



7 September 2021

Dear brothers and sisters in Christ,

Pastoral Letter in Response to Revised Level 2 Restrictions

Yesterday the Prime Minister announced new changes to the Level 2 restrictions as we work together as a community to overcome the threat of this Delta outbreak. The new restriction of gatherings being limited to 50 people is understandable to offset the new clusters for outbreaks of Covid. For our parishes, however, it is problematic as they consider how to manage the new restrictions.

In light of this I have made the difficult decision to continue the suspension of public Masses in the Diocese for the next eight days. I have made an exception for funerals and already arranged weddings. These will have to adhere to the Government restrictions. In the next eight days I will be consulting with my staff, priests and parish staff, to consider how we might move Together, on this Journey, towards being reunited at Mass safely. Already your local priests have been given protocols regarding other sacramental care and this will be conveyed to you by your parish.

I have asked that our churches be open from tomorrow for individual prayer. In this Delta world visiting the churches will bring new challenges. People will be required to sign in. People will be required to wear masks. Please be gracious in accepting these requirements as a sign of your love and concern for your brothers and sisters in your parish community. And please, at this time, remember Auckland and other parts of the world that remain in strict lockdown.

In today's gospel we hear Jesus going away into the hills to pray. He often did this before major decisions or events. This time of Covid is an invitation for us to journey with Jesus in the wilderness and to deepen our relationship with the Lord. After his night in the hills people brought to Jesus those who needed to be cured. In your prayer time with the Lord please pray ardently for those that are sick, afraid or lonely in these challenging times. Pray that the presence of the virus quickly declines so we can worship together as normal once more. And pray also for our leaders who are entrusted with the task of protecting life.

In the midst of this new Delta-reality let us remember, that despite any restrictions the Lord is together with us, that He is with us on the journey, and let us look not just to our needs and wants, but let us rather live for Him who died and rose again for us and who continues to save us and raise us up.

Yours sincerely in Christ the Good Shepherd

+ *Steve Lowe*

✠ Steve Lowe
BISHOP OF HAMILTON



**TOGETHER
ON THE JOURNEY**
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