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Dear brothers and sisters in the Archdiocese of Tokyo:

**RE: ADVISORY AFTER THE JAPANESE GOVERNMENT'S FOURTH DECLARATION
OF A STATE OF EMERGENCY**

In its continued efforts to control the spread of COVID-19 infections, the government issued a fourth declaration of a state of emergency for a limited area. It was reported that Tokyo Metropolitan is included in the prescribed area, and the period will be from 12th July to 22nd August. Chiba Prefecture, on the other hand, will continue to be placed under a special designation that allows for intensive preventive measures against COVID-19.

The Tokyo Olympic games which starts on 23rd July and the Tokyo Paralympic games which starts on 24th August will be held in various places but mainly in the Tokyo Metropolitan area. With the declaration of a state of emergency, it is expected that the events will be held without spectators at venues especially in the Tokyo Metropolitan area. But at the same time, the gathering of the athletes and their support staff coming from all over the world raises concerns about causing further increase in number of coronavirus cases. For the past years, the Tokyo Archdiocese had originally been considering preparations so that each parish may be able to address the spiritual needs of the many people who would come to Japan for this international event. However, we have decided to cancel all plans and thus, will not take any special involvement in the Olympics and Paralympics. In addition, all those who will be coming to the Tokyo Metropolitan area during this period will be provided with information concerning the precautionary measures implemented against COVID-19 infection in the parishes and will be requested to refrain from visiting churches.

Since 30th January of last year, the Archdiocese of Tokyo has made a commitment that “we will not be infected, nor will we allow others to be infected.” Thus, we have implemented various precautionary measures and have taken seriously our responsibility to protect the lives of one another as we prevent the spread of infection to protect not only our own lives but also the lives of others. This time, with the fourth declaration of a state of emergency, we will continue our church activities while carefully implementing the precautionary measures as we have done before.

We will basically continue implementing the current “STAGE 3 PRECAUTIONARY MEASURES AS OF JUNE 20, 2021.”

We all know that the vaccination program is progressing. I myself have been vaccinated, as well as the Holy Father. But we basically have to decide for ourselves concerning this matter.

In addition, we are not considering the idea of making it a criterion, that is whether one is vaccinated or not, for allowing participation in the Holy Mass.

This year started with the declaration of a state of emergency and later continued to a special designation that allows for intensive preventive measures against COVID-19. And being placed once again under a state of emergency has seriously affected many people, especially those concerning economic activities. The Disaster Response Team of the Archdiocese has introduced through online seminars some activities which were organized by parishes and other groups to support those in need. Let us keep in mind that it is an important duty for us to protect not only our own lives but also to protect all those who have received God's gift of life. On top of that, as we take adequate measures against COVID-19 infection, let us do our best to respond to the concerns of those in need. In this difficult situation, may the merciful hands of our Lord through our outstretched hands be extended to the many people facing crisis in their lives.

Moreover, during these times of difficulties, let us put our trust in our Lord Jesus who promised us, "I am with you always, until the end of the age" and let us reaffirm our spiritual bond in the one body centered on the Lord.

For your information, the Archbishop's weekly message which serves as an aid to "Spiritual Communion" is delivered via internet every Saturday at 18:00 under the title of "Weekly Archbishop." Please check the channel "Catholic Tokyo Archdiocese" on YouTube.

Also, there are some churches such as Sekiguchi Church and Kojimachi Church that are livestreaming the Sunday Mass online. Please check them as well. I would like to ask for your active cooperation in every parish to assist those who are not familiar with handling devices such as computers and smartphones so that they may be able to join the masses online as well.

Tarcisio Isao Kikuchi, SVD
Archbishop of Tokyo

< REFERENCE > There are some slight changes. The revised portions are underlined.

STAGE 3 PRECAUTIONARY MEASURES AS OF JULY 22, 2021

1 : In order to keep a distance of at least one meter from each other while inside the Church, we have to limit the number of people who can enter the Church. If this is not possible, gathering inside the Church for liturgical celebrations will not be allowed. Moreover, if proper ventilation cannot be maintained during the celebration of the Holy Mass due to the structure of the church building, gathering inside the Church for liturgical celebrations will not be allowed. After the Holy Mass, kindly exit in an orderly manner and avoid conversations while inside the Church. For the time being, please refrain from "greetings" and "conversations" while inside the Church or around the premises.

Kindly follow the instructions of your parish priest on the specific ways to ensure social distancing inside the Church. Also, please refrain from going out in search of another Church where the Holy Mass is celebrated. Just follow the instructions in the Church where you belong to or in the community where you are part of. The parish will keep a record of those who participated in the Holy Mass in order to respond to the request of the public health department in the event of a confirmed case of COVID-19 infection. Careful handling of the personal information will be observed and proper discarding will be made later.

2 : (deleted)

3 : For the elderly and those with chronic illness, as much as possible kindly pray at home. However, the age limit will not be enforced in the Church. For families having some concerns or anxieties, kindly pray at home. Please take note that all the faithful of the Tokyo Archdiocese are dispensed from their obligation to attend Sunday Masses.

4 : As we had been doing since the beginning from 31st January 2020, let us continue to take proper precautionary measures against COVID-19 such as hand disinfection, providing sufficient ventilation, with everyone wearing face masks for the time being.

5 : For the moment, please refrain from “singing all together” and from “reciting the prayers all together” at Holy Mass and at gatherings. It is however possible to basically have an organist playing the hymns, a cantor singing alone using the microphone, or in case there is a wide space with proper ventilation, singing in a choir with a very limited number of members. Even during these cases, please keep a distance of about one meter from each other.

6 : In the meantime, there will be no offertory procession at the Holy Mass. Also, for the time being, please receive Holy Communion by hand, and everyone must sanitize their hands immediately before reception. For those who would like to receive Holy Communion by mouth, in order to avoid infecting other people with the fingers of the priest during distribution, kindly consult the parish priest beforehand.

7 : Except for the Holy Mass, all activities where people meet face-to-face such as meetings, assemblies, gatherings, study groups among others should as much as possible be conducted online. However, such activities may be allowed in the parish if the capacity of the venue (**less than half the capacity**), proper ventilation and the length of time (**maximum of one hour and 30 minutes**) is carefully considered. But please refrain from events that involve eating and drinking.

8 : For the sacrament of reconciliation, please take precautions to prevent droplet infection by using tools such as acrylic screens. Face shields are not a substitute for face masks. Even if you are using a face shield, please use also a face mask with it. Please take note that the notice released on 26th March 2020 regarding “The Message from the Apostolic Penitentiary on the Sacrament of Reconciliation and on Granting of Special Indulgence” is still valid.

Note: Priests who are above 75 years old may preside in the celebration of the Holy Mass and distribute Holy Communion. In distributing the sacred host, kindly make sure that hands are disinfected and a face mask is worn. The parish priest may ask some parishioners to serve as “extraordinary ministers of Holy Communion” should he find it necessary.