

宗教法人 カトリック札幌司教区

CATHOLIC BISHOP'S RESIDENCE
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May 13, 2021

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

Bernard Taiji Katsuya
Bishop of Roman Catholic Diocese of Sapporo

Circular about self-restraint of masses, meetings, etc. in Sapporo Diocese due to the spread of coronavirus infection (No. 5)

As you all know, the spread of new variants of COVID-19 infection in Sapporo Diocese has become more serious. So far, there have been no reports of infections originating from the parish churches. Thank you all for your efforts. However, as there are some who tested positive and some who've had close contact with people infected, I hear that it is difficult for each parish to make a decision.

The other day, I notified the "Guidelines for the Catholic Church in Japan for dealing with infectious Diseases" from the Catholic Bishops' Conference of Japan and announced that it was in Phase two. But then, the Governor of Hokkaido issued "Semi-emergency coronavirus measures," and it was decided that this would be done sequentially until the end of May. In response to this, the Sapporo Diocese has decided that we are in Phase 3 (Steps to take when an infectious disease is spreading in Japan and the government has declared a state of emergency and requested refraining from business and unnecessary movement).

Sapporo Diocese has suspended Masses with congregation and other activities (Masses without congregation may be celebrated) and dispense all Catholics from the obligation to attend Mass.

Also postponed are the Sacraments of Baptism, Matrimony and Penance Will. The Sacrament of Anointing of the Sick should be administered only in case of emergency and with proper measures against infection.

Funerals should be planned in consultation with the bereaved to include sufficient measures against infection. Consideration should be given to cremating the remains but postponing the funeral to a later date. I am afraid this requires a great deal of sacrifice on your part, but still the COVID-19 virus persists in our community.

However, there are regional differences in the Sapporo Diocese, so please act according to the following regarding the above measures.

- Please ensure that the above contents are thoroughly implemented in the areas in and around Sapporo city and the urban areas in each district.
- For parishes outside Sapporo city and outside the urban areas of each district, please judge whether sufficient measures are being taken daily against infection, and the comings and goings of priests, and overall careful decision-making.
- In cases where it is difficult to make a decision, please consult with the head

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priest of the district and the pastor of the parish.

This measure exempts those faithful who are unable to attend Sunday Mass from the obligation to attend the Sunday Mass. We also exempt any elderly who feel anxious about their health or have anxiety about chronic illness.

Lastly, as I had mentioned in the previous circular, I would like to ask for sufficient consideration and support as a parish community to see if there are any people in need of support in their daily lives who are being left behind, during this restriction of church activities. And even if the Mass on Sunday is canceled, priests are offering Masses for the people of the parish, so please be united with them in prayer.

This measure will last until the end of May. If the situation changes after that and an extension occurs, we will notify you again.

May God's abundant grace be with you!