



31 March 2020

My Dear People of God,

On March 17, our diocese entered an unprecedented time of modified ministry necessitated by the worldwide health crisis. I have rejoiced in the faithfulness that you have shown in continuing to foster your relationship with Christ and his Church during these unprecedented times. As you know, my original decree and instructions made provisions through this Friday, April 3. In the meantime, we have continued to monitor the local and worldwide health situation carefully, in anticipation of making further decisions this week. The dispensation from the obligation to attend Sunday Mass is now extended through April 24, 2020, and all public celebrations of Mass and other gatherings are canceled through the same date. We will continue to monitor the situation and may modify this timeframe if necessary.

The Chrism Mass, a moment of special joy every year for our diocese, will be postponed until we can celebrate it with full joy and solemnity. As before, weddings, funerals, and baptisms may proceed in consultation with your pastors, but you will be asked to limit attendance to immediate family only. Your pastor will be in contact with you about rescheduling the Christian Initiation of those to be received into the Church, as well as confirmations and first communions that have been postponed during this time. Our Catholic schools will continue to be in direct contact with parents concerning ongoing instruction of our students.

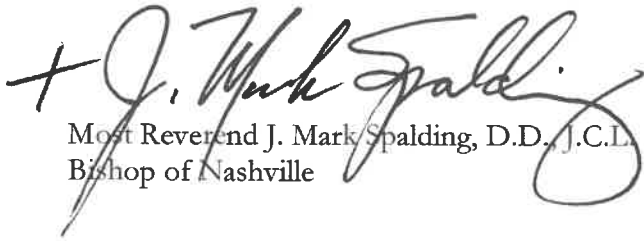
It is heartbreaking for me and for your priests that this situation will disrupt the most sacred celebrations of the year, Holy Week, the Sacred Paschal Triduum, and Easter, which must be celebrated by our priests in solitude and with minimal solemnity this year. Please continue to tune in to the Masses available to you online, to pray regularly and fervently, and to continue to grow in your Faith using the many resources that can be found at [dioceseofnashville.com](http://dioceseofnashville.com), [watchmass.com](http://watchmass.com), and other online and print sources.

I have encouraged your pastors to make blessed palms available to you, as well as yellow ribbons you can pick up to use in prayer and solidarity: with these ribbons you will be able to take a moment of prayer with your family while tying a ribbon to a tree in your yard or some other suitable place, a moment to pray together within the context of your family, praying for yourselves, for our church, and for all those suffering and in fear at this time.

Finally, I hope you will join me for Mass on Easter Sunday morning, broadcast at 11:00 am from the Cathedral of Incarnation on WZTV, Fox 17 Nashville. My prayer is that this extraordinary celebration of Easter Mass together, tuning in from our homes across the diocese, will be a moment of great joy, hope, and peace for our entire community.

As I assured you two weeks ago, please know of my sincere love and concern for all of you and your families. My thoughts and prayers are with you. The Lord has not abandoned us! Your priests will continue to offer Mass in private for you and your intentions and are available for your pastoral needs. Let us pray together that this time of crisis and uncertainty may soon be brought to end by the power of God's loving care and providence.

Sincerely yours in Christ,

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "J. Mark Spalding". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, sweeping initial "J" and a long, horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Most Reverend J. Mark Spalding, D.D., J.C.L.  
Bishop of Nashville