



CATHOLIC DIOCESE OF AUCKLAND

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Covid-19 Catholic Diocese of Auckland UPDATE 24 March 2020

My dear sisters and brothers in Christ,

Our world community is facing an unparalleled time of stress with as we face the COVID-19 pandemic. The New Zealand Government continues to announce a number of serious measures to promote the common good and mitigate the effect of this pandemic on human life. We have had to come to terms with the measure announced last week prohibiting gatherings of more than 100 people. This saw the Bishops Conference agreeing to suspend all Masses, including Sunday Mass, until further notice. A reminder that I formally give you dispensation from the obligation to participate at Mass on Sundays and holy days of obligation (cc 87 #1, 1247).

Buildings Closed but not the Living Church

Moving to Alert 4 sees all of us self-isolating. Not just to keep ourselves safe but those about us. This requires our Church buildings to close. But not the Living Church. We, the People of God, are still missionary disciples, praying for and supporting one another. The priests are still praying Mass, privately without a physically present Congregation. They are praying for all people and with all people. Each and every day around the world, the whole community is being held in prayer. You might like to take some time to pray with us all through the daily Mass which will be uploaded to my Facebook page and linked from the Diocesan website.

We can help each other. Do you know people that are struggling? Let your parish priest know. Regional St Vincent de Paul and the Catholic Caring Foundation are able to access resources and have travel permissions that enable them to provide sustenance and care. We are at this time called to use the great network that is the Diocesan community.

Many of us as children prior to digital games, internet and 24-hour multiple channel TV, spent hours on the phone. Phone ministry is the new normal. Even if a few minutes of: How are you? What are you up to? You are not alone. We are connecting, we are being Church.

Resources are being prepared by the Diocese to support you in the journey of faith in these times. Check our website regularly.

Keeping the Lord's Day Holy

Although Mass will not be available on Sunday in this time people are encouraged to celebrate Sunday as domestic Church. Gathering to pray in small groups, particularly whānau groups.

This might include: reading and pondering the Scriptures for Sunday, giving thanks for all that we are blessed with, praying for the needs of individuals, families, New Zealand and the world. You will also be able to pray Sunday Mass individually or in small groups through the diocesan website www.aucklandcatholic.org.nz/ where Sunday Mass will be available on the front page of the website from 6.00 pm each Saturday.

These are challenging times and the Diocese will regularly communicate with priests, parish leaders and you, the People of God of the Auckland Diocese. The psalmist (Psalm 45) reminds us today that: *The mighty Lord is with us; the God of Jacob is our refuge.* In this we take consolation and hope.

Yours sincerely in the Lord

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✘ **Patrick Dunn**
Bishop of Auckland