

MEDIA RELEASE



Polding Centre
133 Liverpool Street
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THOUSANDS OF CATHOLICS CELEBRATE MASS ONLINE

More than 15,000 Catholics watched live-streamed Masses across Sydney this weekend as a number of priests within the Archdiocese adopted modern technology to reach the faithful.

Such was the demand to tune into Archbishop Anthony Fisher's first private Mass, in an empty St Mary's Cathedral, that one website streaming it, momentarily crashed.

Welcoming the thousands online and via Facebook, Archbishop Fisher said, "please be assured that your priests, even if they cannot celebrate Mass with you, are celebrating Mass for you – and not just today but every day".

"We must be especially careful at this time that 'social distancing' does not mean distancing ourselves socially or spiritually from each other: indeed, as we separate physically we must find new ways of maintaining contact and strengthening communion."

About 10 parishes across the Archdiocese streamed to websites and Facebook pages following the government's order for churches to close due to COVID-19, with thousands tuning in for the live-stream and thousands more watching later on demand. Priests also provided digital prayer resources for use in the home and offered opportunities for church communities to come together online to pray throughout the week.

Many more parishes are expected to live-stream from next weekend.

In his homily, the Archbishop told the congregation isolating at home that it was not the first time the public celebration of Mass has been prohibited in Australia, but “in fact, the fifth time”.

He said how Governor Arthur Phillip ordered “no transubstantiation in the sacrament of the Holy Table” for the first 15 years after settlement and, again, on two other occasions during the convict era due to Irish uprisings before Mass was prohibited again for a fourth time in 1919 during the Spanish flu.

“The fifth time that public Mass was prohibited in Australia was this week past, when the COVID19 pandemic led to similar public health measures to those applied a century ago,” he said.

“Every time we’ve faced this before, the lay faithful have maintained their faith and devotion. Every time the Church has bounced back after the crisis stronger than before, more hungry for the Eucharist and with higher rates of Mass attendance.”

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Media contact:
Anita Quigley
Director Communications & News Media
Catholic Archdiocese of Sydney
Mobile: 0421 612 978
Email: anita.quigley@sydneycatholic.org