



Catholic Archdiocese of Canberra & Goulburn

The Annunciation of the Lord 25th March 2020

Dear Friends in Christ,

On this great **Solemnity of the Annunciation**, I wish to update you on the developing situation regarding the coronavirus pandemic and its implications for the pastoral life of our people.

- Overnight updates by the Prime Minister and clarifications by other authorities in recent days now necessitate not simply the cessation of liturgical or any other gatherings in our Churches but also **the LOCKING of our Churches**. Funerals and weddings can be accommodated with strict numbers in attendance. Baptisms are to be postponed. See **attached updated protocols** for further details. It is with a very heavy heart indeed that I ask you to attend to these matters immediately.
- **Pope Francis** is daily reaching out to us from Rome. He asks us today to join all Christian leaders in the recitation of the Our Father. This coming Friday (27th March) he will impart a special blessing upon the entire world (*Urbi et Orbi*) gripped in this terrible pandemic. He has asked us all to participate spiritually. This is available through the Vatican news portal (**www.news.va**). On this portal the Pope also offers daily Masses for us all. Please visit it often and publicise the address.
- I am hearing of all sorts of wonderful **creative pastoral initiatives** respecting the current protocols blossoming right now in our parishes. Thank you! For example, the creation of “telephone trees” which link parishioners (often youth) with people alone in their homes without any internet access or competency. There are regular phone calls to “check in”. Also there is the offer of hard copies of prayers and practical assistances (eg shopping) to the house bound. Please let us know your initiatives so we can share ideas with others.

May I conclude for the moment with the assurance to you all of my prayers and blessings – especially today with the intercession of *the young woman of Nazareth who changed the world by saying a hearty YES to the initiative of God*.

Archbishop Christopher Prowse

Catholic Archdiocese of Canberra and Goulburn
Apostolic Administrator of Wagga Wagga Diocese.