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Hello Everyone,

Today, the Victorian Premier announced some further restrictions aimed at countering the spread of the coronavirus.

From midnight tonight (Thursday, July 30), people living in the local government areas of Colac-Otway, Greater Geelong, Surf Coast, Moorabool, Golden Plains, and the Borough of Queenscliffe, will no longer be able to visit people or have visitors at home. This will affect people in a few of our parishes, such as Apollo Bay and Colac.

The other new provision will affect us all, namely, the requirement to wear a face covering.

From midnight on Sunday (August 2), people throughout our diocese, together with people throughout the whole of Victoria, will be required to wear face coverings whenever we leave home.

You can find further details on the Victorian government's web pages, such as at www.vic.gov.au/coronavirus-covid-19-restrictions-victoria

The government website provides information about particular issues, such as that children under the age of 12 and people with certain medical conditions do not need to wear a face covering.

Here I would simply add a note regarding the celebration of liturgies.

In our diocese of Ballarat, we will still be allowed to gather for liturgies in churches, with a maximum of 20 people in the congregation, plus those needed to conduct the service. However, from Monday August 3, everyone will be required to wear a face covering throughout the liturgy. The only exceptions would be when the priest is speaking to the congregation or reading prayers, when a reader is actually reading the Scriptures, when a song leader is leading the singing and when anyone is receiving communion.

As well as the new requirement to wear a face covering, the current requirements about hygiene and distance between people will continue to apply.

God bless you all.

Bishop Paul