



CONTACT:

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MEMORANDUM

To: To All Diocesan Entities and to the People of God
From: Office of the Bishop
Date: March 13, 2020
Re: Diocese of Las Cruces COVID-19 Response

Wednesday, March 11, Governor Lujan Grisham declared a State of Emergency due to the COVID-19 pandemic. The Diocese is issuing the following measures and directives in response. These directives will remain in effect until further notice. The Diocese is closely monitoring the situation and will post updates every Thursday, or as necessary.

Preventive Measures

Proper Hygiene per Center for Disease Control (CDC) guidelines:

- Wash your hands often with soap and water for at least 20 seconds.
 - If soap and water are not readily available, use a hand sanitizer that contains at least 60% alcohol.
- Avoid touching your eyes, nose, and mouth.
- Cover coughs and sneezes.
- Frequently clean or sterilize surfaces such as desktops, keyboards, phones, doorknobs, etc.
- Stay home if you are sick.

Adhere to the recommendations of the CDC <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/index.html> and the New Mexico Department of Health <http://cv.nmhealth.org/> specific to a viral or bacterial outbreak. **If you suspect you have been exposed, call the New Mexico Coronavirus Hotline: 1- 855-600-3453.**



Operational Response

Catholic Schools - The New Mexico Public Education Department has issued a statewide closure of schools effective March 16. Students will be allowed to return to school Monday, April 6. All Catholic schools will follow the statewide school closure.

Parish Offices - The Diocese will follow directives issued by the State of New Mexico with regard to workplace closure. Parish offices will therefore remain open unless otherwise notified.

Diocesan Pastoral Center - Consistent with the parish offices the Pastoral Center will follow directives issued by the State of New Mexico with regard to workplace closure. In the event of the closure of the Pastoral Center, essential personnel will remain available.

Liturgical Considerations

Due to the increasing number of confirmed COVID-19 cases in the State and with particular concern for those most vulnerable to the virus, as well as those treating and caring for the sick, Bishop Baldacchino has dispensed all Catholics from the obligation to attend Sunday Mass. Mass will, however, continue to be celebrated in our parishes as regularly scheduled.

All persons should be strongly urged to stay home if they are ill, elderly or if they have compromised immune systems. Persons with infants and young children are also advised to avoid large gatherings, as are those who may simply be fearful of possible contagion for themselves and/or their families

Those not attending Mass are asked to find the Mass on TV, the radio or on-line and make a Spiritual Communion. Where that is not an option, it would be appropriate to pray the Liturgy of the Hours or the Rosary.

Resources for Sunday Liturgy

<https://www.catholicextension.org/stories/sunday-catholic-mass-online>

<https://www.ewtn.com/catholicism/devotions/act-of-spiritual-communion-339>

<https://www.ewtn.com/tv>

<http://www.usccb.org/prayer-and-worship/prayers-and-devotions/rosaries/how-to-pray-the-rosary.cfm>

Non-Liturgical Events

Large public gatherings in parishes such as dinners, lunches and other social gatherings should be postponed or cancelled until further notice. State guidelines concerning large gatherings are available at <http://cv.nmhealth.org/>.



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Confirmation Retreats

Pastors, conscious of the particular circumstances of their towns and parishes, should determine whether or not to proceed with confirmation retreats. In the event that a pastor does determine that the retreat will be held, candidates will not be required to attend. Bishop Baldacchino has waived the requirement to attend the retreat as a condition for Confirmation.

Faith Formation Classes

Faith Formation classes will follow the statewide school closure protocol. All classes are therefore cancelled until April 6. Pastors and catechists should contact the office of Young Adult Ministry for materials that can be viewed at home.