


December 1, 2023

Dear Sisters and Brothers of Sendai Diocese,

 Peace of the Lord

The Advent Season, which is a time of preparation for the Nativity of the Lord, is here. Let us spend this liturgical season through prayer and good works.

Since **COVID-19** has been changed to “category 5 infectious disease” and the government has eased its directives, church activities are returning to normal.

In light of the opinion of Catholic Medical Association of Sendai regarding the new coronavirus, and having consulted the guidelines of other dioceses, I announce the following **COVID-19 MEASURES** as part of our efforts at preventing infection from the said virus. Please consider carefully your own particular situation as you apply these measures.

1. Regarding Sunday Masses, wake funerals, sacraments other than Mass, study groups, music concerts, etc. at Parishes
 - a. Masks
 - ◇ The wearing of masks is in principle optional at places that are ventilated and not overcrowded, and where the volume of voices is at the level of normal conversation.
 - ◇ If all members sing together, the wearing of masks is recommended. Priests are asked to wear mask from offertory to communion. Commentators and readers do not need to wear masks.
 - b. Disinfection
 - ◇ Place disinfectants near the entrance for the use of those who want to.
 - ◇ Priests and ministers are asked to disinfect their hands before administering Holy Communion. The faithful are also asked to disinfect their hands before receiving Holy Communion. It is not necessary to disinfect the pews after Mass.
 - c. Holy Water Fonts may be used.
2. Superiors of religious houses and heads of institutions other than parishes are responsible for deciding about the holding of masses or gatherings at their respective places taking into consideration the measures stated above.

For various reasons some people may or may not be able to wear mask. Please be considerate and understanding of each person's situation in order to avoid criticism or discrimination because of our concern about infection prevention.

Yours in Christ,

Edgar Gacutan
Bishop of Sendai