

May 20, 2020

Dear Catholic Sendai Diocesan Parishioners,

Precautionary Measures Concerning COVID-19 from 7th of June and Beyond

The State of Emergency of the four prefectures of the Sendai Diocese has been lifted last May 14. During this period, the efforts of the people, companies, groups, and churches all over the country to voluntarily restrain from various activities has given a satisfactory result. However, it is still a long way to go before this crisis be over. The opening of the Public-School next month will give us an idea of the extent of the spread of the virus. Based on the result of this, we will have enough time to deliberate on the resumption of the Holy Mass. (Of course, this is not the only basis to decide. Please understand that I do not intend to use the students to experiment.) Basically, we have decided to extend the following precautionary measures from 7th of June and beyond, so please be guided:

1. **From June 7th (Sunday) to July 4th (Saturday)**, all parishioners of Sendai Diocese are dispensed from their obligation to attend Sunday Mass for the time being. Likewise, all public masses, gatherings, lectures, etc. with unspecified number of people attending will also be suspended. Please pray privately by reflecting on the daily scripture readings.
 - ✧ We have received disappointing reports from some parishes (priests) that in certain small churches, because of few attendees, everyone sang the hymn, read the scriptures, and then received communion. With the present situation and for the time being, the prayer and communion service (which has a minimum risk of infection) has kept the faith of the believers alive while we could not yet celebrate the Holy Mass (which has a longer confinement and high risk of infection).
 2. The priest will continue to give communion to those who wish to receive communion in their respective parishes during scheduled Sunday Masses. However, please pay careful attention to the following:
 - ✧ The giving of communion is usually done during the regular schedule of masses in the different churches. To avoid congestion inside the church, try to find some ways and means to observe social distancing.
 - ✧ When using the cathedral and the rooms in the church, be sure to wear mask, disinfect your hands, provide adequate ventilation, and do not stay too long inside the church. Return to your home as soon as you have received the communion.
 3. Concerning weddings and funerals, consult with the priest in charge and the person concern on taking adequate precautionary measures against infections before proceeding as usual.
 4. For events other than masses, as much as possible, kindly consider postponing or canceling them, except only for small gatherings.
 5. We hope that this announcement will be given to the parishioners in various ways by **Friday, June 5th**. Likewise, inform the foreign parishioners as much as possible. An English and Vietnamese translation are posted on the Sendai Diocesan Homepage.
- ✧ The decision was made after a thorough reflection and discussion during the clergy meeting held on May 14th and it has been approved by the Sendai Diocesan Advisory Board. Nevertheless, we will make an announcement again in the middle of June after taking into considerations the situation and advices from experts.

Fr. Shiro Komatsu
Administrator
Catholic Sendai Diocese