

Dear Parishioners of St Joseph's Parish Takapuna,

Ash Wednesday has not quite been "Ash" Wednesday this year, but you'll be pleased to know that Bishop Pat has suggested we **distribute the ashes** later in Lent – on the first Sunday after we move back to Covid level 1. However, Lent has started today, with its threefold invitation to **prayer** (dwelling in the company of God, as friends of Jesus, with the Holy Spirit at work in us), **fasting** (restraining our inclinations to over indulge in food, media use, violent words, use of the world's resources) and **almsgiving** (sharing our blessings of money, time and talent with those in need).

What special things do we do for Lent? Some ideas: read the gospel designated each day for Mass <https://bible.usccb.org/daily-bible-reading> ; attend a weekday Mass in addition to Sunday; jot down the events of your day and highlight the blessings or the places where you realise God was at work; check out Pope Francis' fasting suggestion in next Sunday's newsletter – like fasting from criticism of a particular person; avoid online material that demeans human dignity; channel the money you save by abstaining from alcohol into the Lenten Appeal; use public transport instead of your own car where possible; don't use your phone during a meal with others; don't waste water. Don't try to do everything! If we try to do too much, we'll do nothing. And unless we set ourselves specific challenges, we'll also do nothing!

With our change at midnight tonight to Covid level 2:

1. We return to **weekday Masses** at both St Joseph's Church (9.15am Monday to Friday; 9am Saturday) and St Vincent de Paul Church Milford (Monday to Friday 10am) as from tomorrow, Thursday 18 February.
2. We will not have Sunday Mass at Milford church until we return to level 1. **Sunday Masses** at St Joseph's will be Saturday 5pm; Sunday 7.30am, 10.30am and 6pm. We will seat 100 in the church, 100 in the hall and 100 in the school hall – with Mass live-streamed.
3. You will need to sign in at the entrances to church or halls. For that reason, we encourage you to **register your intention to come to a particular Sunday Mass** at <https://stjosephscatholicakapuna.simplybook.me/v2/> so that your name can simply be ticked on the list when you arrive at the church. You don't need to register for a weekday Mass.
4. Under level 2, Holy Communion is ministered onto the hand (not on the tongue) and the chalice is not offered. There is no holy water in the fonts. And the sign of peace is offered without physical contact. Physical distancing of 1 metre is observed. Scan the QR code at the entrance, and use the hand sanitiser.
5. You are encouraged to stay home if you are unwell.

We are blessed that our lives have not been too disrupted by this latest level 3 confinement. But it is also a good reminder that we must work together as a community to maintain the freedom and privilege we have enjoyed in New Zealand - and to rejoice in blessings which elude people in most other countries.

You continue to be remembered in the prayer of your parish staff.

God bless,
David Tonks

