

Wednesday 27th October 2021

Dear Parishioners,

I write on the eve of the feast of Ss Simon and Jude and with the feasts of All Saints and All Souls, on the 1st and 2nd November, fast approaching. I write not with a reflection this week, but just with information about opening up for Masses. Public Masses have slowly begun, and on Friday 29th October, that limited capacity will increase.

Firstly, you can view our website <https://perpetualhelp.org.au/> to keep up to date on Mass times and numbers. On the website you will also find the Newsletter and a reflection such as this.

This Friday, 29nd October, the new restriction levels allow religious ceremonies to have 30 people indoors, non-status, at each service (Non-status means that no proof of vaccination would be needed to be shown). We will return to our normal Mass schedule plus one extra Mass. For the sake of getting more people to Mass, I will also say Mass on Tuesday morning at Rosebud at 9:30am. This will make 10 Masses for the week and a possible 300 people at Mass per week. **Please do not all try to come on Sunday! The obligation to come on Sunday is still not in effect. Please come to one Mass per week and spread yourselves out over the week.**

There is no pre-booking, admittance is on arrival. I have found pre-booking to be too difficult to implement for our non-tech savvy Parish (no offence, I'm one of them ha!!) and too taxing on our wonderful secretaries.

Confessions will be heard half an hour before each Mass.

Holy Hour and Benediction will begin again at Rosebud for a 30 people limit on Thursday at 5:00pm.

The proposed new restrictions did not have an option to have more at an outside service. In any case, after just trying this at Dromana, it really didn't work, being too reliant on the weather - and I think I was a bit presumptuous of God's providence in this regard!

The new restriction levels also proposed the 4-square-meter-rule (100 people for Rosebud, 60 people for Dromana) for those providing proof of vaccination. However, we will not be taking this option. Dear brothers and sisters, reiterating what I said on [29th September](#) (refer to website), all are welcome to come to Church and to spiritually prepare themselves to receive the Sacraments. Setting the precedent of making entry to the Church conditional on vaccination status would seem to contradict the most basic Gospel values espoused by Christ which are to gather in without discrimination or prejudice. There are many other consequences I wish to avoid too. For instance, families whose members have different vaccination status would be split; parish volunteers being put in the position of policing people's vaccine status; or parishioners needing to reveal private medical information. I want to avoid these and other consequences. Opening a crack for such divisiveness in our community is unacceptable to me. As St Paul said, "For as many of you as were baptized into Christ have put on Christ. There is

neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is neither male nor female; for you are all one in Christ Jesus" (Gal 3:27-28)

For ceremonies such as funerals, weddings and baptisms it is up to the families to make the difficult decisions regarding allowed for numbers.

Dear brothers and sisters, I recognise and empathise that many of you will be quite nervous as our state opens up. Please know I am praying for you every day and commend you to the protection and guidance of Our Blessed Mother in all things. Something to consider is that, if you are nervous about crowds at the moment, 30 people in the Churches of Rosebud and Dromana is quite spacious. In any case, the Sunday obligation is still not in effect, so you might choose just to wait a while before returning to Mass in order to see how things pan out as things open up.

Brothers and sisters, I am aware in these situations whatever decisions I make I can't win. I really am trying to discern in good conscience the most prudent and pastoral path forward in these very trying times. Please know I'm very appreciative of your patience as we navigate gradually opening up. I think getting 300 people to Mass over the week is a good start. Please pray for me and all in our Parishes, and under Our Lady's mantle let us live as people with the great hope of those saved and loved by Jesus Christ.

God bless,

Fr John Paul