



Ref No: 2020.1

Monday 16 March 2020

**Statement from The Most Rev Timothy Costelloe SDB
on revised and temporary changes to be implemented within the Archdiocese of Perth
in relation to Novel Coronavirus (COVID-19)**

Dear Fathers, Deacons, sisters and brothers in the Lord.

The World Health Organisation (WHO) has announced that Novel Coronavirus (COVID-19) is a pandemic.

The Western Australian and Federal Governments continue to issue ongoing public health advice in relation to COVID-19. The Archdiocese of Perth continues to be guided by this advice through our ongoing commitment to monitoring any threat posed by COVID-19 to Catholic communities across our Archdiocese.

In response to relevant public health advice, it was appropriate that the directives issued by The Most Rev Donald Sproxton DD VG on Wednesday 4 March 2020 were reviewed.

I write to share with you a revised and expanded series of directives which are relevant to the clergy, religious and the lay faithful of the Archdiocese of Perth. The following directives should be appropriately communicated verbatim within parishes, Archdiocesan ministries, and the broader Catholic community.

The following directives came into effect within the Archdiocese of Perth on Wednesday 4 March 2020 and are to remain in place:

- Holy Water is to be removed from stoups in all Churches and Chapels.
- Offertory gifts are to be in closed vessels or, where this is not possible, vessels should be appropriately covered.
- The Sign of Peace is to be omitted at all Masses.
- The Precious Blood is not to be shared from the chalice at any Masses and is reserved to the celebrant(s) only.
- Priests are to encourage communicants to receive the Sacred Host in the hand, not on the tongue.
- All priests and extraordinary ministers of Holy Communion are to wash their hands in soap and water, or are to use an alcohol-based hand sanitiser both immediately before and immediately after the distribution of Holy Communion.

All of the above precautionary directives are additional to our normal requirements that all sacred vessels are thoroughly washed before and after each Mass.

The following directives come into effect from today, Monday 16 March 2020, and are to remain in place until such time as a revision is issued.



- **The Sacrament of the Anointing of the Sick (*for individuals*)**
 - *'Those who have the care of souls and those who are close to the sick are to see to it that the sick are consoled by the sacrament of anointing at the appropriate time'* (Canon 1001).
 - Priests will continue to respond to requests to anoint people, and will continue to celebrate the sacrament on an individual basis.
 - Upon request, priests will continue to visit nursing homes, aged-care facilities and hospitals to minister the sacrament of the anointing of the sick.
 - Please be aware that 'in case of necessity ... it is sufficient that a single anointing be given on the forehead or, because of the particular condition of the sick person, on another suitable part of the body, while the whole sacramental form is said.'

- **The Sacrament of the Anointing of the Sick (*for two or more people*)**
 - The communal celebration of the anointing of the sick (two or more people receiving the sacrament consecutively in a single celebration) is to be temporarily suspended.

- **Gathering for the celebration of Mass and all other gatherings of 500 persons or more undertaken by the Archdiocese of Perth**
 - The Australian Health Protection Principal Committee (AHPPC) has advised that a number of social distancing measures intended to mitigate spread the spread of COVID-19 are to be put in place. These include:
 - limiting non-essential organised gatherings to fewer than 500 people.
 - encouraging all Australians to exercise personal responsibility for social distancing measures.

 - **Parishes and Churches:** Across the Archdiocese of Perth, few churches would have congregations at a single Mass of 500 people or more. Given this reality, most parishes will be able to continue their weekend programs without interruption. Parishes which have churches that have a capacity of 500 or more will need to revise their weekend programs to adhere to the government's directives. I commit the Archdiocese of Perth to compliance with the government's public health directives.

 - **St Mary's Cathedral, Perth:** Commencing on Saturday 21 March 2020, all weekend Masses at St Mary's Cathedral will be temporarily suspended. This suspension will be reviewed and remain temporary. All weekday Masses at St Mary's Cathedral will continue. This suspension of weekend Masses at St Mary's Cathedral will be reviewed regularly. Updates will be provided on both the St Mary's Cathedral website and the Archdiocese of Perth website.

- **Domestic and International Travel or Pilgrimages for Parishes**
 - As of 16 March, the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade's (DFAT) 'Smart Traveller' website advises 'all Australians to reconsider your need for overseas travel'.
 - Priests and others holding responsibility for any planned travel (domestic and international travel, pilgrimages etc) will need to revise all planned or proposed domestic and international travel in light of current public health advice.
 - Parishes or Catholic Agencies conducted by the Archdiocese of Perth undertaking international travel and pilgrimages are to comply with the directives of the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade's 'Smart Traveller' website: <https://www.smartraveller.gov.au/news-and-updates/coronavirus-covid-19>



- **Taking up Collections in Parishes and Churches**
 - Parish Priests, Administrators, Rectors and local parish communities are to put in place necessary practices at the local level to facilitate the safe taking up and counting of collections each week.

Congregational Awareness and Fulfilment of the Normal Obligation

1. Parishioners who feel unwell should not attend Mass, and are excused from their normal obligation.
2. Parishioners who feel they may be at risk of infection if they go to Mass should refrain from attending Mass and are excused their normal obligation.
3. Priests and parishioners who attend Mass should practice good hygiene.
4. Where Masses are suspended, the normal Sunday obligation does not apply unless people are easily able to attend a parish where Mass is celebrated.

Public Health Advice

Additional information and access to daily health alerts can be obtained from the Australian Government's Department of Health: <https://www.health.gov.au/health-topics/novel-coronavirus-2019-ncov>

Novel Coronavirus (COVID-19) Resources

The Australian Government's Department of Health provides a collection of resources for the general public, health professionals and industry regarding COVID-19, including translated resources. I would ask that you make your respective communities and ministries aware of the existence of these resources which can be found at:

<https://www.health.gov.au/resources/collections/novel-coronavirus-2019-ncov-resources>

Celebration of the Easter Triduum (Thursday 9 April – Sunday 12 April, 2020)

The implications of both existing and anticipated public health advice have necessitated the consideration of preparatory directives for the celebration of the Easter Triduum within the Archdiocese of Perth. Options for live-streaming the Easter Triduum on the internet are being considered and developed. In light of public health advice, the washing of the feet on Holy Thursday and the Veneration of the Cross on Good Friday are currently being examined. Subsequent advice and directives will be issued in advance of the celebration of the Easter Triduum.

I encourage you to join with me in praying for all those who have passed away or who have been affected by coronavirus and for the women and men working tirelessly to care for those affected.

I assure you of my continued prayers as we as an Archdiocese continue to minister in proactive and collaborative ways within each of our communities in response to the developing public health advice.

Yours sincerely in Christ,

+ Timothy Costelloe SDB

Most Rev Timothy Costelloe SDB DD
Archbishop of Perth