



Archdiocese of New Orleans

Office of the Archbishop

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To the Clergy, Religious, and Laity of the Archdiocese of New Orleans:

Today, Governor John Bel Edwards issued an Executive Order asking people to refrain from attending gatherings of more than 250 people in an effort to prevent the further spread of COVID-19 (Coronavirus) and closing schools for the next 30 days. It is important for us as people of faith and citizens of Louisiana to cooperate with the Governor's order for the health and well-being of our community.

Therefore, I am dispensing the Catholic faithful of the Archdiocese of New Orleans from the obligation to attend Mass on Sunday effective immediately through the next 30 days. We are closing our Catholic schools for the next 30 days in cooperation with the executive order. These dates may be updated as needed. I highly encourage those who are elderly, sick, experiencing symptoms of illness, or who are at high risk of illness to not attend Mass these weekends. The virus has been contracted with serious issues by those 60 and older. Those in that age group must take seriously the caution to implement "social distancing".

For those who cannot and choose not attend Mass, I remind you that 11 am Sunday Mass from St. Louis Cathedral is broadcast live on WLAE-TV and live streamed at theDailyMass.com and the [theDailyMass.com](https://www.facebook.com/theDailyMass) Facebook page. We will share the live stream of Sunday's Mass on the Facebook page of the Roman Catholic Archdiocese of New Orleans and my own Facebook page. There are also other opportunities for televised Mass via Catholic TV and EWTN.

Let me be clear that I am not anticipating or encouraging any changes in parish Mass schedules.

Please be advised that all previously released guidance for Mass remains in effect with some modification:

- Please empty the Holy Water fonts;
- Please refrain from holding hands during the "Our Father";
- Please extend the sign of peace without physical contact;
- Encourage Eucharistic Ministers to practice good hygiene by using an alcohol-based hand sanitizer before and after distributing communion; and
- Holy Communion will not be offered from the chalice to the congregation.

For those parishes with upcoming confirmations, those will go on as scheduled. Please be in touch with the me with additional questions about these liturgies.

In preparation for this order to close schools, which is now in effect for the upcoming 30 days, the Superintendent of Catholic Schools asked that schools begin to create contingency plans to prepare for this reality. What these plans look like for individual schools will vary from site to site. I encourage you to work cooperatively and patiently with your school leaders as these plans unfold.

Furthermore, I am taking this opportunity to advise parishes that while they may continue their Parish Friday Fish Frys at the pastor's discretion, they should refrain from hosting a dine-in option in favor of a take-out option only. Parishes hosting St. Joseph Altars should give strong consideration to the Governor's Executive Order and make plans accordingly. I ask that those parishes planning a public serving of a meal in conjunction with their St.

Joseph Altar consider suspending that practice this year. Please remind volunteers to practice good hygiene throughout these events.

This is a very fluid situation and these guidelines are subject to update as necessary and as directed by state and local officials.

As we face this unprecedented public health challenge, may we call on the intercession of Our Lady or Prompt Succor as we have done over many years to intercede for us. Let us pray,

Lord, we live in fear and uncertainty as we experience the Coronavirus. Be our strength and our hope. Give healing to those affected and protection to all of us. We ask you to calm our fears and trust in You. We also ask the prayers of Our Lady of Prompt Succor, St. Joseph, and Blessed Seelos to strengthen us in this time of need.

We ask this through Christ Our Lord.

Amen.

Wishing you God's blessings, I am,

Yours in Christ,

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

Most Reverend Gregory M. Aymond
Archbishop of New Orleans