

Fr. Nicholas Kipper

Mon, Mar 16,
9:20 PM

Dear brother priests,

I sent you the statement regarding the indefinite suspension of all public Masses and communal celebration of the sacraments or other liturgies in the Diocese of Lincoln. We all know that this unprecedented action is painful, complicated and, frankly, inconceivable. Archbishop Lucas made this decision based on the recommendation of governmental and health officials, who have recommended that there be no public gathering of ten or more people to stop the spread of the coronavirus.

There are many good and reasonable questions that are asked as we suspend all public liturgies. The general principle in this decision by Archbishop Lucas is that our Catholic institutions are shutting down communal operations to avoid the spread of coronavirus.

Tomorrow, diocesan staff will provide more guidance as we move forward. Nevertheless, some of the pastoral decisions are necessarily left to the prudential judgment of the individual pastor or priest.

Here are some guidelines to help inform pastoral decisions:

1. A reminder that the Sunday Mass obligation is dispensed by Archbishop Lucas for all Catholics in the Diocese of Lincoln.
2. Churches and chapels may remain open for private prayer. Protocol for social distancing must be observed.
3. Communal Penance services should be cancelled; however, priests are encouraged to make confessions available in outdoor or open-air spaces if the priest is not in a high-risk category.
4. No parish religious education programs are to assemble.
5. No parish public events or gatherings that exceed 10 persons.
6. Weddings should be restricted to 10 or less persons.
7. Funerals should be restricted to immediate family and friends, less than 10 attending.

The announcement of the suspension of public liturgies was made in the evening of Monday, March 16. If your parish still has public Mass scheduled for the morning of March 17, you may continue to celebrate it.

Let us invoke the intercession of the Blessed Virgin Mary, asking her protection in these difficult times over all of us, our parishioners, our country, and the entire world.

God bless,

Fr. Kipper