

CHURCH ACTIVITIES AFTER LIFTING OF STATE OF EMERGENCY

26 May 2020

Dear brothers and sisters in the Archdiocese of Tokyo

The declaration of state of emergency has been lifted on 25 May. The experts have pointed out however that the situation is still unstable and that there could be several waves of outbreak in the future.

Therefore, as a general rule, we will maintain the status quo for some time even after the lifting of the emergency declaration.

After careful examination of the situation, including the status of reopening public schools in Tokyo and Chiba as well as the cancellation of the request to voluntarily refrain from large-scale events, we shall come up with a schedule to resume Church activities in stages with restrictive conditions while taking precautionary measures against COVID-19 and avoiding the “Three C’s (closed spaces, crowded places, and close-contact settings).”

In particular, keeping a distance of 1.5 to 2 meters from each other while inside the church is a minimum requirement. If this is not possible, gathering inside the church will not be allowed.

In addition, I humbly seek the understanding of the elderly and those who have chronic illness, that in giving priority to protecting life, I would like to ask you to please stay at home at this initial stage. Conventionally, “elderly” has been defined as those who are 65 years old (前期高齢者 early elderly) or older. Especially for those who are 75 years old and older, kindly pray at home for the time being.

It is yet unthinkable that we can immediately go back to Church as we did before Ash Wednesday. Please understand that various restrictions are necessary to make responsible and positive actions to protect not only our own lives but the lives of others as well. This is a sacrifice for the good of the whole Church community and of the society.

In case it would be difficult to gain cooperation with such conditions and restrictions, we may have no choice but to give up resuming Church activities in the parish for the time being. I would really appreciate your cooperation.

When the situation becomes suitable to resume Church activities, we will announce the schedule and the conditions in stages for taking precautionary measures against COVID-19.

Moreover, after sending the guideline to all the priests in the Archdiocese at the end of April, I requested them to consider possible specific responses at each parish. After the lifting of the emergency declaration, small meetings will be allowed for parish coordination in preparation for the appropriate actions concerning the new restrictions and conditions.

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