



**Vicar General & Moderator of the Curia
Diocese of Parramatta**

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9 July 2021

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

Re: COVID-19 (Coronavirus) Update

NSW Health has today revised the COVID-19 guidelines. The following are effective immediately, unless otherwise stated, across Greater Sydney and the Blue Mountains.

Church buildings

Church buildings are not available for private prayer or religious services (except funerals). NSW Police have visited parishes in the Diocese of Parramatta to check on the use of buildings during this time. Fines and other infringements can be issued to each person who is in attendance if a breach has been identified.

Funerals

Effective Sunday, 11 July 2021, funerals are permitted with a maximum number of 10 attendees only. If the funeral takes place in a church building the physical distancing rule of 1.5 metres must be observed.

As a reminder that during this period, it is recommended that a simple grave side service be held or using the crematorium chapel with a small number of mourners (very immediate family) only. A memorial Mass when the current crisis is declared over can be held later.

NSW Health continues to mandate that face masks are to be worn at all indoor venues, including places of worship.

Pastoral Care

Pope Francis has stated that clergy be available to pastorally minister to people in this time of crisis. Those who are gravely ill, either due to the virus, or some other malady should not in any circumstances be denied access to the Sacraments.

The Sacraments should still be available, albeit in certain and limited circumstances only.

In anointing people, the priest will wash their hands with an appropriate solution both before and after the anointing. In the laying on of hands, it is recommended that contact is not made with the person's head but the priest's hands are held above the head of the ill. The same applies to the administration of Viaticum.

In respect to ministry to the housebound, great caution will be exercised by priest and it is preferable if only the priest or deacon visits for the purpose of Holy Communion.

Acolytes and Extraordinary Ministers of Communion should cease from visiting the housebound at this time.

Pastoral Care for those diagnosed with COVID-19

The team of priests that was formed in April 2020 to provide pastoral care for those who may be at home and diagnosed with coronavirus will be re-established. Mark Buhagiar, Head of Clergy Health and Wellbeing, will coordinate this work.

If you have a request from a parishioner for ministry in their home and they are diagnosed with the virus it is imperative that you contact the priest from your Deanery who has been nominated for this task.

Face Masks

NSW Health continues to mandate that face masks are to be worn at all indoor venues, including places of worship, and places of work.

With my continued prayers during these times,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Peter G. Williams', with a horizontal line underneath.

Very Rev Peter G. Williams
Vicar General & Moderator of the Curia

