



# Archbishop of Wellington

PO Box 1937, Wellington 6140, New Zealand

12 August 2020

Dear Fathers, Lay Pastoral Leaders, Leaders of Religious Congregations, School and College Principals

With the return of Alert Level 2 outside of Auckland we need to proceed with the utmost caution in the Archdiocese. Churches have proven to be part of the spread of COVID-19 overseas and we don't want that in New Zealand.

When we were in Alert Level 2 previously, it proved very difficult for parishes to have Masses with the 100-person limit. Social distancing significantly reduces the number of people who can be accommodated in a church and there are many issues around deciding who should take part and how it is managed. Priests are not to celebrate six or seven Sunday Masses to deal with the 100-person limit and social distancing requirements.

The government has said the three days in Level 2 are to give time to find the source of the infection, and they will not rule out continuing for longer at Alert Level 2/3 or higher depending on what they find. This means that it will be Saturday morning before we find out what the situation will be, which will make it difficult to communicate with parishes and parishioners.

To be safe I am suspending all Masses, and parish activities which involve gathering, until Tuesday 18 August. This means there will be no Masses this weekend, and the dispensation from the Sunday obligation is in place. The dispensation also applies to the feast of the Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary, which is a Holy Day of Obligation and falls on Saturday. There are to be no exceptions to this suspension of public Masses over the next few days. It is vital that we all work together to keep everyone safe.

Taking Communion to the sick and Reconciliation are also to be suspended for the same period of time. Priests can make their own decisions about those who are very ill or in danger of death.

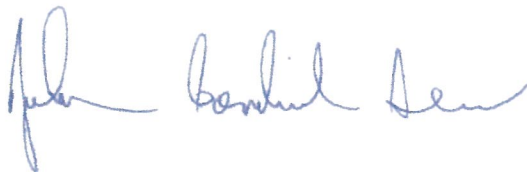
Churches can be open for private visits but there is to be no Eucharistic Adoration. Contact tracing information will need to be collected and social distancing observed.

I will provide further advice on Tuesday depending on the government's decisions about the Alert Levels.

Thank you for the work that you and parishioners have been doing to keep our communities safe. This is a challenging year and I am very grateful for what you are doing.

With good wishes and blessings

Yours sincerely in the Lord

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "John A. Cardinal Dew". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "John" being the most prominent.

✠ John A Cardinal Dew  
**Archbishop of Wellington**

12 August 2020

Tēnā koutou Priests and Parish Leadership,

Following the announcements that the Auckland Region has moved to **Alert Level 3** and the rest of the country to **Alert Level 2** from noon today, we write to you about the pastoral implications. The new Levels apply until at least midnight on Friday. The Government has promised to give updates before then whether these Levels will remain or change. This letter assumes they will continue at least until next week. We will provide additional updates as needed.

**Under Alert Level 3**, Churches must close, except for small, private weddings and funerals of up to 10 people. Physical distancing and public health measures must be maintained.

**Under Alert Level 2**, religious gatherings are restricted to a maximum of 100 people. It will be up to dioceses and parishes to decide whether weekday or Sunday Mass can continue with this restriction. It may not be possible to have 100 people in a small church. Not all parishioners will be able to attend Mass in many larger parishes. Others will not attend due to health reasons, concerns or fears. For these reasons, the dispensation of attendance at Sunday Mass will be in place.

During Alert Level 2, Mass restrictions are:

- At the Sign of Peace, people should avoid shaking hands or other contact with one another, and instead smile, nod or bow to one another.
- Holy Communion is not to be distributed from the chalice.
- Communion is only to be distributed in the hand, not on the tongue.
- Holy water is to be removed from vessels at the church door.

Should any part of the country be returned to **Alert Level 1** (subject to any changes in Government policy for this level) our advice will continue that Mass may recommence so long as Ministry of Health guidelines are met; any Mass and Communion restrictions are to be determined by the diocese or parish.

We know this is a challenging time for many people, the more so because this reimposing of restrictions follows more than 100 days of national hope and gratitude for the absence of community transmission. Our thanks and prayers go to you all for your wonderful work and witness during this pandemic.

Yours sincerely in Christ our Hope,  
Mā te Atua koutou e manaaki, e tiaki

✠ Patrick Dunn, Bishop of Auckland and NZCBC President  
✠ John Dew, Cardinal Archbishop of Wellington and NZCBC Vice President  
✠ Stephen Lowe, Bishop of Hamilton and NZCBC Secretary  
✠ Paul Martin SM, Bishop of Christchurch  
✠ Michael Dooley, Bishop of Dunedin  
✠ Michael Gielen, Auxiliary Bishop of Auckland