

26 February 2020

**Official Notice from Catholic Diocese of Fukuoka
on Suspension of Public Masses from 27 February to 14 March, 2020
due to the Spread of COVID-19**

Dear brothers and sisters in Diocese of Fukuoka,

As the number of confirmed cases of the COVID-19 infection continues to grow, a new coronavirus measure is published by Ministry of Health, Labour and Welfare. According to that, coming two weeks will be crucial period to contain the viral outbreak.

We are also asked to cooperate seriously and wisely to this measure, regardless of reported number of the new coronavirus infection.

After consultation with people from various background, I have decided to take the following precautionary measures and related recommendations during the period of 27 February to 14 March, 2020. This decision is done through prayer, for us to follow the call of Christ and to journey with our society as Catholic Church. I would appreciate your understanding and cooperation for this decision to prevent the viral outbreak and to protect life.

1. Public masses from 27 February to 14 March will be suspended. All the faithful under Diocese of Fukuoka will be dispensed from the obligation to participate in the Mass on Sundays during this period. During this period, I ask all the priests in the diocese to celebrate masses individually in spiritual communion with each community and the faithful.

2. For events other than masses, please consider postponing or cancelling them.

3. It is great pain and suffer for us believers that we cannot celebrate mass together. Understanding this pain and suffer, I would like to invite all the faithful to empathize with the suffering people from this new coronavirus with same look of Jesus Christ, and to journey this Lent season individually and communally with our sacrifice.

Further notice for the measure after 14 March will be followed at appropriate time. I once again would like to ask your understanding and cooperation for this decision, knowing there are different opinions. And most of all, let us pray to God, our Father, that He may guide us, all nations, to closure of the epidemic.

Peter Hironobu Sugihara,
Apostolic Administrator,
Diocese of Fukuoka