



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)

AS OF 31 MAY 2020

To my Sisters and Brothers in Christ

The Book of Sirach (38:12–13) reminds us that there will be times when we have to place our trust in experts such as physicians. I am so grateful that you have supported me and my fellow clergy whilst we have implemented the guidelines recommended by Australian health authorities to minimise harm to those most vulnerable.

Our initial decision to suspend public Masses, and later to temporarily close churches, was made after much prayer and consideration, and was in keeping with decisions made by dioceses around the world, including in Rome. Please know that we did not take this course of action lightly. We are deeply saddened by the circumstances that drove it and the effect it is having on all Catholics and people of faith.

After prayerful consideration, I am pleased to advise you of our diocesan response to the NSW Government's latest COVID-19 restriction changes. Effective Sunday 31 May 2020 Masses, Weddings, Funerals, Baptisms and Reconciliation may be held at the discretion of the Parish Priest in consultation with their Pastoral Council or Leadership Team.

Further details can be found in the latest directives at www.dow.org.au/covid-19, which have been developed in accordance with the latest NSW Government guidelines.

As I have written previously, it is essential at this time that our communities of faith remain calm, ordered and respectful. St Paul commands us as Christians, to “obey the governing authorities, because there is no authority except from God and so whatever authorities exist have been appointed by God.” (Rom 13:1). By doing this—especially in the face of uncertainty and challenge—we reveal ourselves as bearers of Christ’s love in the world.

Our response continues to be one of care for the most vulnerable including the faithful, our clergy and religious. Whatever decisions are made at your Parish, it is vitally important to maintain our sense of unity knowing that all decisions are made in charity and love, because ultimately what counts is “Faith working through Love” (Gal 5:6).

I encourage you to continue to pray, to read the Scriptures and meditate on them regularly, and to stay connected with your sisters and brothers through any means that are available to you now as we cautiously begin to open our churches in the most safe and equitable way possible.

Yours in Christ

Most Rev Brian G Mascord DD

BISHOP OF WOLLONGONG

27 May 2020

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