



March 16, 2020

My dear Sisters and Brothers in the Joliet Diocese,

Thank you very much for your cooperation with actions that have been taken to minimize, to the degree possible, the spread of COVID - 19 (coronavirus). Your health, as well as the health of the public at large, have been my deepest concern. It is important that all of us cooperate with public leadership to make our efforts as effective as possible in containing this pandemic.

I fully realize and feel the painful loss along with you the cancellation of Masses on weekends. Because celebrating Mass is central to whom we are, I understand that its absence creates a palpable void. However, out of genuine concern for the welfare of everyone, I believe it is prudent to cancel weekend Masses for the time being.

Certain liturgical gatherings, namely daily Mass, funerals, and weddings are permitted provided that:

1. The service may not have an attendance in excess of 50 persons. This number is the current directive of Governor Pritzker. Going forward, our point of reference regarding numbers will be those issued by the Governor of Illinois.
2. Every precaution be taken to prevent the spread of the virus.

The attached liturgical accommodations are being implemented and parishes are called to curtail or cancel other non-essential gatherings. These two directives will be ended when it is prudently advisable.

I want to strongly encourage all of the faithful to continue our Lenten practices of prayer, fasting, and almsgiving. Need experienced by those served by the Church continues, even especially so, at this time of crisis. Please consider reaching out to your local parish about the possibility of providing financial support or personal assistance.

Catholic Charities, which serves many of the poor and elderly in the Diocese of Joliet, has a special need for volunteers to serve those in vulnerable situations. Please visit <http://www.cc.doj.org> for more information.

During this extraordinary time, our efforts throughout the community are to the benefit of all and are very much in accord with our identity as Christians. Be assured your participation contributes significantly to the common good.

Once again, I am fully cognizant this is a time of severe uncertainty and fear. I promise my wholehearted prayer and support. Especially comforting is the realization that the Dear Lord accompanies us in our trials.

Sincerely yours in Christ,

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Most Reverend Richard E. Pates
Apostolic Administrator
Diocese of Joliet

Liturgical Accommodations during the COVID – 19 Pandemic

Diocese of Joliet

Effective March 17, 2020 until prudently advisable to discontinue.

1. Dispensation from the obligation of Sunday Mass is effective immediately.
2. The reception of Holy Communion should be by hand only...reception on tongue is temporarily suspended.
3. Reception of the Precious Blood is suspended.
4. The exchange of peace should be expressed verbally.
5. The Holy Water fonts should be emptied and not filled again. Our parishes could make the Holy Water available in containers by which parishioners could fill their own bottles.

Your cooperation with the foregoing is genuinely appreciated. While it is understood that the expected practices may be difficult for some, I assure you they are being undertaken for the common good and to significantly halt the spread of the virus.

Prayers are essential. You are encouraged to intensify the classical Lenten practice of prayer, fasting and almsgiving. Archbishop José Gomez, President of the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops has composed the following, beautiful prayer to Our Lady of Guadalupe, Patroness of the Americas, for our use at this time.

Prayer to Our Lady of Guadalupe During COVID-19 Pandemic by Archbishop José Gomez

Holy Virgin of Guadalupe,
Queen of the Angels and Mother of the Americas.
We fly to you today as your beloved children.
We ask you to intercede for us with your Son,
as you did at the wedding in Cana.

Pray for us, loving Mother,
and gain for our nation and world,
and for all our families and loved ones,
the protection of your holy angels,
that we may be spared the worst of this illness.

For those already afflicted,
we ask you to obtain the grace of healing and deliverance.
Hear the cries of those who are vulnerable and fearful,
wipe away their tears and help them to trust.

In this time of trial and testing,
teach all of us in the Church to love one another and to be patient and kind.
Help us to bring the peace of Jesus to our land and to our hearts.