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August 4, 2020

Hello Everyone,

As you would be aware, the Victorian government has introduced further restrictions to counter the renewed spread of COVID-19.

In regional Victoria, including our Diocese of Ballarat, Stage 3 restrictions will apply from midnight on August 5. The restrictions will apply until September 13.

The regulations require that “religious ceremonies and private worship” be “broadcast only”. This means that our churches and chapels will be closed to the general public. It will still be possible to live stream Masses or other services from churches or chapels, although this would only involve those necessary to conduct the services and enable the live streaming. For information about Masses online, you could go to our diocesan website at www.ballarat.catholic.org.au

In regional Victoria, there are exceptions for weddings and funerals, though with limited numbers. For weddings, there may only be 5 people (the couple, two witnesses and the celebrant). For funerals, there may be up to 10 people, plus those conducting the funeral.

It is very sad that we will not be able to gather for Mass in the coming weeks. However, medical advice indicates that the restrictions are necessary for the health of the community. I hope and pray that these steps will be effective in reducing the impact of the pandemic and that we will be able to come together again soon to give thanks to God. In the meantime, we can pray anywhere and anytime in our own heart. Families can pray together at home. We might also pray with others online or simply with a phone call.

Christ promised to be with us always. May we know his presence in the weeks ahead.

Peace be with you.

God bless you all.

Bishop Paul