

November 18, 2021

**Guidelines on Church Activities  
in relation to the Covid-19 pandemic  
in the Diocese of Niigata**

Dear brothers and sisters in the Diocese of Niigata,

I would like to express my sincere gratitude for your understanding and cooperation in our church's activities on the prevention of the Covid-19 pandemic.

Although some experts have pointed out the possibility of another wave, the spread of the infection throughout Japan has now calmed down considerably. In particular, there have been many days with no new infections in the Niigata Diocese, and the alert levels in each of the three prefectures have been lowered.

As a result, the Diocese of Niigata has decided to relax some of the basic measures that we have been taking. Measure no. 2 has been modified reducing the distance between persons to one meter, and measure no. 4 was also modified so that singing of hymns by the entire congregation will be allowed in appropriate environments. I would like to ask each parish to decide and implement these basic measures according to their own circumstances, including events where many people gather, such as Christmas.

If there is a tendency for the infection to spread again in the future, we will return to the original measures. Let us be flexible and do the things we can for the moment, while monitoring the situation and complying with the rules of the prefectures and other local governments.

Paul Daisuke Narui, SVD  
Bishop of Niigata

## Measures as of November 18, 2021

1. Avoid crowded places, close-contact settings, confined and enclosed spaces. Wear masks and disinfect hands.
2. Keep a distance of 1 meter from each other in the chapel and other church facilities. If you are currently living in the same house, you may sit together.
3. Make sure that the space is well ventilated for indoor gatherings including Masses. 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. Singing by the entire congregation should be done at the discretion of the parish, if it is possible to create an appropriate environment, such as a proper distance between participants, adequate ventilation, and other measures.
6. The Sacrament of Confession should not be administered in a small confessional, but in an environment that is not crowded, not in a close-contact setting, and not confined or enclosed.
7. The collection should be made by each person in a fixed collection box, not by passing around a collection bag.
8. Communion should be received with the hands and not with the tongue.
9. Refrain from using the holy water basin.
10. Sanitize chairs, door knobs, etc.
11. 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.
12. If you have a fever, cough, sore throat, or loss of sense of taste or smell, please refrain from attending Masses.
13. 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.
14. Do not engage in any activities that could be understood as “close contact”, such as shaking hands or prolonged conversation at close range.
15. For the time being, refrain from gatherings that involve eating and drinking.
16. 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.
17. Please consult with the chancery if you are unsure of what to do.