

**The 12th LETTER OF THE BISHOP ON THE PRECAUTIONARY MEASURES
PREVENTING CORONA VIRUS INFECTIONS**

The Right Reverend Mario Yamanouchi, Bishop of Saitama
September 24th, 2020

Three months have already passed without serious troubles after we gradually and carefully resumed the Sunday masses in the Diocese. I am grateful to all of you in my Diocese for your understanding and cooperation. Although the spreading of the Corona-virus infections has not ceased yet, the situation has, thank God, become a little stable. I have, therefore, decided to make the further step towards the lifting of some restrictions for the church activities. Now, I will lift the age limit for the Sunday masses after very much careful considerations as it should be. I am most grateful to all the faithful, particularly, over 65 for their sacrificial patience as they have stayed at home until now. I am afraid that the rest of the restrictions will remain the same. I pray that I would be able to make further decisions for lifting of some other restrictions in November. For that, I thank you very much for your cooperation in advice.

**From the First Sunday of October, October 4th,
the Age Limit for Sunday Masses will be Lifted.**

The rest of the restrictions will remain the same.

To make sure to prevent the spread of the virus infections in all the parishes, I will restate some important precautions measures for you and will ask you to put them into practice with the careful considerations consulting the particular situations of your parish. And those are as follows.

- 1. Although the age limit will be lifted, the elderly and those who have chronic diseases, those with temperature, or those without confidence in their health will be advised to continually stay at home and pray from there, taking very care of your given life first.**
- 2. All the faithful in the Diocese will be continually dispensed from the obligation to attend the Sunday masses.**

3. **To celebrate the one Sunday mass (in Japanese or multilingual) and the Vigil mass on Saturday evenings will be allowed open to the public. In the parishes with a good number of the congregation, to attend at the Saturday vigil masses may be recommended to your parishioners. Now, because of the lifting of the age limit, the number of the mass attendants may increase in most of parishes, I ask you to take careful preparations for preventing for the virus infections.**
4. **You will be asked to join the mass in your Parish, not in other Parishes.**
5. **The weekday masses will be continually not open to the public.**
6. **For the baptisms or the anointment with the holy oils in case of emergency, and the sacrament of reconciliation will be put into practice with special cares. The confirmation by the Bishop will not be celebrated for the time being. If needed in case of emergency, it could be done only with the permission from the Bishop. Consult the parish priest first, please.**

The further advisory in details

- 1) First of all, these will still be the most important principles to avoid the congestions in the closed rooms and to keep a distance to each other. You will also be asked to wear face masks, to wash hands, to sterilize the church. Those should be done not only at the masses but for all the church activities.
- 2) To make sure to keep a distance to each other over 1.5 meters at the church. If those above including 1) are not possible, the church will not be allowed to use for the liturgical celebrations. If you have a hall wider than the church, you may use it for Sunday masses.
- 3) To wash hands, to wear face masks (for the congregation as well as for the priests and the readers), to keep a distance to each other, to ventilate at the church should be done. Also, to sterilize the door handles as much as possible.
- 4) Not to use the Holy Water Fonts.
- 5) Refrain from singing the hymns together at the masses and at any gatherings, except playing the organ or singing a sole, keeping a distance from the congregation.
- 6) Not to take offertory processions during the mass.
- 7) Not to take the collection of the offering during the mass. You will be advised to place the offering boxes at the church entrance for instance.
- 8) During the greetings of peace, not to shake hands nor to hug each other.

- 9) The congregation will be asked to write their names, addresses, contact numbers and their temperature at the church entrance. For that it will be advised to prepare the mass cards or the special registration book for the mass attendants. These records will only be used to report to and to cooperate with the local health authority strictly in the case that the infections might occur at the church. These records will be kept very carefully at the church as those contain private information.
- 10) To avoid the congestions during the time of entering the church and the recession from there.
- 11) To refrain the meetings or gatherings rather than masses for the time being, or to take those meetings just for short time with the small numbers of the people (less than 10 persons), following the precautious measures. You will be advised not to start the preparation classes for the candidates for baptism or the bible study classes until you can strictly follow the principle precautious measures otherwise.