

June 12, 2020

Dear Catholic Sendai Diocesan Parishioners,

Re: TOWARDS THE RESUMPTION OF CHURCH ACTIVITIES

For the past four months, the different church activities in Sendai Diocese have been suspended due to COVID-19 pandemic. Recently, I asked for an extension of the suspension of the church activities. However, during our recent Sendai Diocese Clergy Board Meeting held last June 9, 2020, we have set out guidelines (see the attached document) for the resumption of the church activities, so please be guided.

Henceforth, in preparation for the resumption of church activities, kindly read carefully and discuss the set guidelines with the priest-in-charge and the church committee during your meeting. Furthermore, after you have completed the necessary preparation for the preventive measures, you can already lift the suspension on July 4, 2020 (Saturday). But if you feel you are not yet ready, you can continue the suspension from July 5, 2020 (Sunday) until further notice.

Since there is no vaccine or specific medicines to fight COVID-19 virus, let us prepare ourselves not to go back to our old normal ways. Afterall, the most important thing is to protect the lives of the parishioners as well as those people outside the church. With the resumption of church activities, the dryness of faith will be quenched, and we will walk together towards the "new normal".

In the near future, the Sendai Diocesan Office will send disinfectant and set of bottles (where you put the disinfectant) to all the parishes. Please use it extensively when cleaning the church, like disinfecting the hands and other personal items. We will inform you about the additional orders later. But, if you have prepared some disinfectant in your parish, please use it first.

Fr. Shiro Komatsu
Administrator
Catholic Sendai Diocese

RESUMPTION OF CHURCH ACTIVITIES

Starting July 5th (14th Sunday of the year), Holy Mass will resume, including meetings, lectures and other church-related activities. However, we need to take adequate precautionary measures against COVID-19.

In addition, those who wish to refrain from participating in church activities, like the elderly, people with chronic diseases, people who are worried of getting infection, will be exempted from going to mass on Sundays.

- You are obliged to wear mask. (A spare mask is provided to those who forget to bring it.)
- Refrain from using the holy water font/vessel at the entrance of the church in order to prevent infection through contact.
- Disinfectant is provided at the entrance of the church, please disinfect your hands properly.
- Maximize the use of space in the church. If the church has an extra room, use it extensively and properly.
- When seated in the church, observe social distancing.
- **Limit the number of people who can enter the church. For those churches with many church-goers, consider ways to increase the number of masses.**
- Refrain from singing during holy mass.
- Individuals should refrain from putting host in the ciborium. (There will be enough host put in the ciborium for everyone ahead of time.)
- When receiving communion, please observe physical distancing and take the communion in the hand, **not** on the mouth.
- The priest should try to maintain brief homily and keep the mass as short as possible.
- In gatherings, other than the Holy Mass, **try to avoid the following C's**: closed spaces with poor ventilation, crowded places with many people nearby and close-contact setting like close range conversation.
- The same measures apply to the weekly masses in the different convent.
- For summer, consider a balance between having enough ventilation (to control infection) and keeping the room cooler (to avoid heat stroke).

Please read this notice carefully in each parish. Discuss this matter with your pastoral (priest) team and create various measures vis-à-vis the resumption of church mass. 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 Presbyterian Steering Committee meeting held on June 9th and it has been approved by the Sendai Diocesan Advisory Board.