

**The 7th LETTER OF THE BISHOP ON THE PRECAUTIONARY MEASURES
PREVENTING CORONA VIRUS INFECTIONS**

The Right Reverend Mario Yamanouchi, Bishop of Saitama
April 23rd , 2020

Dear my brothers and sisters in the Diocese of Saitama:

I am sorry that we cannot see any of signs of the ceasing of spreading of the Novel Corona virus infections even after the “Emergency Measures” were issued by the Government, which has now extended to all over Japan. I would like to wish all of you my warmest Easter greetings, who spent the recent time, even the Holy Week, without participating at the mass but with special prayers, following the precautionary measures issued by the Diocese. The Diocesan Advisory Committee held through internet have made the following decisions for the time up to the end of May.

1. The term of the suspension of the public masses will be extended until Saturday, 30th May, just the day before Pentecost.

2. The cancellations of the following Diocesan meetings:

•The Diocesan meeting of those involved in the Diocesan ministry (originally planned between 15th and 17th June)

(The preparation for that meeting will be continued. When the time would come, the meeting would be held, but with the rearranged dates.)

•The Diocesan committee for the ministry and pastoral care (19th July)

•The joint meditation sessions of the Diocese of Saitama with the Diocese of Niigata (21st to 25th September)

•The Diocesan meeting of the priests and deacons (30th November to 1st December)

(If the spread of the Novel Corona Virus ceased by then, the meeting above would be held around that time.)

3. The following precautionary measures remain the same.

The principal policies against the prevention for the Novel Corona Virus are the same, that is, as follows:

- 1) To avoid staying in the small and closed spaces, and gathering close together, as well as meeting without proper distances.
- 2) To avoid going out or traveling without necessary reasons or emergencies.

We should think of those involved in medical cares, such as medical doctors and medical nurses, who have accepted and been caring for the patients infected with the Novel Corona Virus, or of those working at nursing homes. They are working hard even while they are facing at risk of the infections. Again, thinking of them, we should pray hard for them and keep all the precautionary measures strictly as possible ourselves.

Re-affirmation of the following instructions already given beforehand.

- 1) For the Sunday Masses during the time above, all the faithful of Saitama Diocese will be dispensed from their obligation to attend them.
- 2) Baptisms will be kindly postponed.
- 3) The Sacrament of Reconciliation will not be given, except the times of emergencies, such as at people's death bed.
- 4) The Sacrament of Anointing of the Sick can be given, but with special cares.
- 5) Funerals may be proceeded with taking precautionary measures against infections, such as to avoid staying in the small and closed spaces, and gathering close together, as well as meeting without proper distances.
- 6) Weddings may be kindly postponed until the time when the spread of the Novel Corona Virus would have ceased.
- 7) Public events or gatherings other than masses will be kindly postponed or even cancelled.
- 8) The daily masses will be said privately by the priest alone at his private room in the presbytery, not in the church.

(To the priests: Not allow the people to join in the mass above.)

- 9) The churches will be open to the people who wish to come to pray there. However, please avoid staying in the small and closed spaces, and gathering close together, as well as meeting without proper distances. Therefore, please not come together with others. We cannot sterilize the church all the time, so I advise you to gargle and wash your hands after you return home.
- 10) You may find the weekly leaflets 'The Liturgy and the Bible' at the church's entrance, so take them and use them for your sake.
- 11) The Bishop's homily for Sundays will be up on the Diocesan webpage every following Tuesday.
- 12) If your Parish runs the webpage, it may be a good idea that you may have your Parish priest's homily for Sundays on your webpage.

4. The commencing of the urgent appeal for those who suffer from the Novel Corona Virus Infections to be run by the Caritas Japan.

Your kind donations will be used for the following services:

- 1) For the international support through the Caritas International for those who suffer from the Virus or those in difficulties in this situation worldwide.
- 2) For the domestic support through the Caritas Japan for the groups with all sorts of activities for the prevention of the spread of the Novel Corona Virus Infections or for supporting for those in difficulties or in need.

Please send your kind donations directly to the Caritas Japan, and its details are as follows:

The postal transfer account of the Caritas Japan: 00170-5-95979.

The name of the subscriber: The Caritas Japan / The Catholic Bishops' Conference of Japan.

Please make sure, you will be asked to write in its note clearly such as 'The Novel Corona Virus Donations'.

Also, if you are registered with the internet services with the Japan Post Bank for 'Yucho-Direct', your client number is 6257.

5. The Diocese will start to discuss the matters concerning the remarkable decline of the mass offerings at the Diocesan parishes.

The Diocese of Saitama consists of the congregations with many nationalities. Therefore, the finances of the Diocese heavily depend on the mass offerings at the Diocesan parishes. Because of the suspension of the public masses for such a long time, many parishes are struggling with the remarkable decline of the mass offering. With regard to that, the Diocese will start to consider the way to maintain the finances of the Diocese, which may include the possible reduction of the parochial contributions for the Diocese and for the priests, and of the expenses of the Diocese, as well as of the allowances for the priests.