

12 May 2020

Dear Priests and People, tēnā koutou

Church activities in restricted Alert Level 2

Following the announcement on Monday afternoon that our country will move to a restricted Alert Level 2 on Thursday of this week, we write to you to clarify the pastoral implications of this decision.

The move to a restrictive Level 2 allows many of our parish activities to resume, including churches opening for private prayer and the Sacrament of Reconciliation. But because of the gathering restriction of 10 people, we bishops have reluctantly agreed that public Masses will not commence again during this stage of Level 2 and we are not advocating Eucharistic Adoration at this time.

We note that the Government will reconsider this restriction in two weeks, and we have joined with the Anglican Church today in asking the Government to look again with urgency at the restrictive numbers permitted for religious gatherings. Like yourselves, we too are disappointed that we are not yet allowed to assemble in our churches in groups larger than 10 people.

For churches to open from Thursday, all health and safety requirements as declared by the Ministry of Health must be adhered to strictly. Safety has always been paramount for us. We understand that many churches may not be able to open as early as this week if parish leadership needs more time to prepare. We are supportive of parishes making decisions fit for the safety of their church community.

While these have been difficult weeks for all, we know that in some surprising ways they have also been graced days for many. We have been encouraged and inspired by the number of people who have taken the opportunity during this lockdown time to deepen their spiritual life and reevaluate their daily lives as individuals and families.

Yours sincerely in Christ our Hope,
Mā te Atua koutou e manaaki, e tiaki

- ✠ Patrick Dunn, Bishop of Auckland and NZCBC President**
- ✠ John Dew, Cardinal Archbishop of Wellington and NZCBC Vice President**
- ✠ Stephen Lowe, Bishop of Hamilton and NZCBC Secretary**
- ✠ Paul Martin SM, Bishop of Christchurch**
- ✠ Michael Dooley, Bishop of Dunedin**
- ✠ Michael Gielen, Auxiliary Bishop of Auckland**