



**DIOCESE**  
*of*  
**TYLER**

**Additional Precautionary Measures in Response to  
Concerns about Novel Coronavirus (COVID-19)**

March 13, 2020

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

As we continue to monitor the situation and follow best practices regarding the prevention of the spread of the novel coronavirus disease (COVID-19), and recognizing that this is a dynamic and evolving situation, I am announcing the following measures which are intended to limit the possibility of local transmission of the disease and keep our parishioners and the wider East Texas community healthy. These measures are effective immediately and are to be communicated to the faithful by the pastors of the diocese. The continuation or modification of these measures will be announced on April 1.

1. All non-liturgical events and public gatherings on parish or diocesan property are to be postponed or canceled. This includes faith formation and religious education classes, parish meetings, retreats, conferences, and other public events.
2. At this time, the celebration of Mass should continue according to normal parish schedules. The temporary liturgical regulations announced on March 10 remain in effect. The faithful who attend Mass should consider putting additional distance between themselves and other parishioners.
3. The following categories of persons are granted a dispensation from the Sunday Mass obligation. Those who do not attend Sunday Mass should, if possible, devote some time to prayer and make a spiritual communion.
  - a. The faithful in the high-risk category due to current illness, age (60+), or suffering from a chronic health condition (like high blood pressure, kidney disease, cancer, or diabetes), or compromised immune system.
  - b. The faithful who care for the above persons, those who live with them, and those who are in regular contact with them.
  - c. The faithful who, for a just cause, may feel uncomfortable in large groups or in close contact with others.
4. The faithful in the high-risk category due to current illness, age (60+), or suffering from a chronic health condition (like high blood pressure, kidney disease, cancer, or diabetes), or compromised immune system, are asked to remain at home. This also applies to those who have traveled to affected areas.

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5. Parishes are asked to observe heightened sanitization and hygiene standards at this time.
  - a. Please remove hymnals, missalettes, prayer cards, and other items from the pews. These commonly handled items can serve to inadvertently transmit viruses from one person to the next.
  - b. Please continue to take measures to ensure that common surfaces (pews, door handles, restrooms, etc.) are regularly disinfected.
  - c. Holy water fonts and stoups are to be emptied.
  - d. Ushers and those who assist with the collection may consider using latex gloves.

I believe these are appropriate precautions that will help safeguard the health of those we serve. They are also consistent with actions being taken by civil authorities and other groups in our area.

In addition to these measures, we must continue to pray for those who are ill, those who care for them, and for those who are working to keep our communities safe from disease. In this spirit, I am asking the following of the clergy and faithful of the Diocese of Tyler:

1. The priests of the diocese have the permission and encouragement to offer the Mass for the Sick on any weekday and especially on Fridays (see *Roman Missal*, Masses for Various Needs and Occasions, No. 45; GIRM 374).
2. For each parish to conduct a procession with the Eucharist, even if it is very small, in which we ask God's protection and implore his mercy for our brothers and sisters who are ill.
3. That in private prayers and devotions, all include a special prayer for the prevention of the spread of disease and for the healing sick.

Through the intercession of the Blessed Virgin Mary and St. Joseph, may the Lord, who sustains us in our human weakness, show his protection to our communities and restore the sick to good health.

Faithfully yours in Christ,



✠ Joseph E. Strickland  
Bishop of Tyler



Peyton Low  
Chancellor