



DIOCESE OF GRAND RAPIDS

Office of the Bishop

April 8, 2020

Dear Friends in Christ,

We have continued to see the grave impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic on our cities, in our state, and across the world. Mindful of the current circumstances and to continue our efforts to protect the common good, I write today to announce that **the Diocese of Grand Rapids has extended its cancellation of ALL public Masses and all other liturgical and devotional services, effective immediately, through April 30, 2020.** With this suspension, all Catholics within the territory of the Diocese of Grand Rapids are granted a dispensation from their obligation of attending Sunday Mass through April 30. Priests are to continue to celebrate Mass each day without a congregation. Priests may not invite the laity to attend their private Mass.

The celebration of the Eucharist is the source and summit of the Christian life. I fully understand the gravity of these extensions in the life of the Church and the great sacrifices everyone is making without public Masses. This decision, along with the many others made before it, has not been undertaken without prudent consideration. While we cannot be gathered together to celebrate the Eucharistic feast, we are still receiving the Lord's graces.

You are encouraged to unite yourself with Jesus during this time by making a [spiritual Communion during the televised and livestreamed Masses](#). Families are invited to use this time to pray together. Let us renew our efforts to turn to the Lord. Spiritual resources can be found on the diocesan website, grdiocese.org.

I am deeply grateful for our priests who have risen to the challenge to connect with their parishioners in new ways. They are evermore keeping their ordination promise to "implore God's mercy upon the people entrusted to their care by observing the command to pray without ceasing."

I wish to profoundly thank our health care professionals – doctors, nurses, technicians, administrators, and support staff – all of you – have demonstrated courage, compassion, and remarkable professional care in a time of growing crisis. We are blessed by your ministry and witness!

I would also like to commend the response of the Catholic faithful to heed these orders designed to protect the common good, and for the many heartfelt efforts to check on your family and neighbors. "...Let us love not in word or speech but in deed and truth." (1 John 3:18)

My directives on parish life issued on March 23 are extended through April 30, 2020. These directives should continue to guide the ministry of our Catholic parishes and schools.

During this extension, exceptions for infant baptisms and weddings only will be made. If celebrated, the sacraments must adhere to the following guidelines.

Infant baptism must be celebrated outside Mass with the following conditions in place:

- Baptisms are to be held individually. Those present for the baptism are to be limited to the minister, infant, parents, and godparents.
- Contact between the minister and infant is to be as minimal as the rite allows.
- Social distance is to be maintained insofar as possible.
- It is recommended that adult participants wear face masks.
- A small basin of holy water should be blessed and used for each individual baptism, and then discarded appropriately.

Weddings should be postponed if possible. Wedding receptions are not to be held on parish property. If a wedding is to be celebrated, then it must be celebrated outside Mass with the following conditions in place:

- Those present for the wedding are to be limited to the minister, the couple being married, and two witnesses.
- Contact between the minister and couple is to be as minimal as the rite allows.
- Social distance is to be maintained insofar as possible.

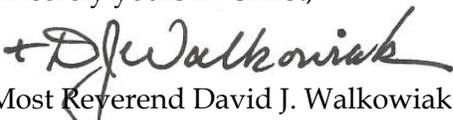
The prior directives for funerals remain in place. And are as follows:

- Funerals are to be celebrated without Mass with only immediate family members present, limiting those gathered to 10.
 - Alternately, a committal service at the cemetery may be celebrated outdoors, with the appropriate social distancing guidelines in place, with a memorial Mass to be celebrated at a later date.

For up-to-date information about the Diocese of Grand Rapids' response to the COVID-19 pandemic, visit <http://bit.ly/GRdioceseCOVID19Updates>.

Please join us in praying for the remarkable doctors and health care workers who are treating those who are sick, and for front-line employees who are keeping us all safe. Please pray for the sick and the deceased, may they feel the loving presence of Christ, and for all who are impacted by this virus. Relying on the intercession of our Blessed Mother, [we pray for an end to this pandemic](#). As we celebrate the sacred mysteries of this Holy Week, we trust in the hope found in the Lord's glorious Resurrection.

Sincerely yours in Christ,



Most Reverend David J. Walkowiak
Bishop of Grand Rapids