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Hello Everyone,

As you may have seen, the Victorian government has announced new provisions for religious gatherings, to take effect from tomorrow (November 23). This will make it much easier for us to gather for Mass and other celebrations. However, we should note that, while the number of people who can gather is much greater, COVIDSafe practices, including wearing masks, record keeping and cleaning, are still in place. The following is a summary of the new provisions.

### **Numbers permitted for religious gatherings and ceremonies**

New limits from **Monday, November 23**

**Indoor** religious gatherings and ceremonies: Cap of **150** people with a density quotient of 1 person per 4 square metres.

**Outdoor** religious gatherings and ceremonies: Cap of **300** people with a density quotient of 1 person per 4 square metres.

At any one time, a venue can have either an indoor or outdoor ceremony, not both at the same time.

**Weddings:** Cap of **150** people with a density quotient of 1 person per 4 square metres indoors or outdoors. Persons necessary to conduct the wedding (such as celebrant and servers) are not counted in this limit.

**Funerals, including wakes:** Cap of **150** mourners with a density quotient of 1 person per 4 square metres indoors or outdoors. Persons necessary to conduct the funeral (such as a faith leader) are not counted in this limit.

**To calculate the number of people** who can gather in a particular area, you will need to measure the floor space and divide by 4. For example, if a church is 30 metres long x 10 metres wide, the area is 300 square metres. So you could have 75 people gather in that church for Mass.

**Note:** Cleaning, signage, record keeping, and other COVIDSafe requirements continue to apply. In general, those attending must wear masks. Masks may be removed when necessary, for example, while leading prayers or reading the Scriptures or receiving Communion.

God bless you all.

Bishop Paul Bird