



# Archbishop of Wellington

PO Box 1937, Wellington 6140, New Zealand

21 September 2021

Dear People of God

Greetings and all good wishes to you all.

Thank you for your patience during these days of the various lockdown levels we have been in over recent weeks and still are at this Level 2.

Thank you too for the creative ways you have joined in prayer and continued to pray and reflect on the scriptures while we have not been able to gather for Mass. I hope too that this time has been an opportunity for you to pray in new and different ways with your families and wider bubbles you belong to.

Now that we know that we are going to be at Level 2 for the near future I write to say that I have consulted the Council of Priests and we have agreed to stay with the current arrangement of NO MASSES in the meantime. I will update parishes again on 5 October.

The reason for this is that the Delta variant of Covid19 is very highly transmissible and we have the responsibility to take care of each other and ensure that the virus is not passed on.

Some people have asked why I have made these decisions over recent weeks. Following is the Canon Law advice I have received.

*Rights in the Church are not absolute in matters such as receiving communion on the tongue. Bishops sometimes have a responsibility to issue directives during pandemics such as the one caused by Covid19 especially in regard to the health and welfare of other people. Jesus told us that we have to love our neighbour as ourselves. Love of neighbour obviously includes doing our best to protect others from infections that threaten their health or even their lives. For reasons such as these the final canon in the section of rights reminds all the faithful that their rights are not absolute and they must consider the common good of the Church and all other members of Christ's faithful.*

**Can. 223 §1** In exercising their rights, Christ's faithful, both individually and in associations, must take account of the common good of the Church, as well as the rights of others and their own duties to others.

§2 Ecclesiastical authority is entitled to regulate, in view of the common good, the exercise of rights which are proper to Christ's faithful.

Most important at this time, is prayer for one another, vigilance in the ways we try to keep one another safe and patience and kindness. Today on the feast of St Matthew we reflect on the words of Jesus "*what I want is Mercy not sacrifice*". This is a time to be kind and merciful and to remember that public safety is more important than personal preferences.

I thank you all for your understanding and for your prayerful support.

Please continue to keep yourself and others safe.

With all good wishes and every blessing.

Yours sincerely in the Lord

John A Cardinal Dew

Archbishop of Wellington