



Diocese of Worcester
Office of the Bishop
49 Elm Street
Worcester, Massachusetts 01609

March 13, 2020

Dear Monsignor/Father,

The spread of news regarding the Coronavirus is causing confusion and concern among many of our parishioners. Please be assured that we are in communication with various state and federal authorities on this issue in order to make meaningful and prudent choices regarding how we operate as a Diocese, bearing in mind that our mission to save souls does not change while caring for the physical needs of the faithful.

1. Sunday Mass is not suspended but please communicate with your people, ideally by Flocknote if you are using it, that they should stay home if they are sick or vulnerable to illness under the current circumstances. A sign is attached for your possible use this weekend on all entrances.
2. Given that Governor Baker has just announced banning gatherings of 250 or more people, please use an overflow space once your church has reached that limit which might at least have an audio feed and Extraordinary Ministers of Holy Communion to minister to them. You may also be able to provide a simultaneous Mass in your hall if you have a priest available to assist.
3. Please cancel any other activities in your parish which would gather 250 people or more in one space, per the Governor's order. This includes any events by groups outside the parish who may be renting space from your parish.
4. A prayer is attached to this memo which was prepared by the Office for Divine Worship and could be used this weekend, even if just read by the celebrant. We are having copies printed and encourage you to use on parish websites and share by email to parishioners.
5. Take care of yourself. Many of us are in the "vulnerable" population and should avoid public contact within reason. Outside of administering the sacraments, consider seriously curtailing your interaction with the community when gathered in large numbers. They are also hearing these warnings in the media and should understand that if you are not available, neither are the sacraments.

Join me in praying for the strength to face the challenges which are ahead of us in these difficult times. As we have so often professed, so must we also remind ourselves that our faith in God's providence will give us the courage and wisdom to serve our people when in need.

With every prayerful best wish, I remain

Sincerely yours in Christ,

Most Reverend Robert J. McManus
Bishop of Worcester