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March 26, 2020

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ:

May the grace and peace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with us always!

I am writing to give you an update on our response to the COVID-19 pandemic. When I suspended public Masses and gatherings on March 13, 2020, I was hopeful that by now the situation would improve and we could resume gathering together. However, the national and state health mandates remain in place which include travel restrictions and quarantines. Local governments are enacting “hunkering down” and “stay at home” ordinances, and COVID-19 continues to spread throughout Alaska.

In response to the current situation, and in accord with Canon 223 (CIC), in order to promote the common good of all in the Archdiocese of Anchorage, I have made the following decisions:

- The suspension of public Masses and all other gatherings is extended until further notice. Public Masses and gatherings will resume as soon as it is safe to do so.
- All remain dispensed from the obligation to attend Sunday Mass. At the same time, we remember our obligation to keep holy the Lord’s Day.
- Priests will continue to offer daily private Mass and when possible livestream the Mass.
- The Chrism Mass will be livestreamed on Wednesday, April 1, 2020 at 6:00 p.m.
- The public celebrations of Holy Week liturgies are suspended. These liturgies will be livestreamed from the cathedral and parishes that have livestream capability.
- The Christian initiation of the Elect and/or the Reception into Full Communion and Confirmation of baptized candidates at the Easter Vigil are postponed until after public Masses resume. Pastors will determine the date and time.
- First Holy Communion is postponed until after public Masses resume. Pastors will determine the date and time.
- Confirmations will be rescheduled for the fall.

I know that extending the suspension of public Masses and other gatherings is disappointing. However, in light of the current health crisis in our country and state, maintaining physical distance for now is the responsible and prudent course of action. We hope that our actions will contribute to an end to the spread of the virus and help save lives.

Let us continue to pray for persons who are sick and those who have died. May our Lord bless us and protect us all. We remain united in prayer.

Sincerely in Christ,

Bishop Andrew Bellisario