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March 30, 2020

To: Priests, Deacons and Parish Staff

Dear Co-workers in Christ,

My heartfelt thanks for the prayers and support you have extended to me during my recuperation. I believe in God's healing power and I thank you for praying for me.

As clergy we are ministering to God's people in an extraordinary time, which we will never forget. Who ever heard of ministry by social distance! Nonetheless, you are doing it well. I thank you for your creativity in ministry, your availability to your people and for giving tirelessly to your people in a challenging time.

Listed below are several items of interest at this time.

1. The President has extended social distancing through April 30, 2020. It is anticipated that the governor will do the same by Friday.
2. Please request hospital chaplains to notify you as parishioners are hospitalized. The chaplains met by phone conference Sunday afternoon and discussed their ministry and sincere desire to reach out to parishes. Please notify chaplains if you are unable to locate a patient who is a parishioner. Please pray for the chaplains during this very stressful time.
3. Many people cannot visit their family members in the hospital because of the virus. Please reach out to family members in their time of anxiety.
4. Please extend gratitude to health care workers from your parish or any you know who are working long shifts and are exhausted. Invite others to do the same. They need our prayers.
5. As you know from the media, government assistance will be available to the Catholic Churches and Schools as we "heal and rebuild". Please do not apply for any grants, loans etc. without checking with Fr. Patrick Carr, Vicar for Finance. He and the Finance Office will guide you in the process.
6. Many things may change in the next 10 days, but we are hoping to fulfill the following for Holy Week:
 - a. A quiet Chrism Mass will take place at the Cathedral to pray and bless the Holy Oils for this year.
 - b. The Cathedral will have WLAE and live stream available for the Triduum. More details later.
 - c. In the parish the Triduum will be celebrated with a very small number of people so as not to spread the virus. The Liturgies are not open to the public.
 - d. It is best to delay Baptism, Confirmation and Profession of Faith as part of the Easter Vigil. If it is necessary, a pastor may use his discretion if there are extenuating circumstances. Otherwise, they can be celebrated on a Sunday when people can return to Mass.
 - e. Please refer to my March 24, 2020 Guidelines for Holy Week regarding Palm Sunday and the Triduum. The Vatican has placed restrictions on the liturgies.

7. Make Confession available as you are able. Remember social distancing. Some have Confessions in the car or in an open space.
8. All parishes and Archdiocesan ministries will feel a financial crunch. We will address these as a plan is being developed. A committee has been appointed to study this matter.
9. Regarding Confirmations, this is being studied. One thought is to have several regional Confirmations to confirm those who are prepared. Another possibility is to celebrate these in the summer. I am open to any suggestions. More study is needed.
10. For now, Ordinations will take place as scheduled. More information to follow.
11. Please continue to pray for the victims of the virus, those deceased and for our protection.

Be assured of my deep appreciation for your ministry and I asked for you God's strength and blessings. If I missed any items, please call them to my attention.

If any of you are ill, please call me. For any questions, I can be reached at home.

Wishing you God's blessings, I am

Sincerely in Christ,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Gregory M. Aymond". The signature is written in a cursive style with a small cross at the beginning.

Most Reverend Gregory M. Aymond
Archbishop of New Orleans