

March 17, 2020

Dear sisters and brothers,

In the interest of cooperating with local, national and global efforts to slow the spread of the Coronavirus, effective from now through April 3, 2020, I am suspending all public Masses celebrated in the counties of northern Nevada that comprise the Diocese of Reno. Other liturgies, devotions, programs and activities involving more than ten people are also suspended.

This is a heavy decision to make given how vital the Eucharist is to our faith; however, after much prayer and deliberation, I do so out of the love of our neighbor that Jesus Christ expects of us and our moral duty to safeguard human life, especially of the vulnerable, and to promote the common good.

During this period, churches will be open for private prayer at times designated by pastors, with due regard for social distancing and limits to gatherings of no more than ten people. Pastoral care and the ministrations of sacraments essential to immediate needs will continue with appropriate measures to safeguard health. The diocese and parishes are exploring creative ways, especially through social media, to keep in contact with our communities and to provide spiritual support and opportunities for prayer. Another resource is the TV Mass on KOLO Channel 8 on Sunday at 9 a.m. Catholic Charities of Northern Nevada will continue to provide essential services to those in need.

In the Church's tradition is the practice of "spiritual communion", a prayer of saints and used in times of war, natural disaster, persecution and other crises when access to the Eucharist was difficult or impossible. It is a prayer of desire to be united to Jesus Christ, arising from our faith that "Nothing can separate us from the love of God that comes to us in Christ Jesus" (Romans 8:38-39). We are in an unprecedented health crisis and this can be our prayer of communion with Christ. This Lent we can incorporate this prayer and think not only of ourselves but of our brothers and sisters who, due to a shortage of priests, are not as blessed as we are with frequent access to Mass.

This is a time to intensify our prayers, in particular for those stricken by COVID 19, for the cessation of the spread of this disease, for first responders and health workers, for those working to find a vaccine for this virus, and for one another. Each of us has the moral obligation to assist in efforts to slow the spread of this virus.

Because the trajectory of this crisis is not predictable, all above provisions are subject to revision.

Assuring you of my prayers, I am

Sincerely yours in Christ,
Bishop Randolph R. Calvo