



March 17, 2020

Dear Friends and Followers of Jesus,

I write to you today to offer my prayers, hope and guidance as together, throughout the 16 counties of the Diocese of Green Bay we maneuver through this extremely fluid situation regarding the COVID-19 outbreak.

This is a difficult time for us all as we strive to stay positive, proactive and preventative within our homes and communities. Fear of the unknown, including how to care for children as school are closed, the care and safety of elderly and those with compromised immune systems, and prioritizing responsibilities at work and at home as the virus ramps up, is causing stress on a variety of fronts for many families.

I have been working closely with the bishops of the state of Wisconsin and diocesan staff, as well as professionals from Catholic health care over the last week. Based on their advice, the latest directive from CDC regarding limiting public gatherings to no more than 50 people (Fed Gov. is recommending 10 people), and after much prayer and discernment, I am providing you the latest directives with regard to the celebration of Mass and other sacraments, as well as other directives and information.

Celebration of Sacraments:

- Effective Friday, March 20, **ALL PUBLIC ATTENDANCE AT MASSES** in the Diocese of Green Bay is suspended through mid-April. I want to assure you all that not attending Mass during a national health emergency like this is not sinful.
- Please see the document attached to this email regarding [*Liturgical Directives Concerning COVID-19 and the Celebration of the Sacraments of the Church.*](#)
- During this time when we are most in need of the Eucharist as the source and summit of our Catholic faith, I encourage parishes to find innovative ways to meet the needs of the faithful and to be the body of Christ for each other, even when physically apart. In addition to spending Sunday in prayer, the Office of Parish Life and Evangelization has created resources for parishes to share. They can be found on the diocesan website at www.gbdioc.org/covid19.
- Bishop will celebrate a 30 minute Mass each Sunday during the suspension of public attendance and it will be broadcast over the local CBS affiliate, WFRV Local 5 at 10:30 a.m. Sunday Mass is also available diocesan-wide via broadcast television on ABC affiliate WBAY at 5:30 a.m. Sunday morning, and on CW14 at 8:00 am. Mass is also available on Relevant Radio, 1050 AM at 9 a.m. Parishes throughout the diocese are also livestreaming Mass. Check your parish website for details. As additional resources are made available, we will keep the public informed.
- Daily Mass is livestreamed Monday through Friday from the campus of Relevant Radio here in Green Bay. You can access the Mass at the Relevant Radio app, or at this link <https://relevantradio.com/faith/daily-mass-video/>.

- Guidelines related to priests, deacons, care ministers and extraordinary Ministers of Communion, except in emergency situations, such as checking in on the sick and elderly via phone or other indirect ways like dropping off care packages at their doors, remains in effect.

Catholic Schools and Religious Education:

- As you are already aware, Gov. Evers declared a State of Emergency closing schools in the state until at least April 6 and that includes the Catholic Schools, as we follow public school protocols. After-school activities are also cancelled, and as a result, our Religious Education programming for children is cancelled until further notice.
- Parish Adult Faith Formation programs are also cancelled.

Restrictions on Gatherings:

- CDC guidelines recommend, and we will follow, suspension of all non-essential gatherings for 50 people (Fed. Gov. is recommending 10 people) or more through mid-April. See [Directives for Non-Essential Gatherings](#)

Finances:

- We are concerned and understand that the COVID19 virus will have an economic impact on parishes and schools. The Finance and Accounting Office of the Diocese of Green Bay will assist the schools and parishes with questions, concerns, and planning relating to this area. On-line giving is encouraged through electronic payment; please visit your parish website, stop by the parish office during normal office hours, or call the parish office for assistance.

Diocesan Offices:

- Diocesan campus and parish offices will accept very limited walk-in traffic while we are at the height of this health emergency. Parishes may wish to consider hosting regular or occasional opportunities for formation, prayer, and social connection via such channels as Facebook Live, Zoom, GoToMeeting, Google Hangout, Facetime, Skype, etc.

We need prayer now more than ever as we traverse the unknown and make the best decisions for ourselves and our families. Please continue to pray for swift resolution to this pandemic by going to our Blessed Mother, who intercedes to Jesus on our behalf, and to St. Joseph, as we begin this year-long devotion to him in our diocese. There are many resources available on our website at www.gbdioc.org/stjoseph.

In closing, let us pray for our health care professionals, first responders, paramedics, police officers, firefighters and finally our priests, deacons and pastoral leaders who are on the frontline of this outbreak providing support and care to those in greatest need. They are witnesses of Christ's love and concern to all of us. May Christ give them courage and strength as we respond to the changing landscape this virus presents.

May the Lord of all compassion watch over us and comfort us in our time of need. You remain in my prayers, and I ask that you include me in yours as we support each other at this difficult and unsettling time.

Yours in Christ,



Bishop David L. Ricken

Most Reverend David Laurin Ricken, DD, JCL



By the Grace of God and the Authority of the Apostolic See
Bishop of Green Bay

DECREE

Suspension of the Public Celebration of Mass

Whereas the worldwide spread of the Covid -19, the coronavirus has been declared a pandemic by the World Health Organization (WHO),

Whereas it has been declared a National Emergency,

Whereas the State of Wisconsin has declared the spread of the illness to be a public health crisis,

Whereas the Catholic Diocese of Green Bay is made up of almost 300,000 Catholics in Northeast Wisconsin,

Whereas the decree dated March 13, 2020, which dispensed from the obligation to attend Sunday Mass remains in effect, and is hereby extended for the length of this suspension, (Canons 85-87)

Therefore, in order to prevent further spread of this disease and to cooperate with public authorities in the work of precaution and public safety, and in light of the gravity of the situation, I hereby suspend the celebration of public Mass until further notice.

Given at the Chancery on March 17, 2020.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads 'David L. Ricken'. The signature is written in a cursive style with a large initial 'D'.

Most Reverend David L. Ricken, DD, JCL
Bishop of Green Bay

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads 'Jimmy C. Basten'. The signature is written in a cursive style with a large initial 'J'.

Chancellor, Ecclesiastical Notary