



Diocese of Rockford

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Office of the Bishop

March 20, 2020

Dear Monsignor/Father,

I write to you once more given more guidance that has come to us about how to respond to the coronavirus outbreak and its rapid spread.

At this time, health authorities have announced the need for **a strict limit of ten persons maximum for any gathering**. Therefore, effective immediately, weddings, baptisms and funerals may only be celebrated under that circumstance. If that limit established by the health authorities cannot be agreed to, the ceremony will have to be postponed. Graveside services may be held under the same condition. This guidance will also be conveyed to the funeral homes in the Diocese of Rockford.

In the interest of public health, please postpone all Quinceneras until further notice.

Given this guidance, all parish churches are to adhere to this limit at all times. Pastors, at their discretion, may leave the Church open for private prayer provided they are able at all times to observe this restriction. Please note, as previously indicated, the distribution of Holy Communion and the administration of the Sacrament of the Sick should be only for emergency situations at this time following the guidance of the health authorities. That means any other efforts, including proposals for communion in people in cars should not be utilized. Please observe that directive strictly and ask your faithful to make a spiritual union at this time when physical participation is not possible.

As noted previously, no public Masses on weekdays or Sundays are to be celebrated until further notice. While priests are to celebrate Mass privately daily, especially in the current situation of great spiritual need, this must be done without the presence of the faithful for the time being. Do not gather an informal group for a private Mass as we seek to limit the spread of the virus.

In addition, the Congregation for Divine Worship and the Discipline of the Sacraments has today issued instructions for celebration of Holy Week. I am attaching that letter. **Please note that the Congregation stresses that the celebrations should take place only in the Cathedral or parish churches, not in rectory chapels or other venues.** Given this guidance, the Diocese of Rockford will respond as follows:

The Chrism Mass: The Chrism Mass for the Diocese of Rockford will be celebrated as originally scheduled on Holy Thursday at 11:00 a.m. from St. Peter Cathedral Parish. I will celebrate this Mass along with Monsignor Glenn Nelson as Vicar General. The Mass will be live-streamed without the presence of other faithful or priests except for the Cathedral Rector and Masters of Ceremonies. I ask that in order for us to try to keep the rhythm of our liturgical practice, all priests consider following the Mass as it is streamed in order to renew together, from your parish, our priestly promises. The oils will be blessed and held for subsequent distribution when possible.

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Holy Thursday: I will celebrate the Mass of the Lord's Supper again with Monsignor Glenn Nelson, Father St. Jules and Masters of Ceremonies. It will be live-streamed from the Cathedral at 7:00 p.m. Priests are given the faculty to celebrate this Mass in the parish church without the presence of the faithful. That condition is to be observed. I would urge where possible that your faithful be given the opportunity to follow the liturgy by some element of live-streaming. Please note the changes in the liturgy outlined by the Congregation that are to be observed. Only one Mass is to be celebrated by all the priests of the parish.

Good Friday: Under the same conditions outlined above, I will celebrate the Good Friday liturgy at St. Peter Cathedral at 2:00 p.m. without the faithful being present. Priests should do the same at the time chosen for the parish, again with no faithful present.

No other gatherings of any sort will be celebrated such as Stations of the Cross or any sort of distribution of the sacraments except in the case of an individual emergency.

The Easter Vigil: Again I will celebrate the Vigil Mass in the manner outlined by the Congregation at St. Peter Cathedral at 7:30 p.m. Priests are again given the exceptional faculty to celebrate this Mass without the people and that is to be observed. Please note the liturgical changes granted by the Congregation.

Again, brothers, I stress the urgency of following the directives contained here as a response to the health emergency we are facing. At the same time, in a way different than any of us has ever experienced, we need to enter into the conclusion of Lent and into Holy Week in a manner that offers the spiritual riches of the Liturgy for our faithful and for the world.

Sincerely yours in Christ,

+ *David J. Malloy*

Most Reverend David J. Malloy
Bishop of Rockford

Attachment