season of the Church, this time of preparation and celebration, not be seen as lost, but something embraced in a new, life-giving way.

In Domino

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "+ Pat O'Regan". The signature is written in a cursive style with a small cross at the beginning.

Archbishop-Elect Patrick O'Regan
Diocesan Administrator