



CATHOLIC ARCHDIOCESE  
OF MELBOURNE

## **#7 UPDATE: GENERAL GUIDELINES COVID-19 Implications for the Catholic Archdiocese of Melbourne**

**Information Updated: Monday 1 June 5.00pm**

The following Guidelines are approved by Most Rev Peter A Comensoli, Archbishop of Melbourne, to assist Clergy and Faithful with questions pertaining to specific areas of liturgy and ministry in the Archdiocese of Melbourne during this time of the COVID-19 pandemic.

In relation to the latest directives announced by Government (Sunday 24 May 2020), there are **THREE KEY POINTS** that directly affect churches, places of worship and liturgical celebrations and ceremonies held within.

From **1 June 2020** restrictions on gatherings at places of worship and ceremonies will be eased:

- **Places of worship** can open for private worship or small religious ceremonies for **up to 20 people in a single undivided indoor space**, subject to **the four square metre rule** plus the minimum number of people reasonably required to perform the service or ceremony.
- **20 people in addition to the celebrant and couple being married** can attend **a wedding**. If a wedding is held in a home, a maximum of 20 people is allowed, including the celebrant and the couple.
- **50 people can attend a funeral in addition to the officiant and funeral staff**, subject to **the four square metre rule**. If a funeral is held in a home, a maximum of 20 people can be present (including the officiant and funeral staff).
- **Further information has been received through the Deputy Chief Health Officer (Restricted Activity Directions #9 released 31 May 2020)**  
You are encouraged to read the following thoroughly:  
<https://www.dhhs.vic.gov.au/sites/default/files/documents/202005/Restricted-Activity%20Directions%20No%209%20-%20signed.pdf>

Key points can be found in Sections **#8 Places of Worship** and **#15 Signage, cleaning and records requirements**. In particular, these points may be referred to in planning for Parish ministry meetings, and record keeping for Private Prayer and Reconciliation.

**Of particular note are**

**#8 (1)(b)** A person who owns, controls or operates a place of worship in Victoria may operate that place of worship during the restricted activity period for: Hosting a limited group or members of the public;

**#8 (4)(c)** A person who owns, operates or controls a place of worship during the restricted activity period must comply with the: Records Requirement (except in relation to private worship, and in relation to support groups if confidentiality is typically required);

**#15 (1)(c)** A Person who owns, controls or operates a place of worship which involves members of the public entering, must during the restricted activity period display a sign at each public entry to each such space that includes a statement that the maximum number of members of the public that may be present in the space at a single time is the density quotient, rounded down to the nearest whole number.

**#15 (4)(c)** Records Requirement: A person who owns, controls or operates a place of worship must request that each person who attends the facility or venue for longer than 15 minutes in the circumstances listed in the relevant clause provide:

(i) their first name; and

(ii) a contact phone number,

and, if provided by the person, must keep a record of those details for 28 days, together with the following details:

(iii) the date and time at which the person attended the facility or venue:

The records requirement applies to all persons that attend the facility or venue for longer than 15 minutes, which may include staff, customers, maintenance and delivery workers.

**#15 (5)** A person that obtains contact details in accordance with this clause must:

(a) use reasonable endeavours to protect the personal information from use or disclosure other than as requested by an authorised officer under the PHW Act; and

(b) destroy the information as soon as is reasonably practicable following 28 days after the visit, unless another statutory requirement permits or requires the personal information to be retained.

**It is important that you please take the time to read the DHHS Vic guidelines.** <https://www.dhhs.vic.gov.au/religion-and-ceremony-restrictions-covid-19#can-a-recreational-facility-be-used-for-wedding-or-funeral-services>

## GENERAL GUIDELINES

Please note most recent updates are marked in red.

An accompanying set of recommendations has been provided to assist in reviewing and determining what your Parish community can manage so as to effectively meet all health and safety requirements – and meet the spiritual and pastoral needs of your people.

It is important to note as we welcome the opening of our churches, what is made available in these early days will be at the discretion of the Parish Priest or Administrator who will best be able to determine the capabilities of each individual Parish to meet all the required conditions and pastoral needs of their people.

Please also consider maintaining your livestreaming where possible. This has been an important point of contact and spiritual resource for people, and will continue to assist the housebound, vulnerable and those who do not feel comfortable in returning to public spaces at the current time.

<b>Masses and Church buildings – Places of Worship</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• <b>All places of worship</b> (including Hospital, Aged Care and School Chapels) may now open for pre-arranged worship, small religious ceremonies or private worship. As of 1 June 2020 up to 20 people as well as the minimum number of people reasonably required for the service – in a single undivided indoor space – are permitted.</li><li>• <b>CONTACT DETAILS</b> are required for all attendees at Masses and Ceremonies (if attending for longer than 15 minutes) – and must include: First Name + Contact Number + date and time at which the person attended the place of worship. Records must be kept for 28 days, and all endeavours made to protect personal informal from use or disclosure;</li><li>• <b>CONTACT DETAILS for Private Worship:</b> an exemption is given to private worship and where confidentiality is 'typically required.' Also noting it is not required if a person is in the venue for under 15 minutes.</li><li>• Multiple liturgical celebrations or ceremonies can be held on the same day, but cleaning must occur between liturgies or ceremonies. Consider at least an hour between liturgies or ceremonies to reduce the risk of crowds at entrances and exits.</li><li>• The following time limits should apply to allow for a higher frequency in Masses and to ensure that the appropriate hour gap is maintained between celebrations. <b>Sunday Masses – 60 mins. Weekday Masses – 30 mins.</b></li><li>• Places of worship can continue to be opened for the purposes of hosting essential public support services such as food banks, help for the homeless or other essential activities, ensuring appropriate physical distancing is maintained by keeping at least 1.5 metres between everyone at all times.</li><li>• Churches may be opened for scheduled times of <b>Private Prayer</b>. Only 20 members of the public may be present, in</li></ul>
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	<p>addition person/s reasonably required to conduct the service and maintain the space may also be present. All distancing and hygiene measures must be in place.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Making Private Worship available will require door monitoring to check how many people are present at any one time, and communicating a workable and nominal length of time that people should spend in prayer (to allow others the opportunity to partake). Contact details must also be taken as per regulations <b>if visits extend beyond 15 minutes</b>: First Name, contact number, time in attendance (note: this should not be merely leaving a clipboard and pen out, which is unhygienic. Consider online registration or a volunteer who actively records these details).</li> <li>• Clear and frequent signage must be made available regarding distancing and hygiene requirements – and should particularly note the maximum number allowed in the space at any one time for particular celebrations. Floor and outdoor signage should be considered to prevent people congregating or waiting in queues.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Masses, Ceremonies, Liturgies</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Multiple liturgical celebrations or ceremonies can be held on the same day, <b>but cleaning must occur between liturgical celebrations or ceremonies.</b></li> <li>• Each Parish must publicly publish a <b>schedule of Masses and liturgies</b> that will take place, and how people may nominate for attendance;</li> <li>• <b>At least an hour should be allowed</b> between liturgical celebrations or ceremonies to reduce the risk of crowds at entrances and exits.</li> <li>• The four square metre rule, which limits the number of people who can be in a building, applies at all times. This is not about distancing between people (which is 1.5m) but is about building capacity. A space can only allow 1 person per 4 square metres. This pertains particularly to a Funeral, but possibly a Wedding or Baptism, where a larger number of attendees and those enabling the liturgy to run may be present.</li> <li>• CONTACT DETAILS are required for all attendees at Masses or ceremonies – and must include: First Name + Contact Number + date and time at which the person attended the place of worship;</li> <li>• Liturgical celebrations and ceremonies can still be recorded or broadcast live from the place of worship for viewing online. You are allowed to have people on site to record and live stream celebrations, however, you must ensure those people maintain physical distancing by keeping at least 1.5 metres between each other at all times.</li> </ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Places of worship may be opened for the purposes of conducting weddings and funerals, but there are strict limits on the number of people who can attend (see under listing for Weddings and Funerals).</li> <li>● Priests may celebrate Mass privately in a closed church for the purposes of live streaming. In doing so all precautions such as physical distancing and hygiene measures must be modelled and met.</li> <li>● Masses may be celebrated in Religious Community Chapels (for that household religious community only), and in Hospital Chapels as long as all conditions are met and in co-operation with the particular Health organisation and the Chaplain assigned to that place.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Broadcast and livestreaming of liturgies and ceremonies</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Churches are now considered as workplaces for the purposes of broadcasting or live-streaming liturgies. This permission pertains only to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- “people conducting services”</li> <li>- for the purpose of “broadcasting or live-streaming”</li> </ul> </li> </ul> <p>While this allows for more people to be involved, churches must abide by the 4 square metre per person rule for the capacity of the space, and adhere to the 1.5m between each person distancing.</p> <p><b>The following points are to be strictly adhered to in every place of worship in the Archdiocese of Melbourne:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Churches will be considered as "workplaces" for the purpose of allowing broadcast or live streaming of key liturgies and ceremonies for the faithful.</li> <li>● Only the minimum required for the proper conduct of the Liturgy and its broadcasting/live-streaming are permitted to be present;</li> <li>● You may not have a choir or music ministry group, or any other group of people, located elsewhere inside the church, even if they are off-camera if they exceed the limits allowed.</li> <li>● The 4 square metre rule applies in all circumstances to building capacity. The number of persons present must be adjusted according to the size of the location of the ceremony.</li> <li>● At Communion time, only those physically present (as above and outlined further below) may receive the Holy Eucharist, following all previously shared guidelines for hygiene.</li> </ul> <p><i>Please note: this may be a difficult time for people online who cannot share in sacramental Communion. Please show discretion and sensitivity in distributing, reminding everyone at home that they may join prayerfully in spiritual Communion.</i></p>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Following a liturgy, the church must be cleaned in accordance with the guidance on routine environmental cleaning and disinfection in the community, available at: <a href="https://www.health.gov.au/resources/publications/coronavirus-covid-19-information-about-routine-environmental-cleaning-and-disinfection-in-the-community">https://www.health.gov.au/resources/publications/coronavirus-covid-19-information-about-routine-environmental-cleaning-and-disinfection-in-the-community</a></li> <li>Home/household Masses are not permitted.</li> <li>There are to be no Masses in presbyteries or any location where people are invited to attend.</li> </ul>
<b>Priests Daily Mass and obligations</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Daily Mass should be offered for all God's people, the faithful in Melbourne, and the wider community.</li> <li>The Archbishop has decreed dispensation to allow Clergy to say extra Masses per day, until the end of May, to assist in providing further opportunities for the faithful to attend. This permission should only be exercised depending on local circumstances and capabilities to manage distancing and hygiene precautionary requirements. The faithful may only attend one Mass per day.</li> <li>Those who regularly celebrate Mass for in-house religious communities may do so and up to 20 attendees may be present.</li> </ul>
<b>Prayer Groups</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Prayer Groups may be held at a place of worship or another public place, up to 20 people can attend. A prayer group held in someone's home can meet as long as there are no more than 20 people, including the normal residence of a household.</li> <li>CONTACT DETAILS are required for all attendees at churches– and must include: First Name + Contact Number + date and time at which the person attended the place of worship;</li> <li>Physical distancing measures must be adhered to.</li> </ul>
<b>Home Masses</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Masses in family homes or other such private or domestic locations are not permitted until further notice.</li> </ul>
<b>Baptisms</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Up to 20 people permitted to attend, as well as the minimum number of people reasonably required for the service.</li> <li>CONTACT DETAILS are required for all attendees– and must include: First Name + Contact Number + date and time at which the person attended the place of worship;</li> <li>Baptism by immersion or baptisms using already blessed water is to be avoided. Fresh water is to be used in every individual instance of baptism, and immediately drained afterwards.</li> </ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Physical distancing and building capacity limits must be maintained at all times;</li> <li>• Hygiene precautions must be maintained throughout;</li> <li>• Doors must remain closed to prevent public access;</li> <li>• No lingering outside the church following the Baptism;</li> <li>• Following a Baptism, the church must be cleaned in accordance with the guidance on routine environmental cleaning and disinfection in the community, available at: <a href="https://www.health.gov.au/resources/publications/coronavirus-covid-19-information-about-routine-environmental-cleaning-and-disinfection-in-the-community">https://www.health.gov.au/resources/publications/coronavirus-covid-19-information-about-routine-environmental-cleaning-and-disinfection-in-the-community</a></li> <li>• In emergency situations priests and deacons must make themselves available for Baptism. In extreme circumstances any lay person can validly baptise using water and the Trinitarian formula. (Can 861 §2)</li> </ul>
<b>Weddings</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Up to 20 people may attend a wedding in addition to the couple, the celebrant as well as the minimum number of people reasonably required for the service;</li> <li>• CONTACT DETAILS are required for all attendees– and must include: First Name + Contact Number + date and time at which the person attended the place of worship;</li> <li>• Physical distancing and building capacity limits must be maintained at all times;</li> <li>• Hygiene precautions must be maintained throughout;</li> <li>• Doors must remain closed to prevent public access;</li> <li>• No lingering outside the church following the wedding;</li> <li>• Following a wedding, the church must be cleaned in accordance with the guidance on routine environmental cleaning and disinfection in the community, available at: <a href="https://www.health.gov.au/resources/publications/coronavirus-covid-19-information-about-routine-environmental-cleaning-and-disinfection-in-the-community">https://www.health.gov.au/resources/publications/coronavirus-covid-19-information-about-routine-environmental-cleaning-and-disinfection-in-the-community</a></li> </ul>
<b>Funerals</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Up to 50 mourners may attend funeral in a place of worship as well as the people required for the funeral, such as the officiant or funeral company;</li> <li>• CONTACT DETAILS are required for all attendees– and must include: First Name + Contact Number + date and time at which the person attended the place of worship;</li> <li>• <b>Funerals held outdoors</b> can be attended by <b>a maximum of 50 mourners in attendance</b>. If a funeral is held at a private house then only 20 people, in addition to people who live at the household, can attend;</li> <li>• Physical distancing and building capacity limits must be maintained at all times;</li> </ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Hygiene precautions must be maintained throughout;</li> <li>• Doors must remain closed to prevent public access.</li> <li>• No lingering outside the church following the funeral;</li> <li>• Following a funeral, the church must be cleaned in accordance with the guidance on routine environmental cleaning and disinfection in the community, available at:  <a href="https://www.health.gov.au/resources/publications/coronavirus-covid-19-information-about-routine-environmental-cleaning-and-disinfection-in-the-community">https://www.health.gov.au/resources/publications/coronavirus-covid-19-information-about-routine-environmental-cleaning-and-disinfection-in-the-community</a></li> <li>• It will not be possible to organise any refreshments in the Parish hall or centre after the funeral is concluded.</li> <li>• Permission is granted to hold the funeral Liturgy in a funeral parlour, if the family so wish.</li> <li>• Families may wish to arrange a larger Memorial Mass at a later date, and after the public emergency and relevant social restrictions have passed.</li> </ul>
<b>Penance</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Only the First Rite of Penance (individual confession and absolution) can be celebrated, because of the restrictions on numbers.</li> <li>• Parishes may give consideration to schedule Reconciliation into their weekly celebrations – following the same rules of attendance and distancing required for other liturgical celebrations and ceremonies;</li> <li>• The location for the individual celebration of the Sacrament can be adapted to ensure the required health needs.</li> <li>• <b>CONTACT DETAILS: an exemption is given to private worship if people are not in attendance beyond 15 minutes and where confidentiality is 'typically required.' This would pertain to Penance.</b></li> <li>• All Parishes should purchase a Sneeze-Guard if possible (as seen in retail outlets) to provide protection;</li> <li>• If there arises an urgent need to impart sacramental absolution to several people together out of grave necessity (eg. to a group of persons in a hospital setting who are dying from Coronavirus), then permission is to be sought from the Regional Vicar. The provisions of Can.961 and 962 are to be met and applied for validity.</li> </ul>
<b>Confirmations</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• All Confirmations are hereby suspended, unless a grave and urgent pastoral need arises.</li> <li>• Individual application must be sought and directed through the Parish Priest to the Regional Vicar.</li> </ul>
<b>Pastoral and Sacramental Visitation.</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• It is important that the Sacrament of Anointing be available to those seriously ill and in danger of death.</li> </ul>



<p><b>Communion to, and Anointing of, the Sick</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● If more Oil of the Sick is required, please make contact with the Cathedral office.</li> <li>● In general circumstances, if a Priest is requested to visit the home of a sick and dying person, he must take every precaution in relation to those who may be contagious.</li> <li>● As previously communicated, when Anointing the Sick, priests are given permission to lay on hands by holding them above, rather than upon the head, so as to avoid physical contact. The anointing is to be carried out by dipping a cotton wool ball, cotton bud into the bottle of Oil (do not use an Oil Stock).</li> <li>● Protective gloves could also be used, which can be disposed of appropriately after a single use. Anointing the head would be sufficient.</li> <li>● If <i>Viaticum</i> is to be administered, follow the guidelines below: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Wash hands or use a hand sanitiser once you enter the home;</li> <li>- Avoid any physical contact with the person or family during the visit;</li> <li>- Use a hand sanitiser again before distributing Communion;</li> <li>- If the communicant usually receives Communion on the tongue, strongly encourage him or her, for your safety as well as his / hers, to receive Communion in the hand;</li> <li>- Wash or sanitise your hands after the visit;</li> <li>- Maintain optimum physical distance with everyone in the room, except the patient;</li> <li>- Do not offer comfort through any physical contact.</li> </ul> </li> <li>● It is encouraged that those Priests who are in a vulnerable age category or with health concerns contact a neighbouring Priest, their Regional Vicar, or Fr Dean Mathieson to discuss who might be available to support them.</li> <li>● Physical distancing to the extent possible, disinfecting hands before and after pastoral encounters, and other current measures must be applied at all times.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Ministering Sacraments to a confirmed COVID-19 Patient</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Health officials will be able to guide what is possible and permissible.</li> <li>● If you have concerns please be in contact with Fr Dean Mathieson who will be able to assist in determining the best course of action.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Religious Communities, Monasteries</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Request that our religious communities should hold our people in special prayer during this time.</li> <li>● ‘Household’ chapels and oratories of monasteries and religious communities are not to be open for public access. They may continue to hold community prayer and liturgy following the health and precautionary gathering restrictions as directed by government.</li> </ul>

<b>Popular Piety</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Personal piety and devotions are strongly encouraged. People may undertake this in their own homes. They are discouraged from bringing others to physically gather together.</li> </ul>
<b>Parish Staff</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Communications have been sent regarding working arrangements for Parish Staff.</li> </ul>
<b>Supporting Families</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The Mission and Communications Teams are building resources to support families, particularly those with young children, during this time. This should be encouraged as an opportunity for nourishment and formation.</li> </ul>
<b>Sacramental Preparation for Children</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Work is being undertaken to look into online opportunities for Sacramental preparation, encouraging families to take on this responsibility in meaningful ways during this time together at home.</li> </ul>
<b>Supporting those isolated</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A comprehensive list of support and resources is being constantly updated. These are being shared via the Archdiocesan website and Facebook pages and through emails to Parishes.</li> <li>• It is encouraged that communities find ways to share this information and to build ready phone or mailbox drop networks to those who may become isolated from regular contact.</li> <li>• CatholicCare is continuing many of its support and counselling programs now by video and teleconferencing where possible.</li> </ul>
<b>Clergy care</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• For any personal concerns or issues that this time is raising for you, please be in contact with Fr Thang for further support. Be in regular contact with your neighbours. Find digital opportunities to pray together.</li> <li>• Ministry for Priests will keep in touch with you regularly, and have sent out information.</li> </ul> <p>Some key points for retired Clergy to note:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Restrict your travel at all times to only essential – Pharmacy, Supermarket, GP</li> <li>- Arrange your annual flu vaccinations now</li> <li>- Document your Advanced Care Plan</li> <li>- Contact the Clergy Care Team about your personal health</li> </ul>