

November 5, 2020

Dear people of the diocese

Thomas Aquinas Manyo Cardinal Maeda
Archbishop

**On precautionary measures against the spread of
Novel Coronavirus (COVID-19) infection
(Part 9)**

+Peace of the Lord

We now welcome the month of November and preparations for Christmas have finally started as well. Although it has been a year threatened by the Coronavirus pandemic, it is also a year after the visit of His Holiness Pope Francis to Japan. As such, let us once more put in our hearts the theme of His Holiness' visit: "Protect All Life." Moreover, let us all together lead a life in response to Pope Francis' call through His Holiness' publications "Life After the Pandemic" and "*Fratelli Tutti*." Everyone is at risk of getting infected. "Without discriminating and rejecting those infected," "let us spend Christmas with Corona" praying that we may welcome a New Year free from the Coronavirus infection.

With regard to the Novel Coronavirus infection, the Catholic Bishops' Conference of Japan issued "Guidelines in the Event of Outbreak of New Infectious Diseases in the Catholic Church" (which will be referred to as "guidelines" henceforth). Basing on these guidelines, the Archdiocese of Osaka are issuing the following announcements. However, as this is a recommendation addressed to the whole diocese, in general, actual implementation will still rely on each parish and facility.

1. As the current situation qualifies in "④Continuation of the prevalence of infectious disease within the country" of pages 2-3 of the guidelines, as much as possible, follow the points that are written there. With regard to sacraments, refer to page 4 onwards of "Appendix: Guidelines on Sacraments and Liturgy During the Outbreak of New Infectious Diseases" and adapt them accordingly to the circumstances of each place.
2. Everyone in the diocese are continuously granted exemption from fulfilling their obligation to hear mass on Sundays and holy days of obligation (December 25, Solemnity of the Nativity of the Lord and January 1, Solemnity of Mary, Mother of God).
3. With regard to the seating capacity of the venues for masses and gatherings,

the guidelines instruct everyone “to maintain social distancing.” Please refer to the national and local government announcement that, in general, “if possible, maintain a distance of 2 meters or at least 1 meter.” Furthermore, although it has been announced that “it is possible to use the maximum seating capacity in case that no speaking is involved,” as it is considered difficult to maintain proper ventilation during winter, just please pay attention instead, to use up to half the seating capacity of the venue while maintaining social distance.

4. It is indicated in the guidelines that people should “refrain from receiving Holy Communion by tongue” (page 3) and that people should “cooperate in receiving Holy Communion by standing and receiving by hand” (page 5). But if someone wishes to receive Holy Communion by tongue, please consult with the priest beforehand, so that you can fall in line at the very end of the communion line or consider the possibility of receiving Holy Communion after the mass.
5. In the unlikely event of an outbreak of infection, a need to respond to the request of the health care center will arise. To address that, prepare in advance the information of people attending mass and gatherings. Please take utmost care in handling personal information and make sure to dispose them off at a later time (around after 2 weeks.)
6. In case that new infections have occurred during church activities, please immediately notify the health care center and follow their instructions. After which, please notify the diocese through the pastoral worker in-charge of your area. If necessary, announcements within and outside the church will be done by the diocese.
7. Everyone is at risk of getting infected. In the unlikely event of an infection, please follow the instructions of the health care center and be careful in protecting the privacy of the infected person.
8. Lastly, we would like to express our sincere gratitude to all the people concerned who continue to give consideration to all aspects of church activities in a situation that has been prolonged and the prospect of termination is still uncertain. From now on, let us show everyone the image of a new church that protects all life while giving priority to consider those people in vulnerable situations.

* Translations of the diocese’s announcement (Part 9) into major foreign languages will be posted in the homepage.