

DIOCESE OF SAN BERNARDINO



OFFICE OF THE VICAR GENERAL

Date: March 17th, 2020

Memorial of St. Patrick, Bishop

TO: Pastors, Administrators, Pastoral Coordinators, and Brother Priests
Parish, School, Diocesan Staff
Deacons, Religious

FM: Msgr. Gerard M. Lopez

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'G. Lopez', written over the printed name.

RE: Diocese of San Bernardino Corona Virus Response

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ:

After much prayer to Our Lord Jesus and reflection with the People of God, and in light of new developments, Bishop Barnes has provided us with the following authoritative guidance and protocols on our Diocesan response to the ongoing public health crisis. Please review these points carefully. All of these points go into effect in the Diocese of San Bernardino IMMEDIATELY and UNTIL FURTHER NOTICE.

I. PARISH LITURGICAL CELEBRATIONS:

A. THE HOLY EUCHARIST/MASS:

- Effective immediately, all Masses in the Diocese of San Bernardino are suspended as to public celebrations. This means ALL daily and weekend Masses at all parishes, missions, chapels, hospitals and any and all outdoor Masses anywhere in the Diocese, including the Diocesan Pastoral Center. This suspension is effective immediately and will continue until further notice.

- The priests of the Diocese are asked to celebrate and offer daily Mass in private according to liturgical and canonical norms. Mass intentions accepted at the parish are to be offered by priests of the Diocese. We shall keep our Diocese alive through our daily Eucharistic practice as priests.
- PARISH CHURCHES, CHAPELS, AND MISSIONS are to be closed to the public immediately and until further notice. You may not open your parish church, chapel, or mission for whatever reason, except as noted below under the norm for Weddings.
- Our Diocese will be increasing the use of digital media to assist our people to remain engaged in their Catholic Faith. This will include a regular livestreamed Mass and other opportunities for collective prayer. Many additional spiritual resources will be posted regularly on our Diocesan website. Please consult our website in these days.

B. RECONCILIATION/CONFESSION:

- Individual Confessions and Communal Penance Services are suspended immediately. You should not have any Confessions at all at your parishes.
- The only Confessions allowed are those to be heard for penitents in danger of death.

C. ANOINTING OF THE SICK:

- Priests are permitted to administer the Anointing of the Sick and Holy Communion to parishioners who are ill in their homes. However, such sick calls must be in accordance with any health department directives in place.
- Priests may visit hospitals and convalescent homes to administer the Anointing of the Sick and Holy Communion, but only with the permission of such hospitals and convalescent homes and in accordance with any health department directives in place.

- You may ask Extraordinary Ministers of Holy Communion to assist in taking Holy Communion only to those parishioners who are already on your sick call list or who are legitimately added to your sick call list.
- D. BAPTISMS: Any and all Baptisms are suspended, only with the exception of cases of persons who are in danger of death.
- E. WEDDINGS: All scheduled weddings must be postponed to a later date if possible. If postponement is not possible, the Order of Celebrating Matrimony without Mass (Chapter II of The Order of Celebrating Matrimony) may take place at a parish but only in the presence of the priest/deacon, the bride and the groom, the 2 witnesses, the parents of bride/groom, and others not to exceed 10 persons (inclusive of the priest or deacon).
- F. FUNERALS: There are to be NO funeral Vigils or Masses. The only funeral rite permitted is the Rite of Committal (graveside); no more than 10 persons may attend the Rite of Committal (inclusive of the priest or deacon).
- G. FIRST HOLY COMMUNIONS: All of these must be put on hold and a decision will be evaluated on April 5th.
- H. CONFIRMATIONS: All of these are on hold and a decision will be evaluated on April 5th.
- I. HOLY WEEK AND TRIDUUM SERVICES: A decision will be made on April 1st on whether these services will be celebrated by parishes.
- J. CHRISM MASS: A decision will be made on April 1st regarding the Chrism Mass. The Ecclesial Dinner is cancelled.

II. PARISH OPERATIONS:

- A. All parish offices must be and will be *closed to the public*, but you should still keep the parish office open to answer telephone calls and to review emails, as well as to process parish mail.

- B. Pastors, Administrators, and Pastoral Coordinators are to determine which parish staff members are essential for daily parish operations. These essential staff members must continue to work at the parish office. Other parish staff members are to be allowed to work from home.
- C. All parish staff members are to continue to receive their hourly pay or salary. Please consult with the Office of Human Resources and the Office of Payroll regarding details on payroll and employment issues. Please consult with the Office of Human Resources if any essential staff members object to working at the parish.
- D. PLEASE NOTE: All parish religious education classes, Stations of the Cross, formation classes, prayer groups, Eucharistic adoration, retreats of any kind, Quinceañeras, and all festivals, fiestas, carnivals and all parish activities must be suspended effective immediately and until further notice, whether these activities take place at the parish or take place off site. There will be no exceptions.
- E. Food pantries and food banks must be kept open to distribute food supplies to persons. All soup kitchens or sit-down meals of any kind must be closed immediately. Only take-out meals may be served to our needy brothers and sisters.

III. DIOCESAN PASTORAL CENTER (DPC) OPERATIONS:

- Diocesan staff will be available by email or telephone
- ALL meetings, seminars, conferences, and gatherings scheduled at the DPC site and the Rezek Centre site are cancelled effective immediately
- NO ministry events will take place at the DPC or the Rezek Centre site until further notice
- Diocesan staff may hold meetings by telephone conference
- Bishops are not available for any parish events, commitments, or meetings until further notice
- DPC staff over 65 years of age or DPC staff with underlying health issues will be asked to work from home

Please note that this comprehensive Diocesan Response is intended to be our Church's contribution in our local community response to the ongoing Corona Virus crisis. As an important member of the Inland Empire community, we must take effective and dedicated steps in dealing with this crisis, while keeping our Catholic Faith alive here in the Diocese of San Bernardino.

As developments rapidly change, please contact the Office of the Bishop if new regulations are issued for your city or locality by local government agencies. We are aware that we will need to adapt to the regulations of both the County of Riverside and the County of San Bernardino and their localities.

On behalf of both Bishop Barnes and Bishop Rojas, thank you for your dedicated ministry and heroic service in support of the spiritual well being of our 1.7 million Catholics. If you have any question or concern, please contact me or Reverend Erik L. Esparza, Director of the Office of Priest Personnel.

May Our Lord Jesus bless you with strength and good health. May Our Blessed Mother, Our Lady of Guadalupe, and Saint Bernardine of Siena intercede for us from Heaven.

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Bishop George J. Loza", written in a cursive style. The signature is positioned above a single horizontal line that serves as a baseline for the text.