

St Thomas the Apostle

Catholic Parish, Clyde North

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20th May 2020

Dear Parishioners,

During last week we received the welcome news that the restrictions on our churches have been eased a little, although there are a range of requirements and regulations that will continue to apply to all gatherings in churches or other places of worship.

Masses can now be celebrated with up to a maximum of 10 people attending, in addition to the celebrant and door attendant, and other persons necessary for the celebration of the Mass. At the same time, I invite everyone to continue to observe advice regarding the right behaviour to adopt in order to safeguard the safety and health of all.

There are many requirements including:

- Social distancing of at least 1.5m between attendees must be adhered to at all times, both inside the room and outside between the room and the carpark.
- A register of attendees must be kept for all liturgies and also for people wishing to visit a church for private prayer. This register will include each person's name, phone number, date and time of attendance.
- Cleaning and disinfecting must take place after every Mass, especially of hard surfaces such as seats and door handles.
- Churches or liturgy spaces should not open unless someone to monitor and record attendance is present.
- Protocols for celebrating Masses must be developed and adhered to and endorsed by St Peter's College, where the Masses will be celebrated.

Our Sunday Mass under these new conditions will resume on Sunday 7th June. At present there will be no Saturday evening Masses, and we will commence with a Sunday morning Mass to be celebrated at 9.00am. In time, we expect to add further Masses.

The current Government advice (13th May) urges people aged 70 and over to continue to stay at home and avoid contact with others. People in this category are at much greater risk of more serious illness if they are infected with the coronavirus Covid 19. This Government advice is also endorsed by the Sale Diocese.

Parents desiring to bring pre-school children to Mass should know that they will have the responsibility of ensuring that the children do not leave their allotted seat at any time so that social distancing is maintained at all times, and remembering that the Mass is being live streamed.

Anyone with a fever, a dry cough, a sore throat, breathing difficulty or any respiratory symptom, however slight, must stay at home and seek medical advice.

Clearly, by far the majority of people will still not be able to be physically present at Mass on any given weekend, so we will continue to stream the 9.00am Sunday Mass live on our parish Facebook page. The Holy Hour with Adoration of the Blessed Sacrament will also continue to be streamed live on the parish Facebook page at 7.00pm on Friday evenings.

For St Thomas the Apostle Parish, a room at St Peter's College has been made available for us to celebrate our Sunday Mass. This is not the place where we usually gather for our Sunday Masses, but a smaller space which will not be used by College staff and students as they begin to resume regular attendance at the College. I am grateful to Mr Chris Black, Principal of St Peter's College, and Ms Julie Banda, Deputy Principal and Head of the Clyde North Campus, for making this space available to us.

The Blue Hills Chapel remains unavailable for use for Mass by the parish at this time.

I invite parishioners to register their desire to participate in a 9.00am Mass on the Sundays from 7th June onwards by completing the attached form and returning it by email to the parish office. Only those who have registered will be allowed entry. You can't simply turn up. Those who do register will receive a reply from the parish office with further information. Those attending Mass will be asked to use the entrance and parking available near the College Office in MacKillop Way. The Heather Grove entrance will not be open. Whilst the Mass will commence at 9.00am, no one will be admitted for any reason later than 8.45am. This will enable greetings and instructions for our gathering for Mass to be given before the live streaming begins.

I invite parishioners who are already approved parish volunteers to offer themselves to assist with thorough cleaning after Mass, and to be door monitors and ushers and for Liturgy ministries. We will particularly need people to be available for a thorough cleaning and disinfecting after every Mass.

I have certainly been missing the opportunity to gather with parishioners for our Sunday Masses, and this is a small new beginning. Let us continue our prayers for all who are suffering worldwide in this time of the pandemic, for all government leaders striving to lead communities through this time, and for the medical and scientific people to are working hard to provide a vaccine.

You all remain very much in my thoughts and prayers. May God bless you all.

St Thomas the Apostle, pray for us. St Mary of the Cross MacKillop, pray for us.

Our Lady help of Christians, pray for us.



Fr Denis O'Bryan (Parish Priest)