



Roman Catholic Diocese of Providence

Office of Communications

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For Immediate Release:
March 12, 2020

Contact: 278-4600

Directives from the Diocese of Providence in Response to the Coronavirus Crisis

(PROVIDENCE, RI) – For the health, safety and well-being of our faith community, the Diocese of Providence has announced the following directives in response to the Coronavirus Crisis:

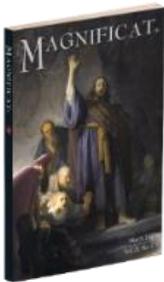
- Masses throughout the Diocese of Providence will continue to be offered at this time. However, in light of the serious health crisis caused by the coronavirus, the Diocesan Bishop hereby dispenses Catholics in the Diocese of Providence from the obligation to attend Sunday Mass beginning immediately and continuing through Sunday, March 29, 2020. Members of the faithful who are sixty-years of age or older, particularly those with underlying health conditions, are especially encouraged to take advantage of this dispensation.
- During this health crisis, pastors are permitted to adjust their liturgical and devotional schedules according to local conditions, while continuing to meet the pastoral and spiritual needs of the faithful, particularly regarding the celebration of funerals and weddings. To the extent possible, churches should remain open during the day for personal prayer, small group gatherings, devotions, and visits to the Blessed Sacrament.
- Regarding the celebration of major liturgical celebrations already scheduled, e.g. the Sacrament of Confirmation, pastors should confer with the Diocesan Office of Divine Worship.
- When gathering for liturgies and devotions, pastors and parishioners are urged to follow carefully the recommendations which have already been promulgated by the Diocesan Office of Divine Worship.
- In keeping with directives issued by the State of Rhode Island, pastors and school administrators should carefully evaluate the advisability of holding any social events scheduled in the parish or school, such as dinners, senior citizen gatherings, youth events, sporting events, fundraisers and field trips, always with the health and welfare of the participants foremost in mind.
- In keeping with recommendations issued by health officials in the State of Rhode Island, it may be necessary for Bishop Thomas Tobin and Bishop Robert Evans to limit their public schedules.
- All members of the Diocese of Providence are urged to pray fervently for all those affected by this health crisis – those who have been infected by the virus, their families, caregivers and health providers. Through the intercession of our Blessed Mother, Our Lady of Providence, and of St. Joseph, Patron of the Universal Church, may Almighty God grant healing, peace, comfort and strength to all.

FROM: *Office of Divine Worship*

As pastors committed to promoting and protecting the well-being of our parishioners, we need to be as cautious and prudent as possible in responding to any possible threat, especially for children and the elderly. Since conditions vary from one locale to another, the most effective approach is at the level of the local parish. Pastors are therefore encouraged to prudentially consider the following guidelines and suggestions as they pertain to your local community:

- During the Eucharistic Liturgy, the Sign of Peace need not be announced or exchanged. (As you know, the exchange of peace is always optional during Holy Mass, omitting the invitation “let us offer each other the sign of peace” GIRM 154)
- The use of Holy Water at the entrances of the Church should be available at the discretion of the Pastor. It should be changed daily or discontinued for the time being. Pastors should encourage the faithful who attend Holy Mass to limit their proximity to others whenever possible and avoid overcrowding.
- Those who are distributing Holy Communion should be especially mindful of the particular need for personal hygiene before the distribution of Holy Communion. The best approach is always to wash one’s hands with soap and water.
- For all programs of religious education and youth ministry, please follow very carefully the directives of the Rhode Island Department of Health.
- While Masses will continue to be offered, individuals should consider on their own whether they should continue to attend Holy Mass as long as they do not exhibit any symptoms. This is an obligation in charity that parishioners should take very seriously.

Finally, but certainly not least in importance, we approach this situation as we approach everything in life, from the perspective of our faith and in prayer. Please ask the Lord's protection upon our community and those throughout the world during this time of concern for the potential of widespread illness.



During this difficult time, many of the faithful may be unable to attend Mass. To help them sanctify their day and to keep walking in the liturgical rhythm of the Church, we are honored to make our [online version](#) of MAGNIFICAT temporarily available to [everyone for free](#).

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