



# Archbishop of Wellington

PO Box 1937, Wellington 6140, New Zealand

12 August 2020

Dear Fathers, Lay Pastoral Leaders, Leaders of Religious Congregations, School and College Principals

With the return of Alert Level 2 outside of Auckland we need to proceed with the utmost caution in the Archdiocese. Churches have proven to be part of the spread of COVID-19 overseas and we don't want that in New Zealand.

When we were in Alert Level 2 previously, it proved very difficult for parishes to have Masses with the 100-person limit. Social distancing significantly reduces the number of people who can be accommodated in a church and there are many issues around deciding who should take part and how it is managed. Priests are not to celebrate six or seven Sunday Masses to deal with the 100-person limit and social distancing requirements.

The government has said the three days in Level 2 are to give time to find the source of the infection, and they will not rule out continuing for longer at Alert Level 2/3 or higher depending on what they find. This means that it will be Saturday morning before we find out what the situation will be, which will make it difficult to communicate with parishes and parishioners.

To be safe I am suspending all Masses, and parish activities which involve gathering, until Tuesday 18 August. This means there will be no Masses this weekend, and the dispensation from the Sunday obligation is in place. The dispensation also applies to the feast of the Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary, which is a Holy Day of Obligation and falls on Saturday. There are to be no exceptions to this suspension of public Masses over the next few days. It is vital that we all work together to keep everyone safe.

Taking Communion to the sick and Reconciliation are also to be suspended for the same period of time. Priests can make their own decisions about those who are very ill or in danger of death.

Churches can be open for private visits but there is to be no Eucharistic Adoration. Contact tracing information will need to be collected and social distancing observed.

I will provide further advice on Tuesday depending on the government's decisions about the Alert Levels.

Thank you for the work that you and parishioners have been doing to keep our communities safe. This is a challenging year and I am very grateful for what you are doing.

With good wishes and blessings

Yours sincerely in the Lord

A handwritten signature in blue ink, reading "John A. Cardinal Dew". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large initial 'J'.

✠ John A Cardinal Dew

**Archbishop of Wellington**