



**URGENT COVID-19 CORONAVIRUS UPDATE
13 March 2020**

Guidance to dioceses and parishes, issued by the NZ Catholic Bishops under the advice of Fr John O'Connor Acting Director, National Liturgy Office.

Tēnā koutou katoa friends,

The National Liturgy Office and NZ Catholic Bishops have received new important new advice today from the Ministry of Health.

This advice specifically says we should desist with “the sharing of communion cups and shared holy water, and hand shaking.”

Having received this, we are now updating our previous advice on these matters. We now ask that:

- At the Sign of Peace, people should avoid shaking hands or other contact with one another, and instead smile, nod or bow to one another.
- Holy Communion is not to be distributed from the chalice.
- Communion is only to be distributed in the hand, not on the tongue.
- Holy water is to be removed from stoups and containers at the church door.
- Priests should not touch children’s heads when blessing them and then continue to distribute Communion.

The Ministry of Health has not asked for any restrictions on public gatherings, including Mass.

We are concerned there is a significant degree of fear among some parishioners, and it is essential that the Church is a safe place for people when they gather for Mass. We therefore ask each diocese, parish and Catholic community to respond with appropriate sensitivity to the fears that exists.

We wish again to emphasise with all parishioners the importance of good practices of hygiene, including regular washing of hands, covering coughs and sneezes with elbows not hands, staying at home if sick, and trying to keep a metre away from people who are unwell.