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Hello Everyone,

By now you have probably heard that there is to be a week of COVID lockdown throughout Victoria from midnight tonight (Thursday May 27).

This will require adjustments in various areas of our lives, with limited reasons for leaving home and the need to wear masks everywhere when we do leave home.

Most school students will need to switch to online learning for the week. Our Catholic Education Office has provided information to schools about the arrangements to be made.

The following provisions apply to places of worship for the coming week.

No in-person gatherings are permitted. Broadcast services are allowed, with a maximum of five people.

Funerals: A maximum of 10 people are allowed at funerals, plus those conducting the service. Children under 12 months are not counted towards the cap of 10.

Weddings: Weddings are not permitted unless deportation or end-of-life reasons apply. If those reasons do apply, the wedding gathering is limited to five people, including the two people getting married, a celebrant, and two witnesses.

It is sad that, for the next week, we will not be able to gather in our parish churches as we usually would. I pray that the week's lockdown will be effective in curbing the spread of the virus and that we will soon be able to resume our gatherings as parish communities. In the meantime, I encourage you in your personal and family prayer at home. I also thank our priests and parish teams for all they have done and all they will do to keep in touch with parishioners and to keep parishioners in touch with one another. This can be by phone or via zoom or other online service. I note also that we are able to leave home for purposes of "caregiving". This would allow us to visit the home of someone who requests a visit because they are unwell or otherwise in need of care. In any such visits, of course, we would need to wear masks and take the usual COVID hygiene precautions.

May the Holy Spirit guide us in our care for one another.

God bless you all.

Bishop Paul