

MOST REVEREND
LOUIS F. KIHNEMAN, III
BISHOP OF BILOXI



OFFICE OF THE BISHOP
1790 POPPS FERRY ROAD
BILOXI, MS 39532-2118
228-702-2111
FAX: 228-702-2139

ADDRESSING THE OUTBREAK OF THE NOVEL CORONAVIRUS (COVID-19)

To the Clergy, Religious, and Lay Faithful of the Diocese of Biloxi:


In the midst of this difficult Lenten journey as we strive to be instruments of God's healing grace in this world, I want to extend the Lord's peace to you. The novel coronavirus (COVID-19) outbreak was the occasion for meeting with the diocesan Presbyteral Council today, March 17, 2020. We considered the present circumstances and the urgings and recommendations of civil leaders and medical authorities. Effective tomorrow, March 18, 2020, and for the next thirty days, the Diocese of Biloxi will address the outbreak as follows:

- A dispensation from the obligation to participate in Mass on Sundays/Saturday Vigils is hereby granted to all in the Diocese of Biloxi;
- Public Masses are not to be celebrated;
- Priests may celebrate Masses privately;
- Gatherings for worship, prayer, devotional services, parish events, or meetings are to be rescheduled; virtual meetings are encouraged;
- Only Priests and Deacons, not Extraordinary Ministers of Holy Communion, may bring the Eucharist to those in need, unless the Extraordinary Minister of Holy Communion is a family member and the circumstances; greatest prudence should be exercised;
- The Anointing of the Sick should be administered only to those most in need; Priests should take every precaution in their contact with the sick;
- The Sacrament of Penance should be provided for individuals in need, with adequate distance and/or use of a fixed grille; penance services should not be scheduled;
- Insofar as possible, Pastors/Rectors of churches are to provide that churches be unlocked for at least part of each day, especially on weekends; signage in the church should instruct people who may come for prayer to stagger their visits so that no more than ten people are in the church at the same time and they keep appropriate social distancing between them;
- Weddings that cannot be limited to ten or fewer in number will need to be rescheduled;

- Only graveside funerals are permitted at this time; Priests may offer a private Mass for the repose of the soul of the departed person;
- Parishes that have perpetual Adoration of the Blessed Sacrament or that schedule a window of time for Adoration are to do so in the largest space available, unless the number of those who come for Adoration is small;
- The faithful are encouraged to pray the Liturgy of the Hours (see the iBreviary app or Laudate app where a Breviary or *Christian Prayer* book is unavailable), the Marian Rosary, and other worthy devotions in their homes;
- Priests are encouraged to use virtual means to assist parishioners in their growth as intentional disciples, in their prayer life, and their connectedness to God and their parish;
- Parish outreach ministries and St. Vincent de Paul conferences are encouraged to continue to offer food assistance, but distribution should be arranged so the distribution team is no larger than ten people, food is picked up or dropped off, and food recipients keep adequate distance from one another and do not congregate in groups larger than ten;
- Lenten fish fries and soup suppers, etc., if scheduled, are to be take-out or delivery, and the number of persons preparing the food, doing cleanup, etc., is not to exceed ten;
- The diocesan Office of Communications will publicize links for live-streamed Masses, supportive videos, and other resources on the diocesan website, www.biloxidiocese.org; and
- The Paschal Triduum should still be celebrated privately in parishes. For special circumstances, please contact the Bishop's office.
- Salaried staff are to continue to be paid; the presence of volunteers in parish offices is discouraged at this time.
- Any member of the clergy who should contract COVID-19 is to notify the Vicar General immediately.

Please be assured of my prayers and a remembrance in my daily private Masses. Let us remember in prayer those who have died, those who are sick, and all who are anxious and hurting at this time.

Given at the Pastoral Center of the Diocese of Biloxi on March 17 A.D. 2020, the Memorial of St. Patrick.


 Most Reverend Louis F. Kihneman
 Bishop of Biloxi