

60 Knights Road,
Lower Hutt, 5010.

27 April 2020

Happy 3rd Week of Easter!

What a time it has been, with thankfully the most amazing response from everyone in regards following the Stay Home, Stay Safe messaging. A Lenten and Easter period which, hopefully we will never need to experience again. The experience of parishioners here appears to be an acceptance of the need for the measures, which necessitated the closing of churches, while being animated in their reaching out to each other through the telephone and various social media platforms. As the Bishops have written, God's grace works in the Sacraments we celebrate, yet is not limited to them. This has certainly been witnessed in this time of lockdown.

Never was there preparation in seminary for praying with someone who is dying via the loudspeaker capability of a telephone, and yet that is what we now experience. And to hear the deep gratitude of the family and hospital/home staff is humbling.

With the change to Alert Level 3, and the ability to celebrate funerals and weddings, and following the NZ Bishops letter I have received communication as Liturgy Advisor which has led me to offer this letter to you.

Naturally, we are asked to keep to the guidelines as directed by the Government through Ministry of Health, which now includes the numbers able to attend a funeral or wedding service (10). And in a similar way if a service were to occur within a church, then the responsibility to keep a register of attendees and to sanitise the church before/afterwards would rest with you/the parish. Outside of a funeral or wedding places of public gatherings, such as a church, remain closed.

If the funeral service were to occur at a funeral home, then the responsibility for such issues would rest with the funeral director. As well at the funeral home the technology for livestreaming to family and friends unable to attend is usually readily available.

In the week ahead I have two funerals, and both families, while being very present in our community, took it as a matter of course that at this time the funeral would be at the Funeral home. As well, they both understood that a Requiem Mass could be celebrated when restrictions are lifted, and when the extended family and friends will be able to gather to pray for their father and celebrate his life. In the present situation they were pleased to be able to have a small service.

If cremation is occurring, the funeral service at the funeral home or crematorium also enables there to be the least opportunity for surface transfer it would seem. And if the deceased is to be buried, then the option is there for the graveside to be the place of gathering with Prayers of Committal.

While the streets of the Hutt Valley are very quiet in general, this section of Knights Rd outside the presbytery has remained a busy spot with the Countdown carpark and truck delivery depot in full use. No longer though does the queue of customers extend around the corner. A time no one will forget.

With prayers,

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