



March 16, 2020
Monday

My dear people of God,

Given the most recent developments regarding the coronavirus (COVID-19) at the federal and state levels and in the interest of the common good, with great reluctance and a very heavy heart, I am suspending public liturgical services in the Diocese of Lake Charles, effective at noon on Tuesday, March 17. Churches and chapels will remain open, according to their established schedules, for individual visits and prayer. Confirmations will be rescheduled at the earliest possible future date. Directives on funerals and weddings will be forwarded to the clergy very soon. The priests and I will continue to celebrate Mass daily without congregation for your intentions. The clergy will also be available for the administration of the Sacraments of Penance and Anointing of the Sick on an individual basis.

The question will be asked: How long will this last? I regret that this is an unknown, because the coronavirus and the ensuing consequences have proven so unpredictable. What I can say is that this situation will be reviewed daily.

I am dispensing the faithful of the Diocese of Lake Charles from the obligation of attending Masses on Sundays and Holy Days during this period of suspended public liturgical services. At the same time, we must continue to keep holy the Lord's Day, at home, quietly reading and meditating on the readings of the day, praying the rosary, and refraining from unnecessary work. I strongly encourage the faithful to avail themselves of the frequently televised Mass on EWTN. I will be working with the diocesan staff on the possibility of live-streaming services of local origin on our website.

I must say that this is one of the saddest decisions I have ever made as a bishop and a priest. However, this pandemic has forced issues upon us which are truly beyond our control. We must pray for an end to this affliction. I will do everything in my power to return us to some normalcy regarding what is most precious to us as Catholics, the celebration of our sacraments, most especially the Eucharist.

Please pray for me, as I do for you daily. Lord Jesus, Redeemer of the world, have mercy on us. Our Lady, Star of the Sea, pray for us.

Devotedly yours in Our Lord,

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "+Glen John Provost". The signature is written in a cursive style with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

+Glen John Provost
Bishop of Lake Charles