

CATHOLIC CONFERENCE OF OHIO

March 12, 2020

RE: Coronavirus Update from the Catholic Bishops of Ohio

Dear Friends in Christ,

This afternoon Governor Mike DeWine issued an executive order regarding the avoidance of large mass gatherings to help limit the spread of COVID-19 in Ohio.

Even though religious gatherings are expressly excluded in the order, the Catholic bishops of Ohio, out of concern for the common good and the physical as well as spiritual well-being of all of the people of Ohio, have agreed to cooperate with the governor's direction to create "social distance".

To that end, we **dispense the Catholic faithful who reside in Ohio and all other Catholics currently in Ohio from the obligation of attending Sunday Mass** for the weekends of March 14-15, March 21-22 and March 28-29.

Out of charity and concern for our brothers and sisters in Christ, **we encourage all the faithful, in particular those who are sick, experiencing symptoms of illness, or are at risk of illness seriously to consider refraining from Mass attendance.**

As much as possible, we would like to see parish Mass schedules remain unchanged to allow the faithful to offer worship to almighty God and receive the great grace of the sacraments during this trying time; however, we recognize that this may not be possible because many of our senior priests may themselves be at risk. We ask for understanding and flexibility in this regard.

Please join us in praying for all who are suffering from illness or disease of any kind, and for an easing of the tension caused by this situation. May Our Lady of Lourdes, Health of the Sick and Mother of Mercy, intercede for us, and may the Holy Spirit continue to guide and protect us all.

Respectfully,

Most Rev. Dennis M. Schnurr
Chairman
Catholic Conference of Ohio
Archbishop of Cincinnati

Most Rev. Robert J. Brennan
Bishop of Columbus

Most Rev. Jeffrey Monforton
Bishop of Steubenville

Most Rev. Joseph R. Binzer
Auxiliary Bishop
Archdiocese of Cincinnati

Most Rev. George V. Murry, S.J.
Bishop of Youngstown

Rev. Donald P. Oleksiak
Diocesan Administrator of Cleveland

Most Rev. Daniel E. Thomas
Bishop of Toledo