

# CATHOLIC CONFERENCE OF OHIO

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March 16, 2020

**RE: Catholic Bishops of Ohio Suspend All Publicly Celebrated Masses/Liturgies**

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

After serious consideration of the grave health risk involved in public gatherings and in order to curb the spread of the coronavirus, the bishops of Ohio have decided, **effective immediately**, to suspend temporarily all publicly celebrated Masses/liturgies, at least through the celebrations of Holy Week and Easter. The bishops of Ohio dispense the Catholic faithful who reside in their respective dioceses and all other Catholics currently in Ohio from the obligation of attending Sunday Mass through Easter Sunday.

This decision is not taken lightly and, as your bishops, causes us great sadness. However, after consultation with the governor and health officials we are convinced that this is the most prudent and necessary action.

Science has proven that participation in public gatherings significantly increases the risk of contagion. This poses a serious danger to those especially most vulnerable.

As Catholics, in every Sunday Mass we celebrate the passion, death and resurrection of our Lord. The Holy Eucharist is the source and summit of our faith. In this moment, we are experiencing in a unique way the passion of our Lord as this pandemic prevents us from gathering for the Sunday Eucharist. In this very difficult time, we encourage the faithful to turn to the Church's treasury of prayer. Sunday remains a holy day, and we encourage the faithful to pray using the rich resources of our faith, including praying as a family or individually the rosary, divine mercy chaplet, the Liturgy of the Hours, stations of the cross, etc. We also urge you to participate in prayer by way of radio broadcast or televised or livestreamed Mass and make a spiritual communion.

Please join us in praying for all who are suffering from illness or disease of any kind, for all health care workers, and for an easing of the anxiety and tension caused by this situation. Relying on the motherly care of Our Lady, we unite our sufferings to those of Our Lord Jesus Christ, who is our healing and our hope.

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

Most Rev. Robert J. Brennan  
Bishop of Columbus

Most Rev. Jeffrey M. Monforton  
Bishop of Steubenville

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

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

Rev. Donald P. Oleksiak  
Diocesan Administrator of Cleveland

Most Rev. Daniel E. Thomas  
Bishop of Toledo