



**BISHOP'S
OFFICE**

Te Rau Aroha
Diocesan Centre
33 Amesbury Street
PO Box 5279
Terrace End
Palmerston North 4441

T +64 6 357 1980
E bishop-pa@pndiocese.org.nz
www.pndiocese.org.nz

25 March 2022

Dear Fathers

On Wednesday the Prime Minister announced changes to the COVID-19 Protection Framework RED setting.

From 11.59pm today, Friday 25 March the gathering limits will increase from 100 to 200 people.

Vaccine passes will no longer be required from 11.59pm on Monday 4 April.

This means that from this weekend the limits on numbers at Masses which require vaccine passes will be 200, (or less if one metre social distancing does not allow for 200 people). For Masses which do not require vaccine passes the limit will remain at 25 until after 4 April when these Masses will have a 200 person limit. They can be discontinued at that time if they are Masses which are additional to a parish's normal Mass timetable.

Masks are still to be worn by the people at Mass. From this Saturday on masks can be dispensed with in the sanctuary by the presider and readers as long as they are two metres away from the congregation, but masks must be worn by those who distribute Communion. The rules that we have had in place for some time continue – communion in the hand and under one kind only, no holy water in the fonts, the Sign of Peace without contact, and there is still to be no singing.

The changes in limits and vaccine passes are a blessing which has come in time for Easter. They give us the opportunity for people to come together in parishes without the divisions which resulted from the vaccine passes.

Mass of Chrism

I do not believe that is safe as yet to celebrate the Chrism Mass. Gathering priests and representatives from the parishes of the diocese could provide an unfortunate opportunity for the spread of the virus in the midst of Holy Week and before the Triduum Celebrations. This could then have ramifications during the Triduum for parish communities, both priests and people.

We have experienced at gatherings outside of the regular Sunday Masses, such as weddings, the transmission of COVID-19. The difference in whether the virus spreads seems to be the nature of the gathering. At the Chrism Mass there is always the joy of the fellowship of priests and also parishioners as they catch up with one another before and after the Mass. Included in this number are priests and parishioners who are potentially vulnerable because of age or health conditions, and we don't want to put them at risk or risk the virus being taken back to parishes.



When we return to the Orange Level, we will plan for the Chrism Masses. In 2020 we celebrated the Chrism Mass later in the year, when the conditions were safer for all. We will do this again this year.

Palm Sunday

On Palm Sunday there is to be no procession into the church. If people mingle outside and during the procession it is very difficult to maintain social distancing.

Holy Thursday

I had notified you in an earlier communication that there is to be no Washing of the Feet this Holy Thursday. Those who are having their feet washed would be very close to the priest, and even though it is feet that are being washed, the chance of breathing over the priest and one another is very real.

Good Friday

There will be no individual Veneration of the Cross on Good Friday. For alternative ways of doing this, see the "Guidance for Ash Wednesday, Lent, Holy Week and Triduum 2022" sent to you earlier and which I am including with this letter.

Easter Vigil

There is to be no lighting of the Easter fire outside the Church, because this would mean people processing into the Church and being close together. Processions do not allow for the social distancing requirements which keep us safe, and which help people to feel safe.

I take this opportunity to thank you for all you are doing in these strange and challenging times. Your generosity and kindness to people in the parishes is wonderful and appreciated by so many.

With all good wishes and 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.

Cardinal John A Dew
Apostolic Administrator
Diocese of Palmerston North

