

Monday 27 July, 2020

To Parish and School leaders and all members of the community,

Please find below directives and recommendations regarding

**Prayer and worship in the Church of Maitland-Newcastle  
July - December 2020**

The Diocesan Liturgy Office and Council, and the CSO RE and Spirituality Team values:

- The responsibility we all share for the health and wellbeing of all members of society
- The safety and wellbeing of all members of the community in parishes and schools
- The rich diversity of members of the Catholic community in parishes and schools
- The nature and purpose of Catholic liturgy
- The rich diversity of Catholic prayer and worship available to the community
- The celebration of prayer and liturgy in contexts and forms that enable the full, conscious and active participation of the assembly
- The opportunity our COVID-19 pandemic experience presents for 'fallow time' reflection on existing practices relating to worship and prayer
- The enormous work the CSO RE and Spirituality Team has done to provide a range of resources to support and nurture the prayer life of schools
- The experience, renewed liturgical understandings and questions individuals and communities have gained in this COVID-19 time

The Diocesan Liturgy Office and Council, and the CSO RE and Spirituality Team understands and appreciates:

- That we are living in unprecedented times
- The need to adhere to the best advice provided by the government, particularly in terms of COVID-19 safety
- That our situation is constantly changing and there is no surety about what our circumstances will be in the next week, month, term, or even by the end of this year
- That the community is stressed, particularly parish and school communities, as they endeavour to reimagine the way they live and pursue their ministry and the mission of Jesus in these COVID-19 times
- The amount of time and energy it takes to prepare the celebration of major liturgical and community events
- The need to do differently what is deemed must be done
- The need to give clear direction to parishes and schools so they can appropriately organise, plan and communicate with the community regarding events that would normally take place between now and the end of the year.

- The need to make the best possible decisions at this time and to live with the consequences of that as our circumstances continue to change
- That many people feel the loss of opportunities and experiences they were looking forward to
- The wide-ranging experience of loss and grief carried by the wider community such as loss of employment, death of loved family members, and financial insecurity.
- The need to prioritise our energy and attention, determining what is essential to be done right now and what is not necessary in these times

In light of these values and understandings the Diocesan Liturgy Office and Council, and the CSO RE and Spirituality Team provide the following directives and recommendations to the diocesan community, inclusive of all parishes and schools, for the celebration of prayer and worship **between now and the end of 2020**.

- The celebration of Mass is limited to the parish with its regular liturgical schedule
- Live streamed Mass is not an option beyond the normal schedule of parish Masses
- Schools are to refrain from going to the parish church given the current concerns about contagion and the connected requirements regarding church cleaning
- Parish and school communities continue their mutual care and support of each other; that they refrain from placing additional demands on each other given that all communities are experiencing stress as they seek to reimagine their life and mission.
  - Parishes and schools are encouraged to find creative ways to nurture their relationship beyond the more usual focus on the celebration of liturgy.
- The large, formal liturgical celebrations that would normally take place in schools or involve schools between now and the end of 2020 are suspended. This certainty frees school communities to give their focus to what is essential to the education of, and care for, students and families and enables planning for significant events to proceed in new and creative ways.
- School communities are encouraged to pray in ways and forums that
  - are supported by the resources available on the resource page prepared by the RE and Spirituality Team.
  - respect the nature of Catholic prayer and liturgy as a physical gathering that enables the full, conscious and active participation of the assembly.
  - respects the diversity of students, families and staff.
  - seizes this time as an opportunity to nurture the prayer life of the school community in class and other smaller groups, and in ways that prepare students for more meaningful participation in the official liturgy of the Church when that is possible.
- School communities are encouraged to take opportunities as is possible to engage in a process of critical reflection that leads to the renewal and reimagining of the community's prayer and worship life beyond 2020.
- All other liturgical celebrations normally part of the Diocesan calendar are suspended, with the exception of those deemed necessary to the life of the Church, e.g. the 2020 Chrism Mass postponed from Holy Week, and the marking of the Perpetual Day of Remembrance.

The Diocesan Liturgy Office and Council, and the CSO RE and Spirituality Team recognises that these directives and recommendations will leave many feeling great disappointment at not being able to celebrate what we have customarily celebrated. At the same time, we are hopeful that new and creative possibilities will emerge which we would otherwise not have considered and that these will light a new path beyond 2020.

We are very aware of the enormous time and effort communities put into the preparation of key liturgical events. We believe that offering clear direction well in advance will enable you to plan what is possible within the everchanging constraints associated with COVID-19.

If you require any assistance with anything, particularly in reviewing the existing prayer and worship life of the school community or writing a special blessings prayer for a graduating class, please contact the Diocesan Liturgy Office at [louise.gannon@mn.catholic.org.au](mailto:louise.gannon@mn.catholic.org.au) or the CSO RE and Spirituality Team at [bernadette.gibson@mn.catholic.edu.au](mailto:bernadette.gibson@mn.catholic.edu.au).

These are difficult times for everyone. May the Holy Spirit wrap you in God's love and strengthen you with the blessings that you most need.

With thanks,



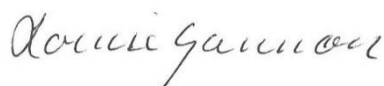
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