



4 March 2020

### Letter to the Diocese of Toowoomba

Following the *National advice on liturgical implications in light of coronavirus (COVID-19)* issued today by the Australian Catholic Bishops Conference, I ask that parishes and communities throughout the Diocese of Toowoomba observe the following temporary protocols until further notice, effective from this weekend (7 and 8 March 2020).

- Individuals should consider their own health, including any potential to infect others with a contagious disease, before attending a public liturgical celebration.
- Holy Water should be temporarily removed from stoups at the doors of churches to reduce the possibility of transmission of the virus. Holy Water should continue to be available for people to take home.
- Parishes and other settings where liturgies are celebrated should make alcohol-based gels or rubs (or like products) available near entrances. Similar provisions should be considered for settings used for the Sacrament of Reconciliation.
- When exchanging the Sign of Peace, individuals should avoid shaking hands but say “Peace be with you” and offer a smile, wave, nod or bow.
- All Ministers of Holy Communion should take particular care to wash their hands before and after distributing. Appropriate means should be made available.
- The coronavirus is easily spread through saliva. In celebrations of the Ordinary Form of the Latin Rite, it is therefore recommended that the Body of Christ only be administered in the hand because of the high risk of transmission if people continue to receive on the tongue. Ministers should also seek to avoid contact with the communicant's hands.
- Parishes should cease distributing Holy Communion from the Chalice until further notice. The faithful should be reminded that Christ is fully present under either species.

Priests and Parish Leaders are encouraged to communicate these protocols with the faithful clearly and appropriately.

The Australian Catholic Bishops Conference will continue to monitor advice from health authorities and other episcopal conferences. This advice will be updated as and when appropriate.

Most Reverend Robert M McGuckin

Bishop of Toowoomba

PO Box 756, Toowoomba Qld 4350

Tel: (+61 7) 4632 4277 • Fax: (+61 7) 4639 2251 • Email: [bishop@twb.catholic.org.au](mailto:bishop@twb.catholic.org.au) • [www.twb.catholic.org.au](http://www.twb.catholic.org.au)