



Archdiocese of Newark
OFFICE OF THE ARCHBISHOP

March 13, 2020

Dear Brother Bishops, Priests, and Deacons,

I am writing to provide additional guidance and support to you as together we weather the storm of the Coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic. This letter follows yesterday's announcement concerning the suspension of the public celebration of Mass for Saturday evening, March 14, and Sunday, March 15, 2020, after evaluating recommendations of state and health officials. This decision will be reviewed daily, and any new determination will be announced.

The celebration of weekday Mass will continue. Churches of the Archdiocese will remain open and the faithful are encouraged to pray while maintaining a prudent distance from one another. Sacramental celebrations are permitted, but attendance should be limited to immediate family members only. Further, the sacraments of the Anointing of the Sick and Reconciliation will remain available, as needed.

This decision comes after careful consideration by the Archdiocesan Coronavirus Response Task Force, comprised of clergy, religious, lay leaders, and medical professionals, which meets daily. The Task Force will continue to meet and monitor the situation. We will also partner with state and local officials to maintain safe and healthy environments. I will provide additional updates in the coming days.

Catholic schools in the Archdiocese will be closed next week, Monday, March 16 through Friday, March 20, 2020. This decision was made out of an abundance of caution with the health and safety of students, staff, and families at the center of the decision. The situation will be re-assessed by the Task Force to determine if an extension is needed.

Religious education activities also are suspended throughout the Archdiocese for this weekend, March 14 and March 15, 2020, and for the week of March 16, 2020, through March 20, 2020.

If you have not done so already, please communicate this information to your parishioners via your website, social media, and email.

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You will find below additional guidance that comes as part of our proactive response seeking to help stem the spread of Coronavirus (COVID-19):

Protection of the faithful

All safe environment policies remain in effect and are not negotiable. Any questions regarding safe environment policies including CONSIDER background checks and any resources for meetings (e.g., books) should be directed to contact Karen Clark, Karen.clark@rcan.org or (973) 497-4254.

Worship

For all Worship-related questions, please contact Father Tom Dente, Rev.Msgr.Thomas.Dente@can.org or (973) 497-4347.

Reminder of previously communicated guidance

- Communion from the cup is temporarily-suspended.
- Holy water should be removed from all fonts.
- There should be no physical contact at the Sign of Peace (note: this does not mean eliminate the Sign of Peace; a nod or wave can suffice).

Daily Mass

Daily Mass should be celebrated with the faithful maintaining a prudent distance from one another. It is at the discretion of the pastor whether, for grave reason, daily Mass should be temporarily discontinued.

Priests are strongly encouraged, but not obligated, to celebrate Mass daily. They may do so alone according to the Roman Missal. They are obligated to celebrate or participate in the Eucharist on Sundays and Holy Days of Obligation, unless ill or incapable due to extenuating circumstances.

Mass intentions must be fulfilled either by the Priest celebrating Mass alone or by moving the intentions to a future Mass. A Priest concelebrant may take a Mass intention. Parishes should still accept Mass intentions from the faithful.

Recommendations for the faithful - please announce before the start of any daily Mass

- Refrain from holding hands at the Lord's Prayer.
- Communion is to be received on the hand but should not be denied on the tongue.
- Refrain from any physical contact (e.g., shaking hands at the end of Mass).
- Maintain a prudent distance from one another.

Human Resources

For general Human Resources-related questions, including benefits and pension, please contact Deacon John McKenna, John.McKenna@rcan.org.

For Benefit-related questions, please contact Dennis Miller, Dennis.Miller@rcan.org (973) 497-4095 or Maria Joyner, Maria.Joyner@rcan.org or (973) 497-4092.

For Pension-related question, please contact Tom Murphy, Thomas.Murphy@rcan.org (973) 497-4239 or Elena Skinner, Elena.Skinner@rcan.org (973) 497-4089.

Policies regarding payment of wages to parish and school employees and authorized quarantine.

1. **Employees who are absent from work due to periodic illness or injury, including the Coronavirus.**

- If absent from work as a result of any illness or injury, should follow the procedures and policies currently in place which include:
- Employees should contact their supervisors if unable to report to work due to any injury or illness.
- Periodic absences or the first consecutive 5 workdays of any illness will be paid by using available or accrued PTO days (based on an individual PTO entitlement for 2020).
- If unable to report to work for three (3) consecutive workdays, will need a physician's note in order to return to work.
- For absences that extend beyond 5 consecutive business days, the employee will be eligible to apply for Short-Term-Disability (STD). **The STD Plan Summary is attached to this letter for your reference.**
- As a reminder, while out of work due to illness or injury, it is necessary for employees to keep their supervisors informed of their health status.

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2. Employees who are quarantined, have a person living within the same household who is quarantined, OR has a child whose school or day care has closed due to the Coronavirus.

Should an employee fall into this category and can provide their supervisor and Human Resources with acceptable verification of the event, the following procedures will be put into effect:

- Employee will work from home (if possible) during the quarantine period or period the school/daycare is closed. If the employee is unable to work from home, the supervisor may request the employee to respond remotely to voice mails, inform the supervisor of any important calls that need a response and check in by phone with the supervisor daily.
- Employee will be paid their normal daily wage during this period for up to a maximum of 10 business days, or for the period the quarantine lasts, or school/daycare is closed, whichever is shorter. Pay in this event WILL NOT be charged against the employees available or accrued PTO.
- Should a quarantine period extend beyond 10 business days, a determination regarding pay will be made at that time and will be communicated to the employee

Note: Employees who self-quarantine will be required to use available PTO for payment of any wages during the self-quarantine period.

3. Temporary Telecommuting

In special circumstances, the Chancery may close the office and/or request employees to work from home. These requests are intended to be short in duration and temporary rather than permanent. In the event the Chancery requests an employee to work from home, the following will apply:

- Employees with internet and phone capability will be required to complete as much of their normal duties as possible from home.
 - * If the employee is unable to work from home, the supervisor may request the employee to respond remotely to voice mails, inform the supervisor of any important calls that need a response and check in by phone with the supervisor daily.
- Employees will be paid their normal daily wage during this period up to a maximum of 10 business days, or for the period the request to work from home is in effect, whichever is shorter. In these circumstances, pay WILL NOT be charged against the employees available or accrued PTO.
- Should the Chancery extend the period of working from home beyond 10 business days, a determination regarding pay will be made at that time and communicated to employees.

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Please see attached for a detailed memorandum regarding Short Term Disability,
Appendix: Short Term Disability plan summary.

Financial management

Finance support for parishes and schools

The Finance Office will provide ongoing support for its usual activities. Financial support to parishes and schools to meet critical needs (e.g., payroll) will be handled on a case-by-case basis.

For parishes, please contact Nancy Lystash,

nancy.lystash@rcan.org. For schools, please contact Donna Quinn,

donna.quinn@rcan.org.

Vendor management

The Finance Office can provide support if needed with If support is needed with processing urgent payment requests from vendors:

For support, please contact Matthew Phelan, matthew.phelan@rcan.org

Risk management & insurance services

Standard processes for reporting claims of injury or property damage (i.e., workers' compensation, injury to non-employees, property damage/boiler & machinery, volunteer or student injuries, auto accidents) should be followed. The various companies and contact information can be found on page 41 of the 19-20 Directory and Almanac. If you uncertain as to who to call, or have questions or concerns, please contact Donna Wrobel, Donna.Wrobel@rcan.org or (973) 497-4044.

Media relations

If you or your staff are contacted by media representatives regarding matters related to any institution of the Archdiocese of Newark, including your parish, you are urged to redirect inquiries immediately to Maria Margiotta, Maria.Margiotta@rcan.org or (973) 497-4186 (weekdays) or (973) 202-2317 (off-hours, weekends).

Without permission, media representatives and media vehicles are not permitted on parish or school property. If you discover a media representative on parish or school property and he or she is not authorized to be there, you may ask them to leave, and escort them off the property. Media is allowed on public property such as streets and sidewalks. Additionally, it is recommended that you not respond to any media questions with a comment such as "no comment," as that is likely to be quoted in a news story.

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Property management

For all property management-related questions, please contact Steve Belloise, Steven.Belloise@rcan.org or (973) 497-4118 or (973) 573-9535.

Additional ministries

For all operational questions regarding additional ministries please contact Father John Gordon, john.gordon@rcan.org or (973) 497-4353 or (740) 632-8800.

Family Life

PreCana

If a PreCana class is cancelled due to the COVID-19 virus precautions, a representative from the Office of Family Life will contact the registered couples to let them know.

Below are three ways the Office for Family Life can continue to support your marriage preparation efforts. Please contact Fr. John Gordon in the office at familylife@rcan.org with questions or concerns:

1. Couples are free to reschedule [at:rcan.org/familylife](http://at.rcan.org/familylife).
2. Instead of an in-person class, couples participate in an alternate format offered by the Office of Family Life. The couple would watch the Ascension Press *Life Skills for Couples* video program and participate in a follow-up online meeting with trained presenters. If this option is chosen, please have the couple email Office for Family Life at familylife@rcan.org to receive instructions for online login and payment:
 - a. The Office of Family Life will send all materials and video access information to the couples who select this option.
 - b. There will be a survey with some detailed questions to complete during the videos to verify their participation.
 - c. The online meeting will aim to offer the witness of a married couple, clarify points in the videos and provide an opportunity for dialogue.
3. Alternatively, the priest or deacon preparing the couple can offer individual preparation for couple(s). If this option is chosen, the priest or deacon should email Fr. John Gordon in the Office of Family Life at familylife@rcan.org with their home address so that the materials may be sent to them:
 - a. The Family Life Office will provide access to the Ascension Press *Life Skills for Couples* video program and the verification survey.
 - b. The Family Life Office will send the priest or deacon workbooks used by the couples during the videos.
 - c. After a couple has watched the videos, the priest or deacon should have a personal conversation with the couple.

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God's Plan for a Joy Filled Marriage

Sessions scheduled for March 21st, 22nd, and 29th, have already been converted to an online format and will continue as scheduled in this format. Registered couples have been by the Office of Family Life and will continue to be updated via email.

All sessions scheduled for April are currently still on the calendar as scheduled. Office of Family Life will continue to evaluate this evolving situation and make adjustments as needed. Please contact Fr. John Gordon Office for Family Life through familylife@rcan.org for questions or concerns.

Mercy House

Mercy House will be closed next Tuesday, March 17th and Friday, March 20th. Archdiocesan Coronavirus Task Force will continue to monitor the situation to determine if an extension will be needed. For any question, please contact Cheryl Riley, cheryl.riley@rcan.org or (201) 650-2961.

I thank you for your steadfastness during this challenging time. I will continue to provide you with updates in the coming days.

Sincerely yours in Christ the Redeemer,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "+ Joseph W. Tobin, C.S.S.R." The signature is written in a cursive, slightly slanted style.

Cardinal Joseph W. Tobin, C.Ss.R.
Archbishop of Newark

Attachments:
Media relations policy
Short Term Disability plan summary