

January 18, 2022

**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,

The Covid-19 pandemic, which had been rather calm for several months until the end of last year, has been spreading since the beginning of the year. The three prefectures of the Diocese of Niigata are no exception, as the highly infectious Omicron variant is spreading.

Since November last year, the Niigata Diocese has been implementing basic measures which were relaxed a little according to the discretion of each parish. However, due to changes in the situation, I would like to inform you that the basic measures will be revised with the main changes as follows: 2. The distance between the seats is now 1.5-2 meters, and 4. Singing by entire congregation is not allowed. Of course, each community is in a different situation. The priority is to protect the lives of the members of the community and the people in the neighborhood, and so I ask that you follow the policies of the local government and work together with the community to prevent infection.

If the parish decides to cancel Sunday Mass, please contact the Diocesan office. Let us continue to walk trusting in the Lord and in cooperation with one another.

Paul Daisuke Narui, SVD
Bishop of Niigata

Measures as of January 18, 2022:

1. Avoid crowded places, close-contact settings, 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. Persons living in the same house may sit together.
3. Make sure that the space is well ventilated for indoor gatherings including Masses.
4. When there is a soloist at Mass or other gatherings, keep a distance from the congregation and sing alone, or have the choir sing. It is strictly prohibited for the entire congregation to sing together.
5. The Sacrament of Confession should not be administered in a small confessional, but in an environment that is not crowded, nor in a close-contact, confined and enclosed setting.
6. The collection should be done individually with 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.
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 activity that could be understood as “close contact”, such as shaking hands or prolonged conversation at close range.
14. For the time being, DO NOT hold 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.