

May 13, 2021

## Guidelines on Church Activities in the Current Situation of the Spread of Covid-19 in the Diocese of Niigata

Dear brothers and sisters in the Diocese of Niigata,

The Covid-19 pandemic is still raging in many places. There are still many restrictions in the church, but I am grateful for your cooperation in continuing our activities.

For the past two months, the infection of Covid-19 has been spreading in the three prefectures of the Diocese of Niigata. Although there have been no special warnings for the whole prefecture, special warnings and instructions have been issued in some cities such as Yamagata, Niigata, Tsuruoka, Akita and Nagaoka. So far, the points of the warnings and instructions have been to refrain from traveling to and from outside the city or prefecture, refraining from meetings that involve eating and drinking, and shortening business hours of restaurants. So general gatherings such as Holy Mass can be held as long as basic precautions are taken. However, if it is necessary to cancel public Masses due to local circumstances, please make that decision at the parish level and inform the chancellor's office.

There has been a dramatic increase in infections of the Covid-19 variants that are highly contagious and can cause serious illness in young people. In order to continue church activities, please take the basic precautions as announced on January 8, 2021. As the weather gets warmer, please open wide the doors and windows of the church for ventilation. Let us pray and cooperate to protect each other as a community called by Christ.

Paul Daisuke Narui, SVD

Bishop of Niigata

## Measures as of January 8, 2021:

1. Avoid crowded places, close-contact settings and confined and enclosed spaces. Wear masks and disinfect hands.
2. Keep a distance of 1.5 to 2 meters from each other in the chapel and other church facilities. If you are unable to keep this distance during Mass in the chapel, hold Mass in a larger room or increase the number of Masses. If you are currently living together, you may sit together.
3. Make sure that the space is well ventilated for indoor gatherings including Mass. During the winter period, it may be difficult to ventilate the space due to the heating system, but try to keep the fresh air flowing.
4. When singing at Mass or other gatherings, try to keep a distance from the congregation and sing alone, or have the choir sing. Avoid singing with the entire congregation.
5. The Sacrament of Confession should not be administered in a small confessional, but in an environment that is not crowded, close-contact settings and confined and enclosed.
6. The collection should be made by each person in a fixed collection box, not by passing around a collection bag.
7. Communion should be received with the hands and not with the tongue.
8. Refrain from using the holy water basin.
9. Sanitize chairs, door knobs, etc.
10. There will be no age restrictions on participation at Masses. However, if you are elderly, have a chronic illness, or are concerned about your health, I ask that you give top priority to protecting your life. If you are absent from the Sunday Mass for these reasons.
11. If you have a fever, cough, sore throat, or loss of sense of taste or smell, refrain from attending Masses.
12. At Masses and other public gatherings, keep a record of the names and contact information of all participants so that we can be prepared for any eventuality. Be careful with the information and dispose of it at a later time.
13. Do not engage in any activities that could be understood as “close contact”, such as shaking hands or prolonged conversation at close range.
14. For the time being, refrain from gatherings that involve eating and drinking.
15. The obligation to attend Sunday Mass is waived for all members of the Diocese of Niigata. Please give top priority to the protection of life.
16. Please consult with the chancery if you are unsure of what to do.