



*We proclaim a crucified Christ*

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**Catholic Archdiocese of Melbourne**  
**Guidelines in Response to the COVID-19 Pandemic**  
**from 19 March 2020 until further notice**

To the people of God in Melbourne,

In these days of increased awareness of the risks associated with COVID-19 (Coronavirus) I implore the faithful to be patient, prayerful and resilient. We fully support the Government's restrictions on social gatherings as being responsible and sensible.

To protect one another, especially the most vulnerable, we have been instructed to be very mindful of personal hygiene, of the careful washing of hands, of regularly cleaning shared surfaces and spaces and of respecting the need for physical distancing.

In Melbourne, as with the Dioceses of Ballarat, Sandhurst and Sale, the following actions were determined on 18 March with respect to Catholic worship:

- Immediate suspension of public liturgies, including celebrations of the Mass, until further notice.
- All other gatherings are suspended. For clarification of any concerns, please be in contact with your Parish Priest or Parish Administrator.

While public celebrations of Mass are suspended, our common work for the Gospel does not cease. In fact, this is a time for us all to re-engage in our mission to share Christ, in thoughtful and appropriate ways, with those in most need.

Please check the Melbourne website for information about Mass online and other helpful information:

[www.cam.org.au/coronavirus](http://www.cam.org.au/coronavirus)

**The following guidelines apply throughout the Archdiocese of Melbourne:**

- all but priests are dispensed from attending Sunday Mass (canon 1248): the faithful can keep holy their Sunday by setting aside some time for prayer at home, reading the Scriptures of the day, watching Mass on television or online, and asking God for the graces they would normally receive in Holy Communion
- priests should celebrate daily Mass without the physical presence of the lay faithful and offer it on behalf of those who cannot attend and for the whole nation
- churches should remain open for private prayer as much as possible
- the Second and Third Rites of Reconciliation should not be used; First Rite of Reconciliation should only be heard through a protective screen (made of plastic or similar) i.e. no direct face-to-face reconciliation other than the sick in hospital or in their home.
- other instructions will be issued to clergy regarding Baptisms of several children, the RCIA and the various rites of the Triduum.
- as far as possible, churches should remain open to allow private prayer; the Blessed Sacrament might be exposed in the monstrance for this purpose (as long as fewer than 100 are attending and with the usual provisions for reverence and security of the Sacrament)
- on days when this is liturgically permitted (see Ordo pp. 10-11), priests should offer the Mass for the Sick, the Mass for Any Need or a votive Mass such as that of Our Lady of Lourdes or St Joseph
- Baptisms, Weddings and Funerals may be celebrated if necessary, restricted to immediate family (and small bridal parties etc.); baptisms and weddings can, of course, be postponed
- preparation for and celebration of First Confession, First Communion and Confirmation for children should be postponed until the pandemic is over
- all ministers should follow precautions recommended by health authorities when visiting people's homes, aged care facilities, hospitals, prisons and detention centres

Priests will abide by all civil restrictions while seeking to be as pastorally available as possible.

These directives will be reviewed as required.

**Given on 19 March 2020, the Feast of St Joseph.**

St Joseph, Protector of the Church, *pray for us.*

Yours sincerely in Christ Jesus,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Peter A. Comensoli'. The signature is stylized with large, sweeping loops and a small cross at the beginning.

Most Rev Peter A Comensoli  
Archbishop of Melbourne