

Fukuoka, July 30, 2020

Dear brothers and sisters:

The peace of the Lord be with you all.

For two months we have been celebrating the Eucharist publicly in all parishes. Only in Kitakyushu did they have to delay the start of the public celebration of Mass due to the particular circumstances of the area. During these two months the Eucharist has been celebrated in all the parishes and religious communities, fulfilling the norms that I communicated to you in the letter of May 22. Thank you all for your collaboration.

Lately the social media have reported an increase in the spread of the coronavirus that causes concern to all of us. Certainly, we must continue to do everything possible to prevent the spread of the virus. Both the Japanese government and the governors of our provinces are insisting on it. "Do not become infected - Do not infect others" must be our fundamental concern.

After consulting the experts, I have decided to continue the public celebration of the Mass while asking everybody to abide strictly by the norms indicated below.

1. Regarding the public celebration of the Mass, strictly comply with the following regulations:

- ① Avoid celebrating in places without sufficient ventilation, maintain physical distance between people and avoid crowded gatherings.
- ② Take care of these three aspects among the servants of the liturgy (altar servers, readers, etc.).
- ③ Disinfect your hands with alcohol and wear masks.
- ④ Ensure adequate ventilation of the church.
- ⑤ Do not fill the baptismal font or the holy water containers with water.
- ⑥ Do not sing during the celebration of the Mass.
- ⑦ Cancel the procession of the offerings.
- ⑧ Put the hosts for the celebrant and those of the faithful in different containers.
- ⑨ Properly cover the chalice and the coupon with the hosts for the faithful during the Eucharistic prayer.
- ⑩ Before distributing communion, both the priest and the Eucharistic ministers wash their hands properly.
- ⑪ During this time meals will be suppressed after the celebrations.
- ⑫ Make a list of all the persons participating in the Mass, asking them to write down their names and telephone number. This is done to be able to deal with an eventual case of infection.

2. Regarding the number of participants in the celebrations,

Bearing in mind the difference that exists between the different parishes, try to avoid crowds. You can think, for example, of:

- ① Increase the number of Masses, distributing the assistance according to the areas of the parish.
- ② If this is not possible, you can even think about determining attendance at Sunday Mass on alternative Sundays according to the areas.
- ③ Try to support each other within each area of the diocese or contact the diocesan

secretariat to find the most appropriate solution.

- ④ There will surely be other ways to organize. Whatever the solution adopted, avoid closed places and crowds and keep the physical distance between people.

3. Concerning other church activities

I leave it to the discretion of each parish or group. Please, avoid any behavior that may cause the virus to spread.

If someone is not feeling well, avoid attending mass. In this case, you have no obligation to attend Sunday mass. Similarly, if a priest is feverish or experiences a persistent cough, stop celebrating Mass for the faithful. In this case, they are exempt from the obligation of Sunday mass.

We pray for all the people affected by COVID-19; for those who have become ill, for those who care for them, for those who have been relegated to very difficult situations and for the eternal rest of those who have died. I ask the Lord to see soon the end of this pandemic. May the Lord bless you. Fraternaly,

Josep M. Abella
Bishop of Fukuoka