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## Catholic Diocese of Bathurst Information Network Update

### **A Letter from Bishop McKenna to the People of the Diocese - COVID19**

18<sup>th</sup> March 2020

Dear Friends in Christ,

Slowing the spread of Covid19 has required an unprecedented response from our public health authorities. We need to trust their expert judgment and cooperate together with their advice and directives. As Christians, we pray especially for the elderly and vulnerable and for healthcare workers and all who are on the front line in this emergency.

I am just back from Vietnam, so have gone into self-isolation at Matthew Quinn House for two weeks. Although I arrived home before the legal requirement came into effect, I have thought it prudent to observe the spirit of the public health directive.

As you know, our usual life has already been disrupted, including the routines of worshipping God together. I want to update you on the latest precautions we have had to take:

1. The latest directive from the public health authorities is

that indoor gatherings of more than 100 persons are prohibited. This means that attendance at each Sunday Mass must be limited to that number unless the Mass is celebrated outdoors.

In small communities, this will not be a problem, but each larger parish is making its own plans to deal with the situation there. People should check with their parish website or office to find out how they will be affected.

At this time, it would be advisable for elderly parishioners to celebrate Mass on weekdays, rather than on Sunday.

It is also possible to pray and follow Mass online at <https://www.youtube.com/user/cathnews>

2. Special announcements regarding the celebration of Holy Week and Easter will be made according to the developing situation.
3. Attendance at funerals will need to be limited to close family and friends.
4. The Sacrament of Anointing of the Sick will continue to be administered individually to those who need it, but Anointing Masses are suspended until further notice.

Check with your parish priest about arrangements for the other Sacraments during this time.

May I close with a prayer of St Patrick, the patron of our Diocese:

*Lord, I praise and proclaim your name in all places, not only when things go well but also in times of stress. Whether I receive good or ill, I return thanks equally to God, who taught me always to trust him unreservedly.*

Our Lady of the Central West, St Patrick and St Mary of the Cross MacKillop, pray for us.

Yours in Christ,

+*Michael McKenna*  
**Bishop of Bathurst**

Catholic Diocese of Bathurst

PO Box 246 | Bathurst NSW 2795

phone: (02) 6334 6400 | fax: (02) 6331 9453

[bathurst.catholic.org.au](http://bathurst.catholic.org.au)

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