



For all things give thanks.

1 THESS 5:18

The Church is the People of God

PASTORAL STATEMENT BY BISHOP BRIAN MASCORD

Updated parish directives as a result of coronavirus (COVID-19)

25 MARCH 2020

To my Sisters and Brothers in Christ

The changes surrounding the sacramental life of our Church are evolving daily as a result of COVID-19. Following further directives from the Prime Minister last night, the following increased sacramental restrictions will apply from midnight tonight 25 March 2020. These directives will likely change again shortly following further advice from the National Cabinet.

WEDDINGS

Weddings can continue to be held with a maximum of **five** (5) people in attendance. The five people consist of the celebrant, bride, groom and two witnesses. Under no circumstances can this limit be exceeded.

FUNERALS

Funerals can continue to be held with no more than **ten** (10) people in attendance including the celebrant. Under no circumstances can this limit be exceeded.

BAPTISMS

Baptisms should be delayed. If there is a risk of death, the child should be baptised with not more than **six** (6) people in attendance which includes the parents, two godparents, the celebrant and the child being baptised.

CONFESSION

The Sacrament of Confession will be suspended during this time of pandemic. Physical and moral impossibility excuses a person from confession, in which case reconciliation may be attained by other means, for example an act of perfect contrition. (Canon 960) An act of perfect contrition can be made by saying these or similar words: "My God, I am sorry for my sins with all my heart. I should love you above all things. I firmly intend, with your help, to sin no more, and to avoid whatever leads me to sin".

I know these changes may cause sorrow and pain and my thoughts and prayers are with all those affected. Please continue to join me in prayer for all those impacted by this crisis.

Yours in Christ

Most Rev Brian G Mascord DD

BISHOP OF WOLLONGONG

25 March 2020

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(These directives replace all other directives issued up to the 24 March 2020)

MASS ATTENDANCE

Effective **Midday 23 March 2020** in the Diocese of Wollongong:

- Public Masses and liturgies—both indoor and outdoor—are suspended until further notice.
- Mass will continue to be said privately by priests throughout the diocese on behalf of the faithful on a daily basis.
- The faithful can keep holy their Sunday by setting aside some time for prayer at home, reading the Scriptures of the day, watching Mass on television or online, and asking God for the graces they would normally receive in Holy Communion (canon 87 §1, canon 1248 §2).
- Church buildings, adoration chapels and other church buildings used for prayer and religious services are to remain closed from midday on Monday, 23 March 2020.
- Priests should consider continuing to publish their weekly parish bulletin online with advice and a weekly homily/reflection.
- Holy Communion is not to be given to anyone, including the sick, except as Viaticum for the dying.
- Sunday Mass and Holy Week services will be celebrated privately by the bishop and made available on the diocesan website from the fifth Sunday of Lent (29 March 2020).

BAPTISM

Baptisms should be delayed. If there is a risk of death, the child should be baptised using the existing directives with not more than six (6) people in attendance

CONFESSION

The Sacrament of Confession will be suspended during this time of pandemic. Physical and moral impossibility excuses a person from confession, in which case reconciliation may be attained by other means, for example an act of perfect contrition. (Canon 960) An act of perfect contrition can be made by saying these or similar words, “My God, I am sorry for my sins with all my heart. I should love you above all things. I firmly intend, with your help, to sin no more, and to avoid whatever leads me to sin”.

SACRAMENTAL PROGRAMS AND CELEBRATIONS OF THE SACRAMENTS

Preparation for and celebration of First Reconciliation, Confirmation and First Communion for children should be postponed until the pandemic is over.

WEDDINGS

Where weddings are to be held, the celebration of the sacrament is limited to a maximum of five (5) people consisting of the celebrant, bride, groom and two (2) witnesses and in accordance with current Government requirements in regard to social distancing of one person per 4 square metres.

FUNERALS

Funerals should be very small with close family and friends and are limited to a **maximum** of ten (10) attendees and must be in accordance with current Government requirements in regard to physical distancing of one person per 4 square metres.

[continued on next page ►](#)

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HOLY WEEK

At this time, the ceremonies of Holy Week will be celebrated privately by the bishop and made available on the diocesan website (dow.org.au) so they can be viewed and prayed.

ANOINTING OF THE SICK

The Sacrament for the Anointing of the Sick will continue. However, for the protection of our most vulnerable parishioners, clergy have been given revised instruction on how to proceed.

Clergy should only visit the sick or infirm with COVID–19 in a hospital or aged care facility if requested by the patient, family or hospital personnel. Clergy are requested to contact hospital personnel to confirm that the appropriate precautions are met prior to administering the sacraments.

COMMUNION TO THE SICK

Holy Communion is not to be given to anyone, including the sick, except as Viaticum for the dying. If Viaticum for the dying is celebrated this is done according to the procedures for the anointing of the sick.

OTHER MINISTRIES TO BE SUSPENDED

Extraordinary ministers of Holy Communion are not to take Holy Communion to the sick.

All parish meetings are to be suspended at this time.

SOCIAL DISTANCING AND HYGIENE

All parishes and parishioners are required to follow social distancing and hygiene guidelines as provided by the health authorities, including:

- Good hand and sneeze/cough hygiene.
- Distancing of at least one person per 4 square metres
- Self isolation if diagnosed with COVID–19 or when exposed to symptomatic or diagnosed COVID–19 persons.