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Dear Fathers, Deacons and Parish Staff,

Prime Minister Scott Morrison last night said that churches, religious gatherings, and places of worship are to close by midday today, 23 March 2020.

These new rules must be adhered to and there are no exceptions to these rules. In an emergency, clergy are encouraged to assess the individual matter and act prudently. Further instructions for clergy will be issued via an Ad Clerum later today.

As the Diocese of Parramatta has previously indicated, fines may be enforced against organisations and parishes that do not enact these new rules.

Public Masses (**both indoor and outdoor**), baptisms, funerals and weddings must now cease. Also affected are church buildings, adoration chapels and other church buildings used for prayer and religious services.

I understand this new directive will be deeply troubling and upsetting to many Catholics. However, we are in a pandemic and we are actively working with the relevant authorities to ensure the health and safety of our people.

As a reminder, Catholics from the Diocese of Parramatta are from 20 March 2020 dispensed from their Sunday Mass obligation until further notice (Canon 1248 §2 and Catechism 2181.)

Yours in Christ,

Most Reverend Vincent Long Van Nguyen OFM Conv
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