

# 宗教法人 カトリック札幌司教区

CATHOLIC BISHOP'S RESIDENCE  
10 HIGASHI 6 CHOME KITA 1 JO  
CHUO-KU, SAPPORO, 060-0031 JAPAN



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To the Clergy, Religious and Laity of the Catholic Church in Sapporo Diocese

Bernard Taiji Katsuya  
Bishop of Roman Catholic Diocese of Sapporo

• **Extension of the cancellation period of public masses in Sapporo Diocese due to the coronavirus outbreak** •

Sapporo Diocese has suspended Mass and other activities to help contain the spread of COVID-19, the respiratory disease caused by the coronavirus started in February 27<sup>th</sup>. I am afraid this requires a great deal of sacrifice on your part, but still the COVID-19 virus persists in our community. Moreover, school closures have been extended, further events and gatherings have been suspended, and efforts are being made to prevent further spread of COVID-19.

Keeping this in consideration, I would like to extend the period of cancellation of Masses as follows. Thank you in advance for your cooperation:

• **Sapporo Diocese will extend the period of suspended Mass and other activities until April 4<sup>th</sup> ( the day before the Sunday of the Passion/ Palm Sunday.) As with the previous notice, you will be exempt from your duty to attend the Mass on Sundays and the Feast days.**

However, if the following conditions are met, Masses and Gatherings will not be suspended. **Please note the following regarding Masses and meetings held by small numbers of participants.**

Experts point out that a small group of 10 to 20 people (cluster infection) occurs in various parts of Hokkaido. And it shows **three conditions** that increase the risk of cluster infection.

- **Closed spaces and poor ventilation**
- **People being within arm's reach with each other.**
- **Short-range conversations and speaking**

Keeping these above points in mind, Masses in the local parish church of only 10 people and Masses of many parishes on weekdays may be allowed at the discretion of

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the priest if the following conditions are met.

- **Mass should not be offered in a small room such as a small oratory or sacristy.**
- **Proper ventilation must be confirmed.**
- **Confirmation of adequate space between participants (beyond arm's length).**

## To All in the Sapporo Diocese

The recent coronavirus outbreak has quickly grown to a crisis unparalleled in recent history. Now the world is working hard to avoid a complete pandemic. We, with our faith in Christ, are forced to sacrifice not attending Mass during Lent. This includes not only the Sapporo Diocese, but also other dioceses across Japan, and many dioceses around the world, including the Roman Dioceses. We all share in this suffering. Assemblies have also been suspended in the Vatican, and Pope Francis has sent a video message entreating people to avoid visiting Vatican Square.

This most extraordinary phenomenon is a great ordeal for us, but at the same time it is the biggest ordeal to face the sacrifice of Lent in solidarity with many of those who are suffering. Many of us cannot receive the Eucharist during this period. However, the masses are being offered in churches.

"It (Mass offered by a priest) is not only for the priest's spiritual life, but also for the good of the church and the world. Because "even if the believers cannot attend, the thanksgiving is the act of Christ and the act of the church."

From Pope John Paul II's encyclical "Eucharist That Gives Life to the Church"

You are part of this Church community, even if you are unable to participate in masses, with the firm belief that you are part of the body of Christ, who is one with the World Community of Church, that is itself one body. That is the spiritual Communion in prayer.

Pope Francisco is inviting us to pray for patients suffering from infection and for those in the medical community who are working with absolute dedication to helping others. For the rest of Lent, let us be united in this diocese in prayer and sacrifice so that the world can overcome this crisis.

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Some are asking for Mass on line as a help for spiritual Communion, but we cannot afford to do so in our Diocese., due to facilities and personnel. Instead, please find online Masses broadcasted by Tokyo Diocese.