

Date: Tue, Mar 24, 2020 at 10:42 AM

Subject: FW: COVID19 Update for Monday 22 March 2020

Dear Fathers and friends

Please find attached a most important Letter from Bishop Anthony in light of the Governments introduction on the evening of Sunday 22 March of new measures restricting physical gathering. Attached also is an Media Statement from the Diocese in respect to the appointment of diocesan delegates to the forthcoming Australian Plenary Council.

With Bishop Anthony's Letter to the Diocese, I offer the following updates for you:

1. As you will read in Bishop Anthony's letter, in accord with new government regulations our churches are closed, except in instances of a wedding or a funeral. In either of these two exceptions, vigilance must be paid to the number of people present being limited to immediate family and to regulation of no more than one person per 4 square metre. The church at these times should not be open to the wider public.
2. The Regulation about the closure of places of public worship also includes outdoors gatherings associated with places of public worship.
3. Please note from the Apostolic Penitentiary on the granting of special Indulgences to the Faithful in the current pandemic that was issued last Friday:

<http://press.vatican.va/content/salastampa/en/bollettino/pubblico/2020/03/20/200320c.html>

4. As well, the Congregation for Divine Worship and the Discipline of the Sacraments has issued a Decree in respect to the celebration of Holy Week, the Triduum and Easter. Bishop Anthony will have more to share with us about this next week, but you may find the attachment helpful even now in your thinking.
5. Companies who supply palm for Palm Sunday have been in contact with Parishes about the cancellation or otherwise of orders. Clearly, parishes will not require the same number of palms as previously. However, the Church still celebrates Palm Sunday! Our churches should be decorated accordingly, particularly if Masses are able to be broadcast, and we should still convey our commemoration of this day with external decoration of our church buildings if possible.
6. A number of Parishes have successfully live streamed their Sunday Mass and other parish prayer. For those who have done this successfully, might we ask that you provide us with a step by step guide so that this can be shared with others? This will be big help for many I am sure.
7. This week we will have available from the Office for Evangelization a range of resources. Do note the resources available on the Australian Catholic Bishops Conference website, too: <https://www.catholic.org.au/coronavirus>. Here you will also find details about Mass online if Parishes are unable to record or livestream their own.

8. Please note the following from Alison Newell, our diocesan CCD Director –

As you are aware, our Federal and State Government leaders are meeting regularly to ensure the Australian community responds with increasing urgency to the COVID-19 pandemic. CCD and the Diocese has appreciated the manner in which our catechists have responded to the ongoing delivery of Special Religious Education in recent weeks. We have done so in a way that respects the directives and strategies of the NSW Departments of Education and Health, the individual circumstances of catechists and the decisions of local school principals who have made decisions in the best interests of their local communities. We have this morning received additional information from the Department of Education. The Department acknowledges that many individual schools, some providers of Special Religious Education and now Primary Ethics have suspended classes. Catholic providers across the NSW dioceses have maintained delivery of SRE as best as practically possible, consistent with the expectations of the Department of Education, particularly important given that SRE is an integral part of the broad curriculum in NSW. We have also encouraged any catechist who felt they could not continue teaching to advise the local schools accordingly.

In recent days, a number of SRE providers from other denominations and faiths have removed their teachers from the delivery of SRE. This has made it very difficult for schools to conduct SRE as normal and to ensure social distancing practices are maintained. With larger numbers of students required to engage in alternative meaningful activities, we appreciate the difficulties this presents for principals and individual school communities. Further, the correspondence we received from the Department of Education this morning inferred that it is very likely the Department will shortly move to withdraw all volunteers from schools. Given all of these pieces of information, **we have decided to pause the involvement of the Catholic Diocese of Broken Bay in the delivery of SRE for the foreseeable future.** This has been done in consultation with other Catholic dioceses for the protection of volunteers and schools communities. We are aware that the Department of Education will welcome this decision. The decision has the endorsement of Bishop Brian Mascord DD, who is the bishop with responsibility for the Catholic Conference of Religious Education in State Schools (CCRESS). I will remain in contact with Parish Catechist Coordinators in order to communicate an appropriate resumption of Catholic SRE classes when that time comes.

In the interim, because Special Religious Education is an integral part of the curriculum in NSW public schools, the Catholic SRE Providers in NSW are exploring the available options to provide online learning resources for children and families in consultation with the Department of Education to ensure online learning recommendations and best practice are upheld. Thank you for your wonderful support and commitment to this ministry. Your continued understanding of the current ever-changing situation is much appreciated. We encourage all catechists to pray for the children in their SRE classes and their families, particularly during their scheduled SRE class times. I further encourage you at this time to join with Pope Francis in praying for the Church and the world. Prayer changes us, changes others, opens the world to God's grace and transformation, so it is essential we commit to prayer at this time. As you continue to pray for the children in our classes please pray for those you love, for those who are sick and those who will become ill in the weeks and months ahead. Pray for our health workers and for the many people in our community for whom this will bring great hardship. As you are so used to doing as Catechists, let us be people of hope and confidence who witness to the love of Jesus.

9. A number of Parish Priests have raised questions around the employment of parish staff through these times. Please note that these issues very much involve legislation on employment. Our Diocesan Financial Administrator, Emma McDonald, will be writing to Parish Priests in the coming days around issues of employment during this period.

10. As you know, the staff of the Caroline Chisholm Centre are now working from home. No one will be able to access the CCC building after Tuesday 24 March. Access Passes will not function after this date. The Council of Priests and the College of Consultors are to meet on Tuesday 24 March as scheduled.
11. The Broken Bay News is ordinarily circulated on the first weekend of April. Please note that the publication of this edition has been deferred until after Easter so that it may adequately address the new situation in which we find ourselves.
12. There is much talk today of the need of ‘social isolation.’ However we might find the term, “physical isolation” more helpful and pastorally advantageous to use. In a time of physical isolation from one another we need to think of those ways by which we can remain **socially connected**. In the communications of our parishes we might seek to adopt the term “physical isolation” rather than “social isolation”?

In this unprecedented situation we are having to adapt with little warning, and we are on a very steep learning curve.

Today we came across this message from the Diocese of Geraldton, which may be helpful for us to remember “Churches are not being closed. Buildings are being closed. You are the Church! You are to remain open.”

Please do not hesitate to keep in contact and to raise questions so that we might all benefit!

With my deep appreciation,

Fr David Ranson

Vicar General

Very Rev Dr David Ranson PP VG



Vicar General

CATHOLIC DIOCESE OF BROKEN BAY

T: 02 8379 1612 (Chancery)

vg@bbcatholic.org.au

2/423 Pennant Hills Road, Pennant Hills

PO Box 340 PENNANT HILLS NSW 1715

www.bbcatholic.org.au