



We proclaim a crucified Christ

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STATEMENT

Friday, 11 September 2020

Caring for Those Facing Sickness and Death

The seriousness and duration of the COVID-19 Pandemic has worn heavily, and stretched and challenged each and every person.

On behalf of the Catholic community of Melbourne, I express my gratitude for the Premier's confirmation this morning that ministers of religion may visit the sick and the dying in hospitals, care facilities and homes. This is a fundamental obligation of Catholic clergy to people in their time of need, and an expectation not only of our people, but for many who are struggling to be present with their loved-ones in their last days.

Upon seeing the DHHS guideline updates yesterday, in which 'Last Rites' was forbidden, I made contact with the Government immediately to seek a revision on this specific Christian ministry of spiritual comfort and mercy.

Throughout the COVID-19 Pandemic the Catholic community has been transparent in its application of Government restrictions, however hard going this has been, and that our commitment to the common good and the law is maintained. However, when a law or restriction unfairly treats a religious community, it raises questions for members of that community. In this case, I was pleased to enter into a constructive dialogue, and the Premier very quickly responded to an obvious problem.

I remain always open to personally work through any issue that arises as the Victorian Roadmap unfolds.

I express my deepest and prayerful gratitude for the members of our clergy and faithful who have diligently supported and met the difficulties of these current times amidst the additional and heartfelt loss of the ability to be present and worship together physically.

I also wish to acknowledge the tireless efforts of so many in leadership, Government, health and community in meeting the ever-changing landscape, ensuring that the best possible pathways are put in place to keep people safe, and to move trending statistics in a positive direction.

Most Rev Peter A Comensoli
Archbishop of Melbourne

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