

# PARISH OF OUR LADY OF FATIMA

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Dear Parishioners

Cardinal Napier has issued various instructions on how to reduce the risk of transmission of COVID-19 (Coronavirus).

To be able to understand the reasons for our Parish response to the pandemic, it is necessary to be clear about certain basics. According to apparently reliable sources, the virus is carried in saliva droplets when people speak (or sing), sneeze or cough. According to a study published on 17 March in The New England Journal of Medicine the virus can remain viable in the air for up to 3 hours... on cardboard up to 24 hours and on plastic and stainless steel up to 72 hours. The virus is highly infectious and spreads quickly.

The basic advice for preventing the spread of the virus is: wash hands thoroughly with soap and water for 20 seconds, spray hands with hand sanitiser containing around 60% alcohol, don't touch your face (mouth, lips, nose or eyes), disinfect things that are commonly touched, avoid physical contact (handshakes, hugs), practise social distancing by keeping keep 2 metres from others, avoid large public gatherings and unnecessary travel. If you have a cough or cold and flu-like symptoms, self-isolate and contact a doctor.

Bishops and priests would like the churches to be filled to capacity with people at prayer, at Mass and in all night vigils but don't want to expose people to the danger of infection. Some people may consider their decisions to be a sign of a lack of faith. Others may consider them to be a good use of the God-given gifts of wisdom and reason. The choices are difficult. Know that all Bishops and priests have the best interests of the people of God at heart. Let us support them in these challenging times.

Cardinal Napier's instructions include: "Anyone who has a cold or cough along with flu-like symptoms should consult their doctor and refrain from going to Church until they are well again." "The Sunday obligation to attend Mass is lifted until further notice... no one should feel guilty for failing to attend Sunday Mass as a result of the restrictions that we are implementing." He encourages those who do not attend Sunday Mass to attend weekday Mass. "The number for all gatherings... must be kept below one hundred."

This letter is long as it attempts to answer, in one place, the *many* wide-ranging questions that have arisen.

The following is the plan for our parish:

## 1. Sunday Masses

- a. We will retain our current Sunday Masses at 7.00 a.m., 9.00 a.m. and 5.15 p.m..
- b. There will be a Sunday observance Mass at 5.30 p.m. on Saturdays, until further notice.
- c. There will not be an audio-visual link to the hall because the hall is small and the numbers would have to be restricted.
- d. Only the main church entrance will be open, in order to control the numbers entering the church. When one hundred people have arrived, we will not be able to admit any more, in order to comply with the Law and Cardinal Napier's instructions and for the safety of all.
- e. Hands should be washed with soap and water at home.
- f. Two ministers of hospitality will spray hand-sanitiser (60% alcohol content) on people's hands on arrival. People must agree to this before they will be admitted.
- g. Holy water fonts will be kept empty.
- h. People must spread out evenly in the church to minimise the risk.
- i. There will be no singing at Masses in order to shorten the time together and to minimise the risk of spreading droplets on to people or pews.
- j. There will be no hand-holding during the Our Father and no Sign of Peace.
- k. For Communion, people are to go forward row by row, in single file and maintain a distance of about 1.5 metres between them.

- l. The Sacred Host is to be received on the hand only. The distribution of the Precious Blood is suspended.
- m. Extraordinary ministers of holy communion will not be necessary because of the maximum of one hundred people receiving only the Body of Christ.
- n. Bulletins must not be left in the church because they cannot be re-used. Please take them home.
- o. Collection will be taken up by Ministers of Hospitality after Mass at the main entrance of the church. Please use the Lenten envelopes for the Bishops Lenten appeal.
- p. There will be no tea after Sunday Masses to maintain social-distancing.

## **2. Prayer at Home**

- a. If you are unable to attend Sunday Mass, pray as a family (domestic church) at the time of one of our parish Masses.
- b. Make a *Spiritual Communion*: "My Jesus, I believe that You are present in the Most Holy Sacrament. I love You above all things and I desire to receive You into my soul. Since I cannot now receive You sacramentally, come at least spiritually into my heart. I embrace You as if You were already there and unite myself wholly to You. Never permit me to be separated from You. Amen." (St. Alphonsus Liguori).
- c. Live streaming of our parish Masses is being arranged.

## **3. Weekday Masses**

- a. Weekday Masses will be at the usual times. Masses may be added if there is a need.

## **4. Small Christian Communities (NSGs)**

- a. Cardinal Napier encourages parishioners to meet in Small Christian Communities and to nourish their faith and sense of community through Liturgy of the Word services or Faith Sharing Reflection Material.

## **5. Ministers of Communion to the Sick**

- a. Ministers may continue to take communion to the elderly and those who have had *injuries* or *operations*.
- b. Ministers must not visit those who have an *illness* or *infection* without contacting me first.
- c. Ministers must wash their hands with soap and use a hand sanitiser.
- d. Ministers who are feeling even slightly unwell must not visit the sick.

## **6. Penance and Reconciliation**

- a. All Penitential Services in the Archdiocese have been cancelled.
- b. Parish Confessions are from 11.00 to 11.30 a.m. and from 4.30 to 5.00 pm. on Saturdays. Penitents must arrive at the starting time. The morning Confession time will be extended beyond 11.30 if there are penitents. Confessions will not be heard in the confessional because of the proximity of priest and penitents and the risk of the virus settling in the penitents' confessional. Confessions will be heard in the sanctuary where there is more space and ventilation. Suitable recorded music will be played softly. Confessions are also available by appointment.

## **7. Adult formation, Alpha and workshops**

- a. All such large gatherings must be postponed or cancelled.

## **8. Stations of the Cross**

- a. There will be no public Stations of the Cross in the church.
- b. Individuals are encouraged to pray the Stations of the Cross quietly, on their own, in the church. See paragraph 17.

## **9. Rosary**

- a. Praying of the rosary in the church will continue at 8.30 a.m. on Mondays and 8.30 a.m. on Saturdays but participants should spread out in the church.

## **10. Funerals and weddings**

- a. Cardinal: "Funerals and weddings may be celebrated provided that attendance is limited to immediate family only and that numbers do not exceed 100 people."

## **11. Catechetics**

- a. Cardinal: "All Catechetical instruction is suspended."

## **12. Paschal meals**

- a. Paschal meals with large numbers may not take place. Cardinal Napier encourages families to celebrate these meals in their homes. Contact the parish office for Paschal Meal booklets.

## **13. Holy Week and Easter Triduum** (subject to change)

- a. **Palm Sunday**: no processions are allowed.
- b. **Chrism Mass** at the Cathedral on 8 April: only priests may attend.
- c. **Good Friday Stations of the Cross** will not take place because it would be difficult to control numbers.

- d. **The other Holy Week and Easter services** will take place in adapted forms e.g. no Washing of the Feet on Holy Thursday, and no touching of the Cross on Good Friday. The attendance must be limited to one hundred per service. Additional information will be provided in due course.

**14. Eucharistic Adoration**

- a. We can have Eucharistic Adoration in a spacious, well-ventilated place, at fixed hours or on a roster basis, bearing in mind that there are other activities in the church e.g. regular cleaning.

**15. Church cleaning**

- a. The church and sacristies have been professionally fogged and sprayed with disinfectant today, 20 March.  
b. Commonly touched surfaces like handrails, light switches, toilet handles and pews are being wiped with disinfectant.

**16. Pray regularly**

**17. Church opening hours**

- a. The church is opened at about 8.00 a.m. unless there is a Mass earlier in the morning.  
b. The church is closed at 4.30 p.m. when the housekeeper goes off duty. It can be left open longer by arrangement.

**18. The Parish Pilgrimage has been postponed to next year.**

**19. Financial stewardship**

- a. Parishioners are requested to maintain their financial contributions if possible. In order to minimise the handling of cash and to facilitate *regular* contributions, the best methods in order of preference are: debit orders, EFTs, Zapper (use the QR code here), cash. For further details contact Brigitte, our confidential bookkeeper, by phone at the parish office or by email at [finance@fatima.org.za](mailto:finance@fatima.org.za).



The disciples were tired from all the things that they had done and that they had taught. There were so many people coming and going, that they didn't even have time to eat. So Jesus said to them, 'Come aside by yourselves, privately, to a deserted place and rest a while.' Mark 6:30.31.

Like those early disciples, many of us are tired from all our running around, attending to so many different things. It has been difficult to find time to truly rest because of our responsibilities and the 'busy-ness' of our lives. For the foreseeable future we will not be able to run around, doing what we used to do. We will not be able to join in large gatherings for work, or leisure or at church. It is disappointing not to be able to participate in the special services, commemorations and celebrations of Lent and Easter. Having to practise social distancing, we will have a good opportunity to strengthen our family relationships at home and to go aside with Jesus, to rest a while with him, to listen and to renew our faith by prayer, private devotions, spiritual reading and using the many resources that are available on the internet and apps. Hopefully this time of retreat will enkindle within us a greater love for God, greater appreciation of the self-sacrificing love of Jesus Christ, greater longing for the celebration of Holy Mass and reception of the Eucharist, greater sense of Christian community and greater kindness and compassion towards everyone, especially those who are suffering.

Pray for your Bishops and Priests as we pray for you.

May God bless you all and keep you safe.

Devotedly in our Lord Jesus Christ.

Fr Justin

*"Do not be afraid, for I am with you. Do not be discouraged, for I am your God. I will strengthen you and help you. I will uphold you with my righteous right hand." Isaiah 41:10.*