

**The 6th LETTER OF THE BISHOP ON THE PRECAUTIONARY MEASURES
PREVENTING CORONA VIRUS INFECTIONS**

**Re: The Suspension of Public Masses and gatherings
during the Holy Week and beyond**

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

Dear my brothers and sisters in the Diocese of Saitama:

Despite of our serious efforts and prayers, the widespread of the Novel Corona Virus infections has not ceased yet. Just now the time before the Holy Week, the Advisory Committee under the authority of me, the Bishop, has made the following decisions concerning the Holy Week and beyond, up to Sunday, April 26th ; these are as follows:

1. The Suspension of the public Masses

The public Masses will be continually suspended until Sunday, April 26th (The 3rd Sunday of Easter).

2. Concerning the Holy Week Liturgies

Passion Sunday (Palm Sunday) on Sunday, April 5th

The Palm Sunday Mass will not be open to the public. The palms will not be used. The palms can, however, be given to your parishioners after resuming the public masses.

Chrism Mass

It will be postponed following the authority entrusted to the Bishop.

Holy Thursday (The Evening Mass of the Lord's Supper) and Good Friday

The Mass and the Liturgy will be celebrated, but not be open to the public.

I, however, recommend all the faithful to pray at home joining spiritually the liturgies at the church.

(To the Priests) The special Prayer for the Solemn General Intercessions on Good Friday Liturgy

Following the instructions from the Liturgical Committee of the Catholic Bishops' Conference of Japan, the prayer below be included into the Solemn General Intercessions.

**A Prayer for the people worldwide
suffering from the Novel Corona Virus Infections**

Deacon: Let us pray for the people worldwide suffering from the Novel Corona Virus Infections.

May God give Your help to those who have suffered and take out from them the worries and fears of infections.

(Silence in short while, then pray as follows,)

Priest: Almighty God of our hope,

Give the adequate medical cares to those who suffer,

Protect the doctors and nurses from infections,

Welcome the souls who have died by the disease.

May all of us be helped by You

and the world now seized with anxiety and fear be restored with hope in You.

Through Jesus Christ, Our Lord. Amen.

The Easter Vigil and Easter Sunday

The Baptism supposed to be taken on Easter will be postponed.

Both Easter Vigil Mass and the Easter Sunday Mass will not be open to the public.

I recommend you, however, to recite the Divine Office indicated for the Easter Sunday instead.

3. The Offerings for *Caritas* for the Lent

Please send them to *Caritas Saitama* as usual.

4. The following instructions already given beforehand will not change.

- 1) For the Sunday Masses and the Holy Week Liturgies during the time above, all the faithful of Saitama Diocese will be dispensed from their obligation to attend them.
- 2) Weddings and funerals may be proceeded as usual, but with taking precautionary measures against infections.
- 3) Public events or gatherings other than masses will be kindly postponed or even cancelled.
- 4) (To the Priests) The masses not being open to the public should be said privately at your room in the presbytery, not in the church.
- 5) (Also, to the Priests) The Sacrament of Reconciliation will not be given, except the times of emergencies, such as at people's death. Please read carefully "The Message from the Apostolic Penitentiary on the Sacrament of Reconciliation and on Granting of Special Indulgence", which appears on webpage run by the Catholic Bishops' Conference of Japan.

To all the faithful I pass the Advisory of The Holy Father Pope Francis delivered at the Mass at Casa Santa Marta on March 20th, 2020; which is as follows:

Confession when a priest is not available

"I know that many of you go to confession before Easter... Many will say to me: 'But Father...I can't leave the house and I want to make my peace with the Lord. I want Him to embrace me... How can I do that unless I find a priest?'. Do what the catechism says. It's very clear. If you don't find a priest to go to confession, speak to God. He's your Father. Tell Him the truth: 'Lord. I did this and this and this. Pardon me.' Ask His forgiveness with all your heart with an act of contrition, and promise Him, 'afterward I will go to confession.' You will return to God's grace

immediately. You yourself can draw near, as the catechism teaches us, to God's forgiveness without having a priest at hand."

Finally, I, the Bishop of Saitama, was born in Japan and was brought up in Argentina, then, have been welcomed by the Diocese of Saitama now to share the special time of God's grace with you, all the faithful of my Diocese. It is true that this world is a house in which we live together as the one family, by overcoming all the differences of ours as well as by respecting and loving each other; this truth which I feel it now stronger than ever before. I am most grateful to all of you to walk together with me with your kindest understanding and cooperation.

Please pray together with me to God the Father, trusting in His mercy and love, as well as thinking of all, through the intercessions of the most blessed Virgin Mary, that Our merciful God may give those who died by the disease eternal rest and may restore the lives to the full for those who have been infected and may take full control over the present situation worldwide.

Yours ever in Christ.