

St Thomas the Apostle

Catholic Parish, Clyde North

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Dear Parishioners,

As we have learnt over recent weeks our normal life and parish routines are changing very rapidly, week by week.

Yesterday evening the Catholic Bishops of the Province of Victoria sent a further message to all Catholics in Victoria. It conveyed the message that in the rapidly changing situation in Australia regarding the Coronavirus Covid-19, and having given this prayerful and considered reflection, that they have determined the following actions:

- Immediate suspension of public liturgies, celebrations of the Mass until further notice.
- All other gatherings are suspended.

This has implications for families planning liturgies such as funerals, weddings and baptisms. In the light of this all Catholics of Victoria are dispensed by the Bishops from their Sunday obligation until further notice (canon 1248).

I know that the rapidly changing circumstances in which we live can cause anxiety and even alarm. It can bring on feelings of isolation and loneliness. And I know that many will feel sad that they cannot participate in our usual weekday and Sunday Masses. The experience for all of us is something which we have not endured before and uncertain times lie ahead of us.

So, there are some things I want to say to all our parishioners.

Firstly, God is with us. We are never alone. Whilst there cannot be public Masses for the time being, I will still be offering Mass every day and all of you, indeed all in our community will present in the prayers at Mass. Be active in making a spiritual communion or participating in a Mass online. We will pray every day that this crisis may soon be overcome.

I encourage you to continue your own active participation in the life of the Church through personal and family prayer, praying with the Scriptures, and through acts of loving kindness.

I wish to reassure you that I will be available to parishioners, especially those in need, and for the Sacraments of Anointing and Reconciliation for individuals. For the time being house blessings will be suspended but please do contact me regarding planned funerals, weddings and baptisms.

Our parish staff will also continue to be available to you during the usual office hours. However, respecting the need for social distancing I encourage you to phone the parish office or send an email in preference to or prior to coming to the office.

We do intend to communicate daily via the Parish Web Page and Facebook Page with information from both the parish and the diocese. So please stay connected with us.

Above all let us pray for one another and take care of each other. Ring those you know who may feel isolated or lonely each day if possible. Through the witness of our faith may we bring hope to those who may be filled with anxiety or despair, and may we bring the joy of God's loving presence into the sadness people may feel. May all know God is close to them through our prayers and loving kindness.

May God bless you all,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Denis O'Bryan". The signature is written in a cursive style with a heart symbol between the first and last names.

Fr Denis O'Bryan (Parish Priest)