



ROMAN CATHOLIC
DIOCESE
OF CHARLESTON
OFFICE OF THE BISHOP

March 16, 2020

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

The COVID-19 coronavirus continues to spread throughout the United States, and we must take care to protect ourselves and those who are most vulnerable. The Center of Disease Control and various government entities have issued directives to limit the number of people who can gather in one place. As a result of these recommendations, and in collaboration with other dioceses in our province, there are to be no sacramental or other liturgical celebrations anywhere in the Diocese of Charleston effective at 12:00 p.m. on Tuesday, March 17 through the end of day on Wednesday, April 1, 2020.

This directive means there are to be no Masses in the Diocese during this time; therefore, I am granting dispensation for your Sunday Mass obligation for the weekends of March 21-22 and March 27-28. Additionally, all scheduled Confessions are cancelled. Any baptisms planned in the next sixteen days should be rescheduled. All quinceañeras must be canceled or rescheduled. Confirmations will be rescheduled according to each parish's calendar. Funerals and weddings may occur but will be celebrated privately with just the immediate family present. Unfortunately, perpetual adoration will have to be temporarily discontinued. There will be no regularly scheduled parish activities until further notice. All scheduled penance services are cancelled, and there will be no Communion calls at hospitals, nursing homes, or private homes until further notice.

The sole exception to this policy is the celebration of the final sacraments for those in danger of death. If you need a priest for the Anointing of the Sick or Last Rites, your pastor will provide a number you can call.

Parish churches will remain open during their normal hours so that you can come to pray. Parish offices will remain open at the discretion of the pastor.

The College of Consultors and I will meet again on Monday, March 30, to decide how we will proceed, including whether we will have public or limited Holy Week services. In the meantime, we will update you on our response to this ever-changing health crisis on The Catholic Miscellany and diocesan websites, and on our various social media pages. These may seem like drastic measures; however, we must put public safety first. We are dealing with a deadly virus.

In the coming weeks, I encourage you to pray. Watch Mass on your computer or on your television. Gather your family and pray together. We are still on this sacrificial journey of

Lent. We must mark these turbulent times with prayer asking for the Lord's boundless mercy as well as showing His love through kindness and care for our neighbors.

These are days when we truly must care for one another by taking the appropriate precautions and providing needed help. Let us pray that the virus is dispatched quickly as we look forward to celebrating the resurrection of our Lord on Easter Sunday.

In the Lord's Peace,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Robert E. Guglielmo". The signature is written in a cursive style with a small cross at the beginning.

Most Rev. Robert E. Guglielmo
Bishop of Charleston