

CATHOLIC DIOCESE OF SPOKANE

Office of the Bishop

March 17, 2020

Dear friends in Christ,

I am writing to you in what may be the most difficult Lenten season we will ever see. In the last 24 hours, we have witnessed emergency declarations from government officials which now call for severe restrictions on public gatherings. I take seriously my responsibility to care for all the souls in the 13 counties of Eastern Washington which make up the Diocese of Spokane. And thus, to date, I have resisted calls to limit public access to the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass. However, given the scope of the pandemic and the latest government prohibitions, I am requiring the following actions which will remain in place until Monday, April 6, 2020.

1. All public Masses are suspended and everyone remains dispensed from the obligation to attend Sunday Mass. Priests are to offer private Mass for their people on a daily basis and, to the extent possible, livestream the Mass on the web. I will offer Mass at the Cathedral this coming Sunday at 9:00 a.m. which will be livestreamed on the parish and diocesan websites.
2. The Chrism Mass previously schedule for March 31st at 5:15 p.m. is closed to the public. It will be broadcast via livestream on the diocesan website.
3. Funerals rites are limited to graveside committals, unless attendance at the Vigil/Mass does not exceed 10 people.
4. The Sacrament of Penance should continue to be available to the faithful while observing social distancing requirements.
5. Churches should remain unlocked, to the extent possible, for the faithful to make individual private visits to the Blessed Sacrament.
6. The faithful are encouraged to join me in a voluntary fast on Fridays with the intention of ending this pandemic.

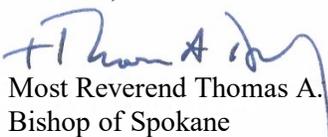
Prior to Monday, April 6th, the diocese will announce any changes to these measures in light of developments with the pandemic.

This letter gives me the opportunity to point out that the Catholic Church has always been on the forefront of responding to crisis, disease, and plague. Our extensive Catholic healthcare system in the Diocese of Spokane as well as Catholic Charities of eastern Washington bear witness to this legacy. I am grateful for the ways in which the Church attempts to care for both body and soul at this difficult time.

Sadly, in response to the mandatory national quarantine in France, it was announced today that the Sanctuary of Our Lady of Lourdes has closed for the first time in history. Although access to both the grotto and the celebration of the Mass have been disrupted, the prayers of Our Lady of Lourdes, patroness of the Diocese of Spokane, remain as powerful as ever. Just as God has granted countless healings through her intercession in the past, may we receive that same healing today.

Our Lady of Lourdes, pray for us. Live Jesus in our hearts, forever.

In Christ,


Most Reverend Thomas A. Daly, D.D.
Bishop of Spokane