

St Therese's Parish Essendon



19 June 2020

Dear friends at St Therese's.

It has been a while since I have written, apart from publishing homilies online. I do hope that you have been able to access the parish website, keeping up to date via our [weekly bulletin](#) and participating in the [video Masses](#). I appreciate that not everyone has access to the internet, but hopefully some have been able to enlist children or grandchildren to help out. At least this has been one means of ongoing communication for celebration and worship.

The good news is, as of next Tuesday we will resume daily Masses Tuesday to Friday and usual weekend Masses on Saturday and Sunday. Although it will be wonderful to begin Mass in person again, with only 50 people attending it cannot be 'back to normal'. Social distancing and density requirements will still restrict us too, in the longer term. Although St Therese's church can accommodate some 600 or so people, these requirements mean that the church can seat 140 people at a maximum.

For weekend Masses you will need to book either by emailing or phoning the parish office to attend whichever weekend Mass is available. At weekday Masses the usual numbers are between 30 and 50, so that should be manageable without booking unless there is a sudden increase! Painful as it is, we can't admit more than 50 into the church at any time at present.

At the same time, I will continue to provide virtual weekend Masses on the parish website for those who cannot get here regularly as it has become an effective means of connection.

Those attending Mass must sign in at the one entry door (on the Lincoln Rd side of the church, with no steps), sanitise hands and provide a contact number beforehand, as contact tracing records are part of the deal too. We must sanitise the church pews, doorhandles and other surfaces after each liturgy. We will be seeking volunteers to help with this, as we get going with opening up.

If you're experiencing a cough, a cold or are just feeling 'off-colour', you are asked not to even think of appearing for Mass, no matter how keen you are to be here. It is for the good of all that this is the way things have to be. I had the flu shot for winter, and also the COVID 19 test at Highpoint when I had a cough and mild cold last week, getting the all clear, but a good thing to do, just in case! And I believe it a good idea to have the COVID 19 APP on your mobile phones, as I have on mine.

Meanwhile, there is understandable concern and anxiety about sacramental celebrations for our First Eucharist and Confirmation candidates. Luckily, we just got in in time for First Reconciliation before shutdown in later March. We will review what is possible in Fourth Term once further limits are lifted. Concrete plans can't be made while we are still in the dark about details.

Likewise, it is appreciated that parish groups wish to get back into action sooner than later, but this is complicated by the fact that the sanitising requirements are so stringent. And so we need to look at virtual meetings, perhaps by **ZOOM**, where possible, but also acknowledging the limitations for those who don't have access to the internet.

Parish finances have been hit hard, but losses somewhat cushioned by the fact that many parishioners contribute to PSP (Parish Support Program) by direct debit. Thanks to those of you who have been generous and thoughtful enough to make direct transfers into the parish Church and Presbytery accounts (details of which are on the parish website and bulletin), and to those who have dropped in or posted regular contributions through the envelope scheme. Our office staff and I are being supported by the Government JobKeeper program, until the end of September.

For those who can attend Mass once the church is open, there will be a drop box near the exit doors to the church, rather than physically taking up collections by handing around the plates.

I do appreciate that all have been adversely affected in some way, to some extent, financially, and also psychologically, by the angst and uncertainty of it all. No matter what, the bills keep coming, as we all know and experience!

There is the question of resumption of home visits by our pastoral volunteer Eucharistic Ministers, where we will hopefully get back into action soon.

My thanks go to our office workers, Kathy, Jac, Irene and Leanne and to our outside workers Bryan, John, Peter and Teresa, who have all continued to keep things going in this strange time.

And also a word of gratitude to our principal, Michael Di Nuzzo, the leadership team, and the committed teachers and all staff at St Therese's Primary School, for the dedicated and enthusiastic way they have committed to ongoing education of our young people through daily on-line communication and now back to more normal face to face classroom activities.

Meanwhile, back at the ranch here, I am available for appointments if anyone wishes to make a time to have a chat meanwhile, by phoning the parish office number, or ringing the after-hours mobile number.

If you are planning on coming along to Mass, it is vital that you read the [Mass Guidelines](#) and the [Weekend Mass Booking Procedure](#). There are many changes to how we attend Mass.

Warmest wishes and thanks in anticipation for your ongoing patience and understanding, in conforming and co-operating with these procedures, as we continue to adapt, change, maintain and build up our parish community together.



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Enclosed: [23 June 2020 Mass Guidelines](#)

Enclosed: [Weekend Mass Booking Procedure 27 June 2020](#)