



12 August 2020

Tēnā koutou Priests and Parish Leadership,

Following the announcements that the Auckland Region has moved to **Alert Level 3** and the rest of the country to **Alert Level 2** from noon today, we write to you about the pastoral implications. The new Levels apply until at least midnight on Friday. The Government has promised to give updates before then whether these Levels will remain or change. This letter assumes they will continue at least until next week. We will provide additional updates as needed.

Under Alert Level 3, Churches must close, except for small, private weddings and funerals of up to 10 people. Physical distancing and public health measures must be maintained.

Under Alert Level 2, religious gatherings are restricted to a maximum of 100 people. It will be up to dioceses and parishes to decide whether weekday or Sunday Mass can continue with this restriction. It may not be possible to have 100 people in a small church. Not all parishioners will be able to attend Mass in many larger parishes. Others will not attend due to health reasons, concerns or fears. For these reasons, the dispensation of attendance at Sunday Mass will be in place.

During Alert Level 2, Mass restrictions are:

- At the Sign of Peace, people should avoid shaking hands or other contact with one another, and instead smile, nod or bow to one another.
- Holy Communion is not to be distributed from the chalice.
- Communion is only to be distributed in the hand, not on the tongue.
- Holy water is to be removed from vessels at the church door.

Should any part of the country be returned to **Alert Level 1** (subject to any changes in Government policy for this level) our advice will continue that Mass may recommence so long as Ministry of Health guidelines are met; any Mass and Communion restrictions are to be determined by the diocese or parish.

We know this is a challenging time for many people, the more so because this reimposing of restrictions follows more than 100 days of national hope and gratitude for the absence of community transmission. Our thanks and prayers go to you all for your wonderful work and witness during this pandemic.

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**