



CATHOLIC
DIOCESE OF RALEIGH

MEMO

TO: Priests, Deacons, Sisters, Seminarians, Catholic Center staff

FROM: Rev. James G Sabak, OFM, Director of Divine Worship

**RE: Suspension of Masses, Parish Ministries
and Celebrations of the Sacraments**

Based on updated guidance from public officials regarding the continued need to further limit the numbers of people gathered, and particularly as more local communities issue “stay at home” directives so as to prevent the spread of the Coronavirus (COVID-19), the suspension of all public daily and weekend Masses in the Diocese of Raleigh continues until further notice.

The following directives are also established until further notice in conjunction with the above:

- All gatherings in parishes also are suspended effective immediately until further notice, including faith formation, CCD, RCIA, Stations of the Cross, Adoration, etc. Exceptions to “stay at home” orders have provided provisions allowing for the video streaming of religious services with appropriate health precautions and limitations of numbers of essential participants. Any virtual Masses must be live when broadcast, not recorded, per the 1997 directive of the USCCB. Celebrations of the Mass which are live-streamed may not include public distribution of Holy Communion before or after the broadcast. The risk of infection by older members of our congregations necessitates this decision for the welfare of all the faithful of the diocese. Masses in open areas around the property of our churches are also discouraged as they cannot guarantee adequate distancing and protections of the members of the assembly.
- All Penance Services, School Masses and Healing Masses are cancelled.
- The Sacrament of Reconciliation is to be suspended except for those in danger of death. All other means of providing the Sacrament should cease. In particular the practice being observed of “stational penance” via automobile “drive throughs,” etc., is not an appropriate celebration of the sacrament and should be discontinued. The necessary human interaction crucial to the celebration of the sacrament is impeded through the lack of full proximity and the ability to offer counsel and direction is hampered by the distance between the confessor and the penitent.

In addition, it needs to be noted and communicated that an indulgence has been offered by the Holy See. Care of Souls and Forgiveness of Sins During the Pandemic. Please educate your parishioners on this important measure provided to you and to them during this time.

- In the current state of the pandemic the celebration of the Sacrament of Anointing of the Sick cannot be fully administered as a gloved hand cannot administer the anointing. Prayer over the sick and with the family of the sick should be observed. Suggested prayers, that do not mention anointing with oil from the ritual, are selections B, E, and G under Prayer after Anointing, Anointing in a Hospital or an Institution in *Pastoral Care of the Sick*. In as far as it is possible, Viaticum should be administered to the dying and those in danger of death.
- Confirmations have been suspended. Celebrations of the sacrament are being evaluated on a week by week basis. Provisions will be made for the eventual delegation of faculties for pastors to confirm candidates at the earliest convenience.
- During the Season of Lent baptism should only be administered in danger of death. Celebrations of the Sacrament of Baptism should be suspended until after the lifting of restrictions on gatherings.
- For the foreseeable future, funerals should be simple graveside services with a small gathering of immediate family. A memorial Mass may be celebrated at a later date.
- Weddings should be postponed where “stay at home” directives, like Wake County’s, prohibit gatherings of any size. Broadly, across the Diocese of Raleigh, weddings should consist of gatherings of 10 or less and must use the Rite of Marriage Outside of Mass.
- Additional directives on the celebration of the liturgies of Holy Week and the Paschal Triduum are forthcoming. These liturgies, however, are all to be live-streamed, with only essential ministers and ministries necessary to conduct the liturgies and rituals present.