

Statement of the Archdiocese of Indianapolis on the Suspension of Public Celebration of Mass and the Temporary Closure of the Archbishop Edward T. O'Meara Catholic Center and Agencies (03/17/20):

As the health and safety conditions in our archdiocesan community have shifted, the spread of the COVID-19 virus is a moment for Catholics and all people of goodwill to offer 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. With deep trust in the Lord and with a close attentiveness to the guidance given by experts in the fields of health and safety, the following decisions have been made about our operations

Based on the recommendations from health officials concerning the danger of the COVID-19 pandemic and the urgency to stem the spread of the virus, the five Catholic bishops of Indiana have suspended effective March 18 and until further notice all public Sunday and weekday Masses throughout the Province of Indianapolis, which is comprised of the Archdiocese of Indianapolis and the Dioceses of Gary, Evansville, Fort Wayne-South Bend, and Lafayette.

Archbishop Charles C. Thompson, the Archbishop of Indianapolis, has also suspended all other liturgical services and gatherings of the faithful effective Wednesday, March 18 and until further notice. Of course, the archbishop's dispensation from the obligation to attend Sunday Mass from March 13 continues until further notice.

- 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 archbishop 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.
- Televised and 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 archbishop and some of the priests on his staff will be making online Masses available soon. Please visit the homepage of the archdiocese, www.archindy.org, for more information.

- During a time of prayer on Sunday or while viewing the Mass on T.V. or 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.
- To provide for the pastoral needs of the people, pastors and parish life coordinators are invited to utilize staff in parishes in a safe and limited way to perform the most essential functions and to attend to routine maintenance.
- Out of an abundance of caution, parishes and chapels, including perpetual adoration chapels, should remain closed until further notice.
- Decisions about the celebrations during Holy Week and beyond 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.
- 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.

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