



Eucharistic Celebrations

Dear Parishioners

The time we are currently in presents us all with great challenges, but also great opportunities. I believe that by the end of this crisis, whenever that may occur, the Australian people will be more responsive to each other, more reflective, more gracious, and humbler.

That of course presents the church with an opportunity **now** to discover new ways to speak of the essential realities of our faith: our need for God who is ever-present, for daily conversion, with a clear understanding that the *face of God is Mercy*. Francis of Assisi spoke of penance as being the restoration of “right relationships”, of healing the disturbances between each of us. Now is the time for us to focus on the core of our faith and to assist all people to love one another, in practical ways, in the places where we live. This we must do; this we can do.

Before we reach the time when we can again live life through normal forms of gathering, we all need to work together with the primary goal of protecting people from the Coronavirus (COVID-19). We need to act on the advice of the Chief Medical Officers and of the Prime Minister. We need to take seriously the clear but ever-changing warnings about mass gatherings. We need to keep up to date with the latest recommendations from the experts who are advising all community leaders.

The three parishes for which we are responsible—Paddington, Edgecliff (Double Bay), Waverley—consist of mainly older people. This reality gives us the added responsibility to consider carefully how we gather and how we minister.

The Premier of New South Wales recently said that she wants to act according to a “No Regrets” policy. She does not want to reach the end of this crisis knowing that she should have acted sooner and in a more cautious manner. I am of the same mind. I do not want to see an outbreak of COVID-19 where the centre of contagion is seen to be one of the parishes where we minister, or where the spread of the virus to retirement villages is traced back to a Eucharistic Celebration linked to Paddington, Edgecliff or Waverley.

I believe that we cannot satisfy the necessary directions of social distancing within our parish communities during Eucharistic Celebrations.

On that basis, and after consultation with each of the parish priests, I have judged it prudent not to hold Eucharistic Celebrations in the three parishes and so I have instructed our priests to cease the public celebration of the Eucharist in the three churches where we minister.

Provincial Minister

Order of Friars Minor | Province of the Holy Spirit

Incorporating the Custody of St Anthony (Malaysia, Singapore, Brunei) and the Region of St Andrew (Aotearoa—New Zealand)

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We have a primary responsibility to protect the health and wellbeing of our parishioners. Reflecting on the outbreaks that have occurred at the Ryde Church of Christ event, at the Dorothy Henderson Lodge in Macquarie Park, and at recent weddings, **we are justifiably cautious about the health and wellbeing of our aging community of faith.**

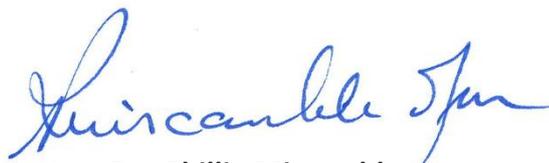
I hope you understand and respect the decision we have taken. It is in line with the most recent advice from the Chief Medical Officer, and decisions taken within other dioceses within the Province of New South Wales, and in Queensland and Victoria. It is a precautionary decision which **considers carefully the demography and needs of parishioners here at Paddington, Edgecliff and Waverley.**

I pray, as we all do, that this COVID-19 crisis will soon end. But I also pray that we will discover new ways to share our faith on an individual basis, in smaller groups, and through the Internet and the various forms of social media.

We have learnt much from overseas experiences with COVID-19. Our Friars in Singapore ceased public Eucharistic Celebrations at St Mary of the Angels Parish Church some 4 weeks ago. They have discovered very positive ways to share the message that we all cherish. I am sure we will do the same.

I pray especially for the leadership of our parishes and for the church in Australia. May we gain strength from our faith and be resolute in our conviction that God can be always be found in the everyday struggles that we face.

Pax et Bonum!



Very Rev Phillip Miscamble OFM
Provincial Minister

21 March 2020

