

**The 4th LETTER OF THE BISHOP ON THE PRECAUTIONARY MEASURES
CONCERNING CORONA VIRUS INFECTIONS**

**Re: The Extension for the Suspension of Public Masses and gatherings
due to the Further Spread of Novel Corona Virus Infections**

The Right Reverend Mario Yamanouchi, Bishop of Saitama
March 11th, 2020

Dear brothers and sisters in the Diocese of Saitama:

We have asked all of you kindly to accept our difficult decisions, which never happened before, of the suspension of public masses and gatherings between February 27th, the day after Ash Wednesday and March 14th (Saturday). Thank you for your patience, but we understand you might feel it difficult to prepare yourselves for the forthcoming Easter celebrations without attending masses even for two Sundays so far. Unfortunately, however, the further spread of infections seems not to have ceased yet.

Due to these circumstances, we took the Advisory Committee to discuss the matter and have made the following decisions with the specific precautionary measures to be taken from 15th March and beyond, that is, to extend the suspension of public masses beyond March 15th (Sunday), I am afraid. We would be grateful if you again could kindly take note of the following precautionary measures, below, and cooperate with us, please:

1: In the Diocese of Saitama, the Public Masses will be further suspended between March 15th (Sunday) and March 29th (Sunday) inclusive.

2: For the three Sunday masses during the time, all the faithful of Saitama will be dispensed from their obligation to attend Sunday masses. We, however, encourage to read the Bible indicated for each Sunday and to spare time to pray either by yourselves or with your family.

On Sundays the Parish churches will be open as usual. We recommend those want to receive and use a weekly liturgical leaflet ‘Seisyo to Tenrei’ to contact the Church staff, please.

3: Weddings and funerals may be proceeded as usual with taking precautionary measures against infections.

4: For public events or gatherings other than masses, as much as possible kindly consider postponing or canceling them.

5: As for the measures above, either if those would be taken continually after March 29th or not, we shall make another announcement as soon as possible after carefully discussing at the Advisory Committee to be held on March 25th (Wednesday).

6: Chrism Mass, which was formerly scheduled at the Parish church of Mito on April 8th (Wednesday), will be taken place at the Cathedral Parish church of Urawa, instead, but with Priests and Deacons only. We, however, ask all of you to pray for us.

7: You may find my homilies for Sundays in the Diocesan website (Home-page). As for Video message services of the Sunday masses, which might give you any aid for your spiritual communion, however, that is not available with our Diocese, I am afraid. However, you may access to the website for broadcasting services of the Sunday masses, run by the Archdiocese of Tokyo. We hope that that may give you some spiritual aid.

8: Under these circumstances, but to spent this time of Lent prayerfully we are now preparing to publish 'prayers for spiritual communion' in a few different languages. Once that has been done we will upload them in our Diocesan website (Home-page). We hope you may use them.

We ask you to kindly understand these precautionary measures above issued in emergency as our efforts and concerns for cooperating with our nation and societies as whole to prevent the further spread of the Novel Corona Virus infections.

Trusting in God of His mercy and love, as well as thinking of all, let us pray to God the Father, through the intercessions of the most blessed Virgin Mary, that He may restore the lives to the full for those who have been infected by the Novel Corona Virus and may take full control over the present situation worldwide.

Yours sincerely in Christ.

