

**March 16, 2020**

**Liturgical Protocols as Community Transmission of Covid-19 Begins in Missouri**

As at least one community transmission of COVID-19 (the Coronavirus) has been declared in our area (i.e., widespread infection), public celebrations of the liturgy will cease.

Churches will remain open for personal and household prayer, devotions, and confessions. If the parish has the practice of Adoration of the Most Blessed Sacrament, this practice may continue, be restricted, or be suspended altogether according to the judgment of the pastor. Under no circumstances is the exposed Blessed Sacrament to be left unattended. If necessary, the Blessed Sacrament may be reposed in the tabernacle and adorers should be encouraged to maintain their prayer schedules as much as possible.

As COVID-19 begins to spread in Missouri because of community transmission, the following additional measures will take immediate effect for the Diocese of Kansas City – St. Joseph **until April 3:**

1. The **suspension of all public Masses**. This includes the extension of the dispensation by the Bishop for *all* the faithful from the obligation to participate at Mass on Sunday.
2. The celebration of **Mass by the priest should continue and include** the assistance of at least one other adult minister who is asymptomatic, but no more than four. Previously scheduled intentions, including the weekly Mass for the people, may be fulfilled in this manner.
3. Priests are encouraged to solicit assistance from the laity to **live-stream Masses** celebrated in the parish, using social media. This can be done with a smartphone with access to the internet. If not, the Mass could be recorded (again on a smartphone) and then later uploaded to the parish website or posted for viewing online. Parishioners, of course, could be encouraged to watch Mass on the internet or television, but the preference should be given to virtual participation in the Mass celebrated in their home parish. Our diocesan website has posted some links to others on the sidebar of <https://kcsjcatholic.org/coronavirus-updates/>.
4. The faithful are also encouraged to celebrate Sunday as a domestic church by taking time to pray together as a household. At our diocesan update link we provide some additional links in addition to making a Spiritual Communion, praying a rosary, Chaplet of Divine Mercy, and particularly our recommended Prayer to Mary, Health of the Sick.
5. **Baptisms** may still be celebrated, but with the requirement to keep attendance to asymptomatic immediate family and godparents.
6. The sacrament of **confession** should still be offered, but penance services are to be canceled. When celebrated individually, proper social distancing should be observed as much as possible. This would seem to favor anonymous confession through the screen. For face-to-face confessions, consideration should be given to moving the chair for the penitent approximately six feet from the confessor, even if this would necessitate using a different room than normally used for confession.
7. **Holy Communion** may still be administered by clergy and Extraordinary Ministers of Holy Communion, and anointing of the sick may still be administered by priests to those

- seriously ill or in danger of death, but always following the proper protocols for handwashing and use of masks by those infected and those who are ministering.
8. **Confirmation** Masses with the bishop will be rescheduled. Priests should use the faculty to confirm in danger of death if needed.
  9. **Public weddings** should be rescheduled, particularly those in April. Simple weddings and validations may be celebrated, but only with the minister, official witnesses and asymptomatic immediate family members.
  10. **Funerals** may be celebrated, but only with the minister and immediate family members. Pastors may use discretion on other requests from families on including others.
  11. If they are not already doing so, parishioners should be encouraged to consider **contributing to the parish by electronic giving**. They may also mail their weekly contributions. The Church will continue her ministries during this period of financial strain and please consider maintaining or increasing your level of contributions at this time.
  12. **Public celebrations** of the Liturgy of the Hours, Stations of the Cross, in-person Bible study groups (or other devotional gatherings) are suspended until the public celebration of Mass resumes.
  13. The public celebration of the **Chrism Mass will not happen**, but a later communication will inform priests upon the procedure in acquiring the three oils for the new year.
  14. Regarding planning for **Holy Week**, for current consideration are the following:
    1. The liturgies could be celebrated with the priest and at least one minister but no more than four, and recorded as described above. If possible, an organist, keyboardist or other musician who sings, or a musician and cantor could be present to assist in order to provide some music for these most sacred celebrations.
    2. At the discretion of the pastor for those parishes with catechumens and/or candidates, the Easter Vigil could be celebrated with the catechumens and/or candidates with only asymptomatic individuals who are sponsors, RCIA team members and immediate family, or their baptism/reception may be postponed until a later time (e.g., the Vigil of Pentecost on May 30).

These petitions can be added to any prayers of the faithful posted or shared electronically with our parishes:

- *For those who are suffering in the current outbreak of sickness, that they might be healed, and for the happy repose of all who have died from this sickness in recent weeks; let us pray to the Lord*
- *For scientists, health professionals, public officials, and all who are serving the common good in this difficult and uncertain time, that they will be filled with wisdom and understanding; let us pray to the Lord*
- *That in times of illness, our merciful and loving Father will strengthen our faith and trust in His goodness and divine providence; let us pray to the Lord*
- *That our compassionate Father would touch all affected by the current outbreak with healing and peace; let us pray to the Lord*