

The 24th LETTER OF THE BISHOP ON THE PRECAUTIONARY MEASURES FOR PREVENTING THE COVID-19 INFECTIONS

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Bishop of Saitama

February 17, 2023

For the time being, remember to be extremely careful in Masses and all other activities to take measures to avoid 3 C's (closed spaces, crowded places and close-contact settings) in line with the changes from time to time.

1. Sunday and Solemnity Masses

- 1.1 When the community celebrates Sunday Mass, they are encouraged to make every effort to create a "Mass in which all members of the community, regardless of nationality or language, can participate".

Specifically, continue to celebrate Sunday Mass (the principal Mass if more than one Mass is celebrated) by using the Japanese Missal as you do now. I trust that you will all consider using foreign languages for the readings, the prayers of the faithful, hymns and so on for the foreign national members of the community to feel comfortable enough to join the Japanese Mass.

Let us not forget that attending Sunday Mass is an important obligation for Catholics to abide by.

- 1.2 This may be mainly applicable to large churches: If necessary, the number of Sunday Masses can be increased (in the afternoon, for example) so that "all members of the community, regardless of nationality or language, can participate in the Mass".
- 1.3 If necessary, the parish churches in their block are permitted to plan a "Mass in a foreign language" up to once a month. You may consult with neighboring blocks at your block meetings.

Transfer of the faithful within their block for this purpose is acceptable.

However, we would like to remind you in advance that the current situation of the priests of Saitama Diocese does not allow us to respond to your request completely. In addition, we would like to request that the application of foreign language Masses in Ibaraki Prefecture (excluding Koga and Joso), as one block in itself, be made in accordance with the other blocks.

2. Masses and other occasions to be held in the native language as much as possible

2.1 Funeral Masses (and wakes), memorial Masses, weddings

2.2 Retreats and gatherings during Advent and Lent, and gatherings and Masses on feasts of the patron saints: First, consult with the pastor or the parish administrator.

2.3 Catechesis

As a rule, catechesis is conducted face-to-face in Japanese. When necessary, it may be conducted in the native language. You are encouraged to train and appoint catechists for this purpose.

3. Dealing with Online

3.1 As a general rule, Masses are to be attended in person, but each parish is encouraged to make every effort to the extent possible to accommodate those who are unable to attend Mass in person.

3.2 Prayer meetings, retreats and study groups may be attended beyond the parish level.

3.3 If you wish to take a sacramental preparation course offered online by another parish, obtain the approval of your pastor beforehand.

4. Holy Communion, Singing and Meals

4.1 Holy Communion

For the time being, continue to receive the Communion in the hand. Priests and those in charge of giving the Sacred Host also should continue to take extra care to sterilize their hands. The faithful should have a way of keeping their hands dry when receiving Communion.

4.2 Singing

The Mass is the center of our life of faith. The importance of the role that singing plays in the Mass has been reaffirmed in the pandemic. I give you permission to sing aloud at a lower volume with a mask on your face for the time being while assessing the surrounding conditions of each church.

4.3 Meals

Since there is a high risk of spreading the infection, each church should make a prudent decision regarding the resumption of large-group meals. First, consult with the pastor or the parish administrator.