



## **Health and Safety Measures for Pastoral Life in the Diocese of Paterson Effective Immediately By Mandate of the Bishop**

As the cases of coronavirus increase exponentially, it is a moral imperative for all people to do what is humanly possible to prevent the spread of the illness. Large gatherings of people have rapidly become a grave health risk. Therefore, I am making the following provisions for the Diocese of Paterson, effective immediately.

### **Suspension of Public Masses**

All public Masses are hereby suspended in the Diocese of Paterson until further notice. Since the Eucharist is the source and summit of the Christian life, all priests of the Diocese of Paterson must celebrate Mass privately for the good of all of the Christian faithful entrusted to their care and for all people during this critical time. Priests should celebrate this private Mass even if another priest or deacon cannot be with them to assist. Priests are reminded of the obligation to offer Mass for the intentions of those who have made an offering for the Mass.

We take to heart the admonition of Saint Paul: "Rejoice in hope, endure in affliction, persevere in prayer." (Romans 12:12). This would be a time to encourage families to pray the Rosary at home, and to make the grace before meals a time for fathers and mothers, and all families, to center their homes on prayer and reliance upon God's mercy.

### **Suspension of Welcome Home to Healing Confessions, Lenten Penance Services**

The *Welcome Home to Healing* initiative of Monday night confessions is suspended. Any scheduled Penance Services or Penitential Liturgies are suspended. Any gatherings of the faithful for private devotions such as the Stations of the Cross are also suspended. Our churches are to remain open to the faithful for private prayer. Please note that praying in large clusters or groups of people is prohibited. You must observe the government curfews.

## **Adoration and Private Prayer**

Parishes are encouraged to expose the Blessed Sacrament for at least three hours each day so that the faithful may come and pray and unite themselves in spiritual communion with the Lord. The hours for Exposition and Adoration should be posted. Priests should administer the Sacrament of Penance or the Sacrament of the Anointing of the Sick to the Christian faithful who legitimately request those sacraments.

## **Suspension of the Sacrament of Confirmation**

The celebration of the Sacrament of Confirmation is hereby suspended in the Diocese of Paterson. Confirmation retreats should be deferred. As developments continue to unfold, we will assess the situation. When it is prudent, we will make the necessary arrangements for the celebration of the Sacrament.

## **First Penance and First Holy Communion**

Since the celebrations of First Penance and First Holy Communion bring together large groups of people, both celebrations are to be deferred in all parishes until further notice.

## **Baptisms, Weddings, and Funerals**

The celebration of baptisms, weddings, and funerals is left to the discretion of the local pastor. The pastor must take into account the ongoing guidance from civil authorities regarding the acceptable size of crowds in public spaces. Every effort to guide couples with pastoral sensitivity must be made. Priests must always be attentive to the grieving and pray for God's mercy upon the departed. Should questions arise, please contact the Office of the Vicar General.

## **Holy Week and the Sacred Triduum**

Any decision in terms of Holy Week, the Chrism Mass, the Sacred Triduum, and Easter will be made as we monitor the situation. Parishes will be advised in due time.

Thank you for your cooperation and all necessary steps you take in order to minimize the spread of the coronavirus. We pray for the healing gifts of the Holy Spirit to descend upon all people during this critical period. In this time of trial, we depend on the mercy and goodness of God to protect us.

Therefore, I urge all to join in fervent prayer, especially by praying the rosary. Through the intercession of our Blessed Mother, may the Lord, in his mercy, deliver us from this present danger.

All to the contrary notwithstanding.

Given at the Chancery of the Diocese of Paterson, this 16<sup>th</sup> day of March, 2020.

  
Most Reverend Arthur J. Serratelli, S.T.D., S.S.L., D.D.  
Bishop of Paterson

  
Sister Joan Daniel Healy, S.C.C.  
Chancellor