



DIOCESE OF CHEYENNE

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March 20, 2020

Peace be with you Brothers and Sisters!

During this time of the COVID-19 health crisis, the Lord is with us and inviting us to journey together in faith. I want to acknowledge the fear and anxiety in the hearts of many. Yet, I urge you to be confident that the Lord is guiding our journey in the desert, just as the people of Israel were led through their exodus to a land of new hope.

As we journey in the desert, we must live our faith with reason, prudence, and compassion. After consulting with several priests and lay leaders, I have decided to provide the following directives, which are subject to modification. These are to be observed through April 6, and they may be extended, if necessary.

SACRAMENT OF THE EUCHARIST

- The public celebration of weekday and Sunday Masses has been suspended in the Diocese of Cheyenne, effective March 17, 2020. Churches are to remain open during normal hours for individual private prayer. The faithful are dispensed from the obligation to attend Sunday and Holy Day Mass while the public celebration of the Mass is suspended.
- Daily Mass may be celebrated by the priest with no one present. If two or more priests are in residence, they are expected to celebrate Mass together. Daily Mass will not be livestreamed; however, priests might livestream a meditation on the readings.
- Sunday Mass may be celebrated by the priest with only two (2) people, as a server and lector, from the parish's roster of liturgical ministers. Parishes are to inform parishioners of the opportunity to view Sunday Mass either through network television, livestream, or other options.
- Sunday is still the Lord's Day. Families are strongly encouraged to gather to pray, read scripture, pray the Rosary, etc. The Diocese will be providing resources on our *Coronavirus (COVID-19) The Living Church in a Time of Crisis* website.

BAPTISM, RECONCILIATION and ANOINTING OF THE SICK

- These Sacraments have been suspended, except for serious illness and danger of death.
- In this time of increased stress, isolation, and anxiety each person should make a daily examination of conscience and a sincere Act of Contrition, which obtains forgiveness of all sin, even "mortal sins if it includes the firm resolution to have recourse to sacramental confession as soon as possible" (Catechism, 1452).
- Finally, if an individual has an urgent need of family counseling or a spiritual crisis, he or she should call the priest for guidance.

HOLY COMMUNION FOR THE SICK OR HOMEBOUND

- This ritual practice is suspended except in danger of death (Viaticum).
- Priests may visit the sick or homebound only in emergencies; however, they are encouraged to be in regular contact via telephone.
- All the faithful should practice mutual charity to the sick and elderly, as well as to those in financial need because of the health crisis.

CONFIRMATION

- Confirmations will be postponed until the health crisis is over. If necessary, pastors may be delegated to confirm.

RCIA and FAITH FORMATION

- These classes have been suspended. Contact Director of Pastoral Formation Joe Wotawa for assistance in providing remote class materials.

STATIONS OF THE CROSS and ADORATION

- These have been suspended.

FUNERALS

- Vigil Services and Funeral Liturgies for the deceased are suspended. If the local cemetery and funeral home agree, burial services will be offered only for the immediate family (i.e., “The Rite of Committal with Final Commendation”).
- The option for cremation of the body and conducting Funeral Rites after the crisis is over should be offered, or a Memorial Mass may be scheduled at a later date.
- Pastors are to contact their local funeral homes and cemetery officials to clarify policies during this crisis.

HOLY WEEK

- Triduum: Holy Thursday, Good Friday, Easter Vigil, and Easter Sunday will occur privately with a maximum of 10 people including the priest(s). These services may be livestreamed.
- Holy Saturday initiation rites may be scheduled for Pentecost Sunday or when community Masses resume.
- Given the current circumstances, priests may celebrate Holy Saturday Vigil or Easter Sunday. They do not have to celebrate both.

WEDDINGS

- Under urgent circumstances, Matrimony without Mass may be celebrated with a maximum of ten (10) people including the celebrant. Otherwise, encourage couples to reschedule their weddings.
- Pastors should notify couples who are currently preparing for marriage or have already scheduled weddings.

This is a dynamic situation and the above directives may be modified or extended as circumstances change. I want to assure all the faithful of the Diocese of my daily prayers and concern for your wellbeing and journey of faith. Please pray for me.

Peace in Christ,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Bishop Steven". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Bishop Steven
Diocese of Cheyenne