



A Letter to the Clergy and People of God in the Diocese of Broken Bay

Monday 23 March 2020

Dear Fathers, and my sisters and brothers in Christ,

Yesterday, Sunday 22 March 2020, the Prime Minister, Mr Scott Morrison, announced yet further measures across Australia to restrict the transmission of the COVID-19 coronavirus. Included in these measures, is the restriction to places of worship. These must now be closed to the public, effective midday Monday 23 March 2020, until further notice.

Naturally, this comes as a further disappointment. Though public Masses had been suspended in our Diocese from last week, it was helpful for people to know they could visit and pray in our churches. Now, even this opportunity has been restricted.

It is important for us to remember that the measures being adopted by the Government are introduced to save the lives of people. We, too, must play our part in this endeavour. Our own disappointment at this further restriction must be held in the context of our own commitment to cooperate as fully as we can with the national endeavour to keep our people as safe as possible.

I am grateful for the many creative ways by which our clergy and parishes are seeking to reach out to their people during this time. We have much to share with each other in respect to this and will be providing everyone with yet further resources in the coming days.

I would like to emphasise that it is imperative that the Sacramental and prayer life of the Church continues. Our people are looking to the Church for support in their day-to-day lives.

Baptisms may be celebrated, by appointment with the priest. The liturgical norms and law provide that the parents and at least one sponsor may be present.

Likewise, in the event that Marriages are scheduled, the couple, the priest or deacon, and two witnesses are required.

It is vital that our people are not abandoned in their spiritual lives and so we must consider this thoughtfully and calmly, while at all times respecting the restrictive measures outlined by the Government.

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An important note in regard to funerals: it is possible to conduct a funeral in a church. However, both the limit of 100 persons AND the size of the church must inform the number who can be present. It may be that the square metres of the church limit the number below 100. Please be vigilant and work with Funeral Directors about this. The recommendation is that only immediate family be present, and even then, the rules of physical distancing will have to be observed. An alternative is to have a graveside ceremony as prescribed in the Ritual.

I will be meeting with the Council of Priests and the College of Consultors tomorrow and will endeavour to give further clarification afterwards.

In line with the position of the NSW Government, our schools remain open, though parents are now encouraged to keep children at home.

The Vicar General, Fr David Ranson, will share with the clergy and parishes some further practical considerations.

With deep gratitude, I thank the priests and deacons of the Diocese. I am conscious that you are closest to our people and your efforts to promote calm and rational behaviour is very much appreciated. I am grateful also for your pastoral care. Please be reassured of my thoughts and prayers for you. It is moments such as these that the communion of the priesthood reassures our people of the communion of the Church, both seen and unseen. If you are in need of assistance or extra support in your pastoral ministry, do not hesitate to contact me or the Vicar General. Please be vigilant also regarding your own health.

Now more than ever we need to hold one another in prayer. May the Lord embrace us with His care and lead us into the future with renewed hearts.

Sincerely yours in Christ

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads '+ Anthony Randazzo'. The signature is written in a cursive style with a cross at the beginning.

Most Rev Anthony Randazzo DD JCL
Bishop of Broken Bay