



DIOCESE
of
LAFAYETTE-IN-INDIANA

March 17, 2020

11:00am EST

Statement from the Diocese of Lafayette-in-Indiana on the Suspension of Public Celebration of Mass

Dear Brothers and Sisters,

Recently, the health and safety conditions in our diocesan community have shifted. The spread of the COVID-19 virus is a moment for Catholics to rely more deeply on their faith, deepen our prayer life and find ways to show loving kindness towards our neighbors. Offering special prayers of intercession for the healing of those infected, for the protection of the elderly and infirm who are at greatest risk, for the prevention of the disease's spread, and for the courage and strength of care providers who minister to the sick, their families and those most in need, should become part of our daily prayer offerings. As your bishop, know that I am just as concerned about the health of our priests, especially those who are over the age of 60 and most at risk. There are sobering reports from Italy about priests' virus-related deaths and hospitalizations.

Therefore, based on current guidelines from civic leaders and public health officials, I, as bishop of Lafayette-in-Indiana, together with all the bishops of the Province of Indianapolis, have mandated the suspension of all public celebrations of the Mass, other liturgical services and gatherings of the faithful effective Wednesday, March 18, 2020 and until further notice. Of course, the dispensation from the obligation to attend Sunday Mass from March 13, 2020 continues until further notice. It is not a permanent dispensation.

The following decisions and directives have been formulated with local and statewide consultation. As a bishop, it hurts my heart to limit access to our churches and to the Divine Liturgy. I am in a position to make decisions that others cannot or will not, so I ask your prayers for the yet unforeseen challenges that we face in slowing down the contagion.

Today's Mass reading from Daniel 3:25, 34-43 seems appropriate. "Azariah stood up in the fire and prayed aloud." We are there with him in some way, so let's make his prayer our own. And let us commend each other to God's daily protection and strength.

+ Timothy Doherty

Bishop Timothy Doherty



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Directives for the Diocese of Lafayette-in-Indiana going forward. These are effective 12:01am EST, March 18, 2020 (this means no public Masses on Wednesday, March 18)

- We encourage all priests to celebrate Mass privately for the good of the People of God, the church and the intentions of the day. The bishop has given permission (GIRM, 374) for the Masses and Prayers for Various Needs and Occasions as well as Votive Masses on Lenten weekdays during this time.
- Priests are forbidden to celebrate a public Mass; no home or outdoor Masses are permitted.
- The public will not be admitted to Masses celebrated in monasteries, convents, or hospital chapels. Hospitals will continue to set their own rules for access and entrance.
- At this time, we would ask each pastor who has scheduled a Propagation of the Faith appeal to contact and cancel the appeal until further instruction is provided.
- Online Masses provide opportunities for the faithful to remain connected in some way to the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass during this difficult time. Parishes with the potential to broadcast their own Masses should do so. All permission requirements for the online use of the prayers and readings of the Mass in both English and Spanish have been granted.
- The bishop will continue to offer Masses at Church of the Blessed Sacrament on Sunday's at 8am; they will be livestreamed online at: <http://churchoftheblessedsacrament.yourstreamlive.com/>
 - During a time of prayer on Sunday or while viewing the Mass online, the faithful are encouraged to make an act of Spiritual Communion. This beautiful devotional practice in the Church is a real source of grace in communion with our Lord. Below is an example of a prayer for spiritual communion:
My Jesus, I believe that You are present in the Most Holy Sacrament. I love You above all things, and I desire to receive You into my soul. Since I cannot at this moment receive You sacramentally, come at least spiritually into my heart. I embrace You as if You were already there and unite myself wholly to You. Never permit me to be separated from You. Amen.
 - The faithful are also encouraged to prayerfully read the readings of Sacred Scripture for the day or to pray the rosary. The goal is for our diocese to create a virtual spiritual community that provides hope and opportunity for prayerfulness. We will offer a nightly family rosary at 7pm as well as Friday Stations of the Cross at 6pm will be livestreamed from Church of the Blessed Sacrament:
<http://churchoftheblessedsacrament.yourstreamlive.com/>
 - Word on Fire, Magnificat online, and Formed are great resources as well.
- The diocese is asking pastors and administrators to utilize staff in parishes in a safe and limited way to perform the most essential functions and to attend to routine maintenance with a heightened focus on disinfecting all areas of common use until further notice.



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- Food pantries may continue to serve those in need but please make sure your process includes a method for goods to be packaged and handed out in a sanitary way by volunteers and respects personal space. The personal protections for the physical safety of volunteers should be considered.
- Out of an abundance of caution, churches and chapels, including perpetual adoration chapels, should remain closed until further notice.
- Decisions about the celebrations during Holy Week and other liturgical items will be made in the coming days.
- As to the celebration of other Sacraments whenever possible, any scheduled celebrations should be postponed until further notice. This includes the celebration of the Sacraments of Baptism, Confirmation and Holy Matrimony. There should be no regularly scheduled Confessions at this time. See below.
 - More information will be forthcoming regarding the health precautions that should be taken for the celebration of the Sacraments of Penance and the Anointing of the Sick (and other Rites in Exceptional Circumstances), which should be administered whenever possible for those in danger of death. Regularly scheduled visits to vulnerable persons and to the homebound should be suspended until further notice.
 - Finally, the celebration of funerals should be postponed whenever possible. If a funeral is offered, then it should be celebrated outside of Mass and in the presence of a very small number of the faithful who practice the prescribed precautions for hygiene and social distancing. A Mass for the intention and the repose of the soul of the deceased may be offered privately by the priest.
- Additionally, the bishop is asking diocesan level directors to coordinate with their employees on their schedules in the office. It may make sense for those employees who are able to work remotely from home to do so until further notice.
- All Catholic school facilities in the diocese will continue to be closed until further notice.
- All retreats at the Saint Joseph Retreat & Conference Center are canceled until further notice.
- Information related to compensation and care for our employees and for the financial well-being of our communities will be communicated with pastors and administrators as per our previous memo.