

AD LAOS

A Pastoral Note to the People of False Bay Diocese

Dear People of God spread throughout the length and breadth of the Diocese of False Bay.

Greetings in the Name of Christ our Healer and Saviour.

I write this note at a most critical time in the history of the world and of our country. I humbly ask all our peoples to abide by the directives, guidelines and regulations as contained in this *Ad Laos*

As you know, the President of the Republic of South Africa issued an urgent directive to curb the spread of the Coronavirus.

In keeping with the President's directives, the Archbishop of Cape Town issued Guidelines about Worship, Services and Church-related events, based on South African Regulations and drawn on best church practices from the Church of England to assist parishioners, clergy and bishops to cope with this emergency.

These guidelines also give Dioceses the freedom to take such steps and to implement such measures as may be necessary in a particular Diocese.

Bishop Margaret, in consultation with Chapter, has deemed it prudent to issue the following Guidelines. These are effective immediately in all parishes.

GUIDELINES FOR PARISHES IN THE DIOCESE OF FALSE BAY

- Worship Services are not cancelled. Should this becomes necessary, as Bishop of the Diocese, I will inform you promptly.
- All Diocesan Events such as Clergy Forums, Layministers and Churchwardens training are suspended until further notice.
- Services should be limited to 100 people. Clergy and Parish Councils will work out how best to achieve this, possibly with multiple Services and rosters (especially with Holy Week and the Triduum Services).

- Ringing of Bells - We encourage Churches with Church Bells, to ring them at 12h00 every day indicating a moment to pause and pray for the development of a vaccine and the eradication of the Coronavirus
 - Only Baptisms already planned for Easter will go ahead (with special instructions for the occasion to be given to parents and sponsors.) Thereafter, the Sacrament of Baptism (unless an emergency) will be suspended due to the vulnerability of everyone involved.
 - The “social distance” ruling requires a distance of at least 1 metre between persons. Given the limited number of parishioners at Services, parishioners are to spread themselves to keep to the 1 metre social distance between yourself and your neighbour.
 - Requiem and Nuptial Masses are suspended until further notice.
 - Parishes must endeavour to provide hand-sanitizers to parishioners upon arrival and leaving Services.
 - Physical contact with each other during the Peace is suspended. During this time handshakes and hugs are not encouraged. Instead waving of hands, or bowing to acknowledge one another, are encouraged.
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- Wafer – The Communion wafer is to be gently dropped into the hand of a parishioner (in order to avoid contact) and not placed on the tongue.
 - Clergy and Parish Councils must devise ways to take Collections without passing a collection plate around.
 - Encourage parishioners to keep a distance from others while waiting to receive Holy Communion. For now, please stand to receive Holy Communion, so you need not touch the Altar Rail.
 - Only the Presider should consume the wine. This is theologically sound and does not detract or invalidate the Eucharist for those who receive it in one kind only [the bread].
 - As you leave the church, wave or bow to your clergy instead of shaking their hands.
 - Clergy and Parishioners who are ill should stay at home to recover and request home Communion or a pastoral visit.
 - Suspend all catering (tea/coffee etc.) to avoid spreading the virus through multiple people handling crockery, utensils and food.

We accept that many of these practices may seem harsh and perhaps even unchristian. The Church must comply with the law and safeguard all its people.

Through these practices, we hope to fulfil our part in preventing or at least slowing down the spread of the virus and ensure the well-being of all God's People. Remember, that our seniors and children are amongst the most vulnerable.

Lastly, dear People of God, I call on you all to pray earnestly both at home and at Services that this virus will be stemmed and that healing will come to those who have contracted the virus. Let us all stand at the foot of the Cross, lifting our gaze to Christ as we pray for deep healing here and everywhere else.

God bless you all,

*Bishop Margaret B Vertue
Bishop of False Bay*

18 March 2020