

## **A Message to Priests in the two dioceses**

26 March 2020

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There are some practical things I need to remind you about.

### ***Visiting the sick and dying***

The following has come as advice from the Ministry of Health.

If someone with the virus is in hospital priestly pastoral care and contact needs to be arranged by the diocese with the local DHB or through the hospital / rest-home, or through the hospital chaplains (including the ecumenical chaplains).

If someone with the virus is at home, if in the early stages do whatever pastoral care is necessary by phone. The Ministry of Health have not directly answered our question about a priest going into a home to visit someone with the virus but stress the need for no contact.

**A priest or lay pastoral leader cannot visit a home during this Alert Level Four.**

If you have been in contact with someone with the virus you must not go to a hospital for testing. Hospitals are in lockdown. You must isolate yourself and call the Ministry of Health helpline.

### ***Livestreamed Masses***

We have had many enquiries about livestreamed Masses. These need to be understood in the context of the government's restrictions on movement and contact during Alert Level 4, and the closure of public spaces. Self-isolation means staying at home. You can leave your house to access essential services, like buying groceries, or going to a bank or pharmacy, go to work if you work for an essential service, or go out for exercise (see covid19.govt.nz).

THE SITUATION IS EXTREMELY SERIOUS, and these restrictions must be observed by everyone.

Our churches are closed public spaces. You cannot go to your church for a livestreamed Mass even if it is on the same site as your home, as this is not a valid reason for leaving your home and you will be very visibly in a closed public space. I have made the decision to not do livestreamed Masses as another person from outside my household needs to be involved and I would need to leave my home to do it, which contravenes the governments instructions.

There are many livestreamed Masses around New Zealand and they can be found on catholic.org.nz. I also recommend Pope Francis' daily Mass at 7pm NZ time on livestreamed on the Vatican's YouTube channel <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VJH18b1OLWg> and on Rome Reports <https://www.romereports.com/.../live-popes-mass-at-santa-mar.../>. Please let your parishioners know about this Mass so they can unite not just with your local Catholic community but with the global Church. This tragic pandemic is causing

immeasurable suffering around the world, much greater than we are so far experiencing in New Zealand, and we must unite in prayer with the global Catholic community.

***Funerals***

No funerals are being celebrated. The Funeral Directors have said that families have the choice of immediate cremation, or putting bodies on hold in their mortuary facilities. Please let people know that when there is a death they can phone priests and ask for prayers but the priest cannot visit, and that there will be the opportunities for Requiem Masses at a later date.

Thank you for everything you are doing among our people and for the wider community at this time. You are in my thoughts and prayers.

With every blessing

Yours sincerely in the Lord

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "John Cardinal Dew". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

John Cardinal Dew

Archbishop of Wellington  
Apostolic Administrator of the Diocese of Palmerston North.