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**Directives for Churches and Chapels within the
Bunbury Diocese
Phase 3 of Western Australia's COVID Roadmap.**

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

The Western Australian Government has implemented the COVID-19 Roadmap. The WA COVID-19 Roadmap is a four-phase roadmap which has been developed in conjunction with the National Cabinet principles and is based on relevant public health advice for Western Australia.

On **Saturday 6 June 2020**, Western Australia will commence Phase 3 of the roadmap. The WA COVID-19 roadmap can be accessed at <https://www.wa.gov.au/organisation/departments-of-the-premier-and-cabinet/covid-19-coronavirus-wa-roadmap>

The Western Australian and Commonwealth Governments continue to issue ongoing public health advice in relation to COVID-19. The Bunbury Diocese continues to be guided by this advice through our ongoing commitment to monitoring any threat posed by COVID-19 to Catholic communities across our Diocese. Clergy and the faithful are encouraged to download the CovidSafe App and observe the latest public health advice.

I write to share with you a revised series of directives which come into effect across the Diocese of Bunbury, commencing **Saturday 6 June 2020**.

1. NEW NUMBER LIMITS

Churches and chapels are permitted to open with capacity limits of one hundred (100) people per single undivided space with up to 300 people in total in the entire venue excluding people required to conduct the service (***it is the presumption here that a church building is classified as a single undivided space unless it has a choir gallery or floor to ceiling moveable walls which completely isolate one space from another space***).

There is to be two (2) square metres of floor space per person with each person practicing physical distancing by keeping 1.5 metres from other persons of other households.

Available seating must be clearly marked with signage to assist in maintaining a physical distance of 1.5 metres between people of other households.

These conditions are to be met **every time a person enters** a church or chapel, **including all that follow**.

Recording those attending

Priests (or their nominated delegate) must ensure that the name and contact details of every person who enters a church for any reason is recorded as per government directives. Churches must retain these records.

No record is to be made of the reason why the person has attended the church.

The purpose of this is to have a record of people to contact should someone contract the coronavirus. The record will be required by authorities if this should happen.

Anyone who feels unwell, who has flu/respiratory symptoms, elevated body temperatures or who has been in contact in the previous fourteen (14) days with someone else suspected to have, or who has been diagnosed with COVID-19, **is not permitted** to enter churches or chapels.

2. A COVID SAFETY PLAN REQUIRED

The **State Government requires that community facilities (which include places of worship and other church buildings) must prepare a COVID Safety Plan.**

COVID Safety Plans are an important part of ensuring that reopening churches and chapels does not increase the risk of spreading COVID-19. Churches and chapels must ensure their COVID Safety Plan is available for inspection by authorised officers. Failure to complete a COVID Safety Plan may mean your church or chapel is putting the community at risk.

To reopen during Phase 3 churches and chapels must comply with the updated Phase 3 COVID Safety Guidelines (Phase 3 COVID Safety Guidelines) and Phase 3 COVID Safety Plan (Phase 3 COVID Safety Plan)

An individual COVID Safety Plan must be completed for each church, chapel or church building that has reopened, or will be re-opening.

In the COVID Safety Plan, you will need to explain how your parish/chapel/church buildings will take steps to implement the requirements and advice set out in the guidelines.

Additionally to reopen during Phase, 3 churches and chapels need:

- To ensure that there are no more than one hundred (100) patrons per single undivided space, up to a maximum of three hundred (300) patrons per premises (excluding staff)
- To comply with conditions outlined in the Phase 3 COVID Safety Guidelines — which need to be read these before completing your plan
- To ensure a Phase 3 COVID Safety Plan is completed by the person responsible for the church or chapel (the Parish Priest)
- To display a COVID Safety Plan Certificate in a visible location on the church or chapel — this is included in the plan
- To maintain a minimum of two (2) square metres per person
- To maintain hygiene and frequent cleaning
- To maintain attendance records of patrons for contact tracing
- To manage waiting areas carefully to ensure physical distancing.

COVID Safety Plans are an important part of ensuring that reopening churches and chapels does not increase the risk of spreading COVID-19. Churches and chapels must ensure their COVID Safety Plan is available for inspection by authorised officers. Failure to complete a COVID Safety Plan may mean your church or chapel is putting the community at risk.

An individual COVID Safety Plan must be completed for each church, chapel or church building that has reopened, or will be re-opening.

In the COVID Safety Plan, it will be necessary to explain how your parish/chapel/church buildings will take steps to implement the requirements and advice set out in the guidelines.

3. CONTINUING HYGIENE REQUIREMENTS

Parishes need to ensure that the following regulations continue to be observed

- Hand sanitizers must be available at each entrance to any church or chapel.
- Clear guidelines must be put in place to direct people on how to enter and exit the church or chapel to ensure that this is done systematically to ensure that appropriate physical distancing is observed.
- Holy Water fonts/stoups in all churches and chapels are to remain empty.
- Pews, seats, seatbacks, top rails, kneelers, doors, door knobs, microphones, sacristies, toilets/bathrooms and all other communal areas are to be cleaned, wiped down and sanitised regularly.
- Parish newsletters or bulletins should never be re-used. Sufficient copies should be made to ensure that people get copies, but then they must either take them home or dispose of them.
- Hymnals or shared copies of texts are not to be used.
- Parish Priests, in consultation with their communities, are to put in place regulations for churches and chapels (including Adoration Chapels) to ensure that the number of people present in the church or chapel conforms to government regulated numbers at all times.

4. CELEBRATIONS OF THE SACRAMENTS

The celebration of *First Reconciliation* (school-aged children) and First Holy Communion (school-aged children) may recommence. Physical distancing of one (1) person per 2 square metres must be observed inside the church or chapel. Available seating must be clearly marked with signage to assist in maintaining a physical distance of 1.5 metres between people of other households.

Confirmation (school-aged children) remains temporarily suspended, except for those in danger of death. Further information for Parish Priests, Catholic School Principals, parents/guardians and Catechists is outlined in my letter of 3 June 2020.

Individual parishes may choose to celebrate *the Rite of Initiation* with RCIA elect and candidates.

Rite of Christian Initiation (RCIA)

Individual parishes may choose to celebrate the Rite of Initiation with RCIA elect and candidates.

Please refer to Baptism and Confirmation directives when celebrating these sacraments with the RCIA elect and candidates.

For the anointing with Chrism the celebrant should use cotton balls with a separate one for each candidate. These cotton balls must be disposed of appropriately after the celebration.

Baptism

Baptism may be celebrated with a limit of one hundred (100) attendees present within the church excluding people required to conduct the service. Also,

- Fresh baptismal water must be used for each candidate.
- Full immersion baptism is discouraged unless the water in the baptismal pool is drained between candidates. The baptismal pool must subsequently be cleaned and disinfected after each full immersion.
- For the anointing with Chrism at baptism, the celebrant should use cotton balls with a separate one for each candidate. These cotton balls must be disposed of appropriately after the celebration.

The Sacrament of Penance and Reconciliation

Priests may provide opportunities for the Sacrament of Reconciliation, according to the First Rite.

- The Sacrament is to be celebrated in a well-ventilated space and with appropriate social distancing being maintained at all times, including the absolution. The Sacrament can be celebrated in the sanctuary but provision for anonymity should be made.
- The contact details (name, phone number, address and/or email address) of each person entering the church for Confession must be recorded and retained, as with other occasions when people enter the church. However **no record** should be kept of the reason for the person's presence in the church.

Celebrations of the Eucharist

Priests must exercise judgement in deciding whether it is yet practicable to conduct public Masses or to reopen churches and chapels. In light of the restricted numbers of attendees under Phase 3 of the WA Government's COVID-19 Roadmap, it may be necessary for Parish Priests to implement revised weekday and weekend Mass timetables.

Parishes are to put in place procedures to ensure that numbers of attendees at all Masses conform to the directives of the Western Australian Government. Inevitably, the majority of the faithful will still not be able to attend a Mass.

The faithful continue to be dispensed of their obligation to attend Sunday Mass. Parishes are encouraged to continue live streaming Masses.

Where Masses are celebrated,

- Church ushers may need to remind parishioners and the faithful to maintain social distancing whether they are entering or exiting a church or chapel for Mass or in the Communion Procession.
- Allocated seating for each member of the congregation must be indicated clearly through the use of signage.
- Offertory gifts are to be in closed vessels or, where this is not possible, vessels should be appropriately covered.
- Offertory processions and Gospel processions are to be omitted.
- The Sign of Peace through physical contact is to be omitted or given without physical contact.
- All priests, Deacons, acolytes and Extraordinary Ministers of Holy Communion are to wash their hands in soap and water, or are to use an alcohol-based hand sanitiser both immediately before and immediately after the distribution of Holy Communion.
- Holy Communion is to be received only in the hand, given the risk of spittle remaining on the priest's or others minister's figure, out of concern for the health of others including the celebrant and other ministers. Holy Communion is not to be distributed on the tongue until the crisis of the COVID-19 pandemic has passed.
- The Precious Blood is not to be shared from the chalice at any Masses and is reserved to the celebrant(s) only. The celebrant and concelebrants are to receive from the chalice by intinction.
- A physical distance of 1.5 metres between people in the Communion Procession is to be observed. Parishes may wish to dedicate ushers to facilitate the movement of people at the time Communion is distributed.
- All sacred vessels are to be thoroughly washed before and after each Mass.
- Collections are not to be taken up during the Mass. Churches can install boxes or containers for offerings at the entrance to the church or wherever they decide to be appropriate.
- Pews, seats, seatbacks, top rail and kneelers are to be wiped down and sanitised after each Mass.
- The pulpit, lectern, credence table, ministers' seats – and anything handled by multiple people is to be wiped down and sanitised after each Mass.
- Those who wish to wear masks when attending Mass are encouraged to do so.

Confirmations

- The celebration of Confirmation (school-aged children) remains temporarily suspended, except for those in danger of death or when the baptism of an adult is celebrated.

The Sacrament of the Anointing of the Sick (for individuals)

- *'Those who have the care of souls and those who are close to the sick are to see to it that the sick are consoled by the sacrament of anointing at the appropriate time' (Canon 1001).*
- Priests will continue to respond to appropriate requests to anoint people, and will continue to celebrate the sacrament on an individual basis.
- Upon request, and with strict compliance with restrictions in place within nursing homes, aged-care facilities and hospitals, priests will continue to minister the sacrament of the Anointing of the Sick.
- Please be aware that 'in case of necessity ... it is sufficient that a single anointing be given on the forehead or, because of the particular condition of the sick person, on another suitable part of the body, while the whole sacramental form is said.'

Community celebrations of the Sacrament of the Anointing of the Sick

- The communal celebration of the Anointing of the Sick is to be temporarily suspended.

Weddings

- Churches and chapels are permitted to celebrate weddings with capacity limits of one hundred (100) people per single undivided space excluding people required to conduct the service.

Funerals

- Churches and chapels are permitted to celebrate funerals with capacity limits of one hundred (100) people per single undivided space excluding people required to conduct the service.

5. OTHER RELEVANT INFORMATION

Many Parishes are offering parishioners live streaming of Sunday and weekday Masses. Links can be found on parish websites.

For those whose parishes are not offering live streaming, the following information is offered.

Sunday Masses

Below is the link to the Mass livestreamed on Sundays and weekdays at 9am

<https://youtu.be/yLEvTDbzGuw>

And the link of the recording is available directly after Mass

<https://www.facebook.com/BunburyParish/>

For those seeking the following

Mass Readings and Liturgical Resources

- [Readings of the Day](#)
- [Prayers for Time of Pandemic](#)

Prayers and Scripture

- Act of Spiritual Communion – Diocese of Bathurst
- [Prayer from Apostolic Nuncio in Australia, Archbishop Adolfo Tito Yllana](#)

Deaf and Hard of Hearing

- [COVID-19 Information for Deaf and Hard of Hearing](#)

Further Western Australian Government information

For those seeking it, the latest information and advice, including economic and health support measures and restrictions can be found at

<https://www.wa.gov.au/organisation/departments/departments-of-the-premier-and-cabinet/covid-19-coronavirus-business-and-industry-advice#covid-safety-plans>

Latest frequently asked questions for Religious practices can be found at <https://www.wa.gov.au/government/publications/phase-3-easing-of-restrictions-frequently-asked-questions#religious-practises>

Current information on the measures being taken to protect the Western Australian community in order to minimise the potential impacts of COVID-19 in WA can be found at: <https://www.wa.gov.au/organisation/departments/departments-of-the-premier-and-cabinet/covid-19-coronavirus-wa-roadmap>

It is anticipated that the Western Australian Government will progress from Phase 3 to Phase 4 in the coming weeks and months. These changes will provide additional scope for a revision of the directives which have been applied to the Diocese of Bunbury. Subsequent guidelines relevant to the Diocese will be issued accordingly to reflect the Western Australia Government's implementation of Phase 4.

It is incumbent on each of us to exercise responsibility in keeping infection rates low and demonstrating diligent citizenship as well as Christian concern and charity.

I assure you of my continued prayers and practical support as together we as a Diocese seek to continue to witness and proclaim our Christ-centred hope within a global context that is collectively seeking to respond to the uncertainty and reality of COVID-19.

Bishop Gerard Holohan
Bishop of Bunbury

4 June 2020