



# Archdiocese of Cape Town

Office of the Auxiliary Bishop of Cape Town

## Lockdown level three revised: Update

At the outset, we wish to thank all concerned for the cooperation, patience and understanding shown during a rather difficult period in our faith life. Happily with the announcement made by President Ramaphosa on the evening of 1<sup>st</sup> February 2021, we can immediately begin to re-open our Churches for worship and resume the celebration of the sacraments.

### Masses and liturgical celebrations with a congregation

Even though the State stipulates a maximum of fifty persons, we continue to make use of our previously established norm that we cater for no more than thirty percent of the church's seating capacity, provided the maximum of fifty persons is maintained. All safety protocols – especially the wearing of face masks, social distancing and hand sanitizing are to be observed. The faithful may, because of restrictions on numbers, choose to attend a weekday Mass *in lieu* of a Sunday celebration. This is to be encouraged and where necessary catechesis ought to be given.

Singing at Mass is to be prohibited. However where a soloist can safely sing at any celebration this ought to be allowed. The soloist will have to wear a face mask and be away from others. No other singing is permitted as we have been reliably informed that with the new strain being airborne and very virulent singing poses a definite threat. Live streamed Masses are encouraged and the dispensation from the obligation to attend Sunday Mass is extended until such time greater safety is assured.

Sufficient time must be allowed to properly sanitize the premises where there are more than one celebration per day. It must be mentioned that proper ventilation is crucial during this time of danger.

**Baptisms** We depend on the integrity of the Parish Priest/Administrator in minimizing the attendance at Baptisms and to baptize one child per liturgy (unless of course there are fraternal siblings such as twins, triplets, etc.). Parishes will have to arrange baptisms outside the context of the Eucharist. Reduced numbers are advised and all safety protocols will have to be observed.

**Penance and reconciliation** ought to be encouraged and celebrated using the format for individual confessions. We leave it to the discretion of the Parish Priests to decide how this can be safely carried out.

**Anointing of the sick** is encouraged provided it is done on an individual basis. All the safety protocols as indicated in previous directives must be maintained. Where hospitals prevent such a celebration, their protocols must be observed. The same applies to taking communion to the sick.

**The Sacrament of Confirmation** will be celebrated after the Easter celebrations. Only in cases where there is a carry over from the period of the lockdown when churches had to be closed, we will make an exception and confirm during the first five weeks of Lent. Parish Priests/Administrators are requested to consult with the Chancery in this regard.

**The Sacrament of Holy Matrimony.** With respect to Marriages we include an excerpt from a notice received from the WC Government on 2<sup>nd</sup> February: “weddings can only take place inside a religious institution with a limit of 50 persons only. No weddings will be allowed outside any religious institutions as it is regarded as a gathering”. We appeal to our clergy ministering at weddings to strictly observe all

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the safety protocols and the thirty percent norm outlined above. We depend on the integrity of the Parish Priest/Administrator and request that issues of special requests be handled in the Parish and not be referred to the Chancery.

A further notification received from the WCG on 2<sup>nd</sup> February offers guidelines for the **registration of marriages**: “External Marriage Officers may however proceed with the solemnizing of marriages but hold back on the submission of the DHA-30 register to the DHA Front Office until 15 Feb 2021. No external marriage officer will be penalized for doing so.”

**Funerals** may be conducted provided the thirty percent norm with a maximum of fifty as previously mentioned is followed. With respect to Covid-19 funerals, undertakers have been issued with guidelines and these will have to be followed. Parish Priests/Administrators are requested to counsel the faithful to dialogue with the undertakers prior to the funeral.

In all cases, whether celebrating any of the sacraments or a funeral, brevity must be observed. Homilies must of necessity be curtailed to include only what is essential for growth in the faith.

#### **Meetings, gatherings and catechesis.**

Whereas, State permission has been granted for worship in established religious spaces, no other meetings or gatherings will be allowed. Catechism, not being worship but an educational activity, will have to be re-worked. Lessons in user friendly format ought to be developed and sent to parents so that home based catechesis could continue. Parents are the first teachers of the faith and in this time could be the only teachers. Parish Priests/Administrators, in collaboration with catechists, ought to formulate plans that are manageable in their contexts. Where audio-visual aids are possible these methods ought to be employed. We rely on the integrity and creativity of the Parish Priests/Administrators to attend to this crucial area of parish life.

#### **Vaccines**

We have recently sent out a directive regarding the moral issues surrounding the vaccines and are grateful that the anticipated vaccines have at last reached our shores, with the promise of more to come in the months ahead. Pope Francis who himself has been vaccinated, has recommended being inoculated in the interest of the common good and we encourage all to establish what needs to be done to ensure that they are vaccinated.

#### **Conclusion**

As the year rolls on we continue to pray that it may unfold with many blessings for us all. We conclude by thanking all concerned for their patience and understanding during this difficult time and reaffirm our stance of protecting life at all stages of its development.

Sincerely,



Bishop Sylvester David OMI  
Vicar General/Auxiliary Bishop



2<sup>nd</sup> February 2021