

**The 13th LETTER OF THE BISHOP ON THE PRECAUTIONARY MEASURES
PREVENTING CORONA VIRUS INFECTIONS**

The Right Reverend Mario Yamanouchi, Bishop of Saitama
October 27th, 2020

One month has passed since the age limit for Sunday Masses was lifted without serious troubles but with your understanding and cooperation. We have now decided to allow you to celebrate the weekday masses with the congregation as the situation of the spreading of the corona-virus infections seems stable at present moment.

**From the First Week of November, you will be allowed to celebrate
Weekday Masses with the congregation.**

The remaining two restrictions below will, however, be the same.

- 1. You will be allowed to celebrate one Sunday mass and one Sunday Vigil mass on Saturday evening with the congregation.**
- 2. You will be allowed to celebrate the mass multilingually, so-called ‘international mass’, but not masses in foreign languages only.**

The definition of ‘International mass’, that is, the multilanguage mass is: the mass celebrated in Japanese with the basic mass text, but with the readings and intercessions, possibly, in the different languages.

I ask you, particularly, in the parishes with quite a few foreign members to be patient a little while, keeping the social distancing and so on, please.

Concerning the Christmas celebrations

You will be allowed to celebrate up to two masses each both on the Christmas eve and on the Christmas day. However, you will not be permitted to have a drink or food together at the Church, including the Christmas party. (In case we have any sign indicating the further spreading of the corona virus, I will give you further instructions.)

Some important precautions measures (restated)

To make sure to prevent the spreading of the corona 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. 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, 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.