

PASTORAL MESSAGE FROM OUR PARISH PRIEST FR DAVID

“For God has not given us a spirit of fear, but of power, love, and self-control.”

2 Timothy 1:7

Dear parishioners

Due to the COVID-19 coronavirus pandemic and the measures put in place by the Federal and State governments to slow the spread of the virus, especially to those most vulnerable, Bishop Brian Mascord has released a pastoral statement and directives for all parishes in our Diocese of Wollongong (available here: <https://www.dow.org.au/covid-19/>). The most significant directive for us in our parish is that **all public Masses are now suspended**. Our Bishop did not make this decision lightly. Most Catholic dioceses around Australia have suspended Masses, as have many dioceses around the world.

Public Masses are suspended not out of an “abundance of caution”, but out of “an abundance of love!” We of all people, led by Jesus Christ who commanded us to “love your neighbour as yourself” (Mark 12:31), need to be led by self-sacrificial love and care for everyone in our community. In making this decision, we are especially mindful of those most vulnerable to the worst consequences of COVID-19: our seniors, and those who have compromised immune systems. We suspend our public Masses to slow down the spread of this virus, so that our health system can cope, and *all* members of our community are protected.

Just because our public Masses are suspended does not mean that God is suspended. Our need for God, for spiritual nourishment, and for our Catholic community life is not suspended. Rather, in these times of uncertainty, sickness, social isolation, and widespread anxiety, we need more than ever to stand on “God our rock” (Psalm 18:2). That is why we in our parish are going to be livestreaming Masses and providing you with suggestions on how to take ownership of your faith life, to be Catholic Christians while we can’t come to church.

Most important – spiritual communion. During this time of suspended public Masses, the Eucharist – the source and summit of our Catholic faith – will be physically unavailable to most of us. But God, who is the heart of the Eucharist, is not unavailable. He loves us, and gives himself to us in the Eucharist, and will not fail to give himself to us if we offer him the opportunity. That is why, during livestreamed Masses and our private times of prayer, from our living rooms and bedrooms, we can make a “Prayer of Spiritual Communion” (as outlined on the back of this leaflet) to unite ourselves with him who gave everything for us.

Please stay in touch via our livestreamed Masses, the Parish Office, and most importantly in prayer. Know that our Parish Leadership Team and I will be praying many times per day for you as we all navigate these difficult days and weeks together.

With God’s abundant Lenten blessing,

Fr.


Fr David Catterall

WHAT THE CORONAVIRUS EMERGENCY MEANS FOR US AS A PARISH COMMUNITY:

WEEKEND AND WEEKDAY MASSES

- From today (Friday 20 March 2020) there will be NO MASS celebrated publicly in our parish.
 - Parishioners are invited to participate in Sunday Mass via our online livestream on the 'St Mary MacKillop Parish Oran Park' YouTube channel (www.youtube.com)
 - From this weekend, Fr David will celebrate livestreamed Masses at 5pm Saturday and 10am Sunday. **These Masses will not be open for worshippers.**
 - In coming days your parish will provide you with ways and resources to take ownership of your Catholic faith life. In the meantime, please see some early suggestions offered by the Melbourne Archdiocese: www.cam.org.au/Guidance-for-Parishes-COVID-19
 - "Suspended Masses" does not mean "suspended community". If you are seeking ways to stay connected while we are all in isolation, please email Erin Gillard, our Coordinator of Welcome and Engagement, at welcomeroranpark@dow.org.au who will explore ways of connecting parishioners who are happy to call others who might feel alone during these days.
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HOLY WEEK AND EASTER SUNDAY

- All parish liturgies will be livestreamed online, but closed to the public.
 - More info will be sent out closer to the dates.
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BAPTISMS

- All Baptisms from April onwards are postponed.
- Those who are booked in for baptisms will be contacted with further details. You have been placed in a priority queue, and we will be in touch to re-book as the situation allows.
- We will accept new baptism enrolments, and they will be placed in this queue, and will be booked in whenever the situation improves. *Any parent of an unbaptized baby/child who may be sick or in danger of death, please call our parish emergency number on 0412 268 299.*

RECONCILIATION + ANOINTING OF THE SICK

- Our normal Reconciliation schedule is cancelled. We will explore how to best make these available, and update you further. *Anyone in urgent health emergency requiring sacraments please call our parish emergency number on 0412 268 299.*

WEDDINGS

- Weddings will need to be smaller, in line with social distancing requirements, or postponed.
- No further wedding bookings will be made, but couples may go on a "waitlist". Please contact the Parish Office at oranpark@dow.org.au or call 4648 2226.

FUNERALS

- Funerals will be celebrated with only close family and friends in attendance.
- We will explore livestreaming options, so others can participate.

SHARING OUR RESOURCES

- Like many churches, we rely on our weekly offertory collection to cover our operating expenses and our ministry expenses. We are making an intentional choice to prioritize the health and safety of our parish family, but also know that cancelling public weekend Masses will be a challenge for us financially. With the long-term economic and social impact of this situation, we encourage parishioners to please continue to financially give to make sure your parish can operate not just in these coming weeks, but in the months to follow.
 - Our ability to offer activities and formation opportunities relies solely on the continued generosity of you, who like all parishioners are called to be 'partners in mission'.
 - If you usually donate to us by cash donation at church, please go to:
www.dow.org.au/plannedgiving
 - Many parishioners are well versed these days on internet banking and would prefer to set up their own recurring payment to the parish planned giving program via their internet banking account. If this sounds like you, our parish's bank account details are:
Account name: Oran Park Parish
BSB: 066711
Account number: 007410
 - Please keep up your offerings, so that we can still provide the community service we love.
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SACRAMENTAL PROGRAMS (School-aged)

- All sacramental programs (1st Reconciliation & 1st Holy Communion) for school children WILL CONTINUE ONLINE.
- Ceremonies for First Reconciliation and First Holy Communion are postponed. New dates will be communicated when the situation improves.
- We will contact those enrolled in these programs, and in the Sacrament of Confirmation later this year, with further details.

PARISH LIFE

- All meetings and gatherings, including Lenten groups, which cannot be conducted by video/teleconferencing are cancelled.
- Parishioners who wish to continue their meeting/gathering are asked to explore online solutions for their group. If you need assistance with this, please contact James Arblaster, our Seminarian on Pastoral Placement, at james.arblaster@dow.org.au.

PASTORAL CARE AND OUTREACH

- Pastoral care for the sick and homebound is a high priority and Christian duty, but we need to ensure we do not endanger the sick and homebound, or the pastoral carer/Extraordinary Minister of Holy Communion. As a result, and until further notice, no parishioner is to provide pastoral visits in person.
- Instead, those who would normally take Communion to the sick and homebound of our parish, have been asked to speak and pray with the person over the phone.
- We will have further updates on how we can best provide pastoral care next week.

MASS CENTRES AND PARISH FACILITIES

- All meeting rooms and other parish facilities are closed.
- Our Southern Mass Centre at Oran Park will remain open for private prayer during parish office hours. We ask parishioners who visit for prayer to maintain social distance.
- **IF YOU HAVE COLD AND FLU SYMPTOMS, OR ARE OTHERWISE FEELING UNWELL, PLEASE DO NOT VISIT THE CHURCH.**
- St Mary Mackillop wrote “There where you are, you will find God.” God always is available to us wherever we are, and we do not need to come to church to “visit” him. Please see our resources for faith nourishment and prayer at home during these days.

PARISH OFFICE

- Our Parish Office will remain OPERATIONAL during its normal office hours, but it is CLOSED to visitors.
- All administrative matters – please email oranpark@dow.org.au, or call 4648 2226.
- For emergencies only – please call 0412 268 299.

Catholics are encouraged to make a ‘spiritual communion’. St. John Paul II writes that “it is good to *cultivate in our hearts a constant desire for the sacrament of the Eucharist*. This was the origin of the practice of ‘spiritual communion’, which has happily been established in the Church for centuries and recommended by many saints. Saint Teresa of Jesus wrote: ‘When you do not receive communion and you do not attend Mass, you can make a spiritual communion, which is a most beneficial practice; by it the love of God will be greatly impressed on you.’” (*Ecclesia Eucharistia*, no. 34)

How Do I Make a Spiritual Communion?

Below are recommendations for how to make a ‘spiritual communion’ when unable to participate in the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass. The recommendations can be adapted based upon personal and family needs.

Gather with others in your household and begin a time of prayer with the sign of the cross.

Take time to read and reflect upon the readings from Sunday Mass.

Share prayer intentions quietly or aloud.

Pray the Lord’s Prayer.

Pray the following prayer of spiritual communion (see below).

Close with the sign of the cross.

An Act of Spiritual Communion by St. Alphonsus Liguori

My Jesus, I believe that You are present in the Most Holy Sacrament.
I love You above all things, and I desire to receive You into my soul.
Since I cannot at this moment receive You sacramentally,
come at least spiritually into my heart.

I embrace You as if You were already there and unite myself wholly to You.
Never permit me to be separated from You. Amen.