



March 13, 2020

My brothers and sisters in Christ,

The onset of the pandemic coronavirus requires of us that we take the necessary, even painful steps to halt the spread of this disease and then eventually return to our normal lifestyle.

I fully realize that some of the accommodations are difficult for us in light of the great meaning of our prayer life. But they are undertaken in the interest of the common good which ultimately is to the benefit of us as individuals and as communities. Your cooperation with them is much appreciated and valued.

In light of the directives offered by the state, I am mandating the suspension of regular weekend Mass services in the Diocese of Joliet for the weekend of March 14-15, 2020. Exception may be made for weddings, funerals and Confirmations, provided that the guidelines issued by the State of Illinois are observed, limiting participation to no more than 250 people. For future weekends, we will consider whether additional action is necessary as we go forward.

For remaining liturgies, the following temporary directives for the Diocese of Joliet are effective immediately. They will be ended as soon as it is prudently advisable.

1. Dispensation from the obligation of Sunday Mass is effective immediately.
2. The reception of Holy Communion should be by hand only...reception on tongue is temporarily suspended.
3. Reception of the Precious Blood is suspended.
4. The exchange of peace should be expressed verbally.
5. The Holy Water fonts should be emptied and not filled again. Our parishes could make the Holy Water available in containers by which parishioners could fill their own bottles.

I encourage all at this time to intensify Lenten practices of fasting, prayer and almsgiving.

Those who are dealing with the coronavirus should remain at home and as is customary for all who are otherwise ill should place priority on recovery from illness and not participate at this time in Church services.

The pastors of our parishes and directors of our institutions are asked to exercise appropriate judgment regarding liturgical services and other activities of the various settings of the parish and being especially attentive to the directives of local government health agencies. Since in our faith we highly value religious practice at times such as this, our parishes are asked to respond generously and pastorally and at the same time prudently as worldwide we seek to overcome this pandemic.

A separate communication will be issued shortly with the regard to the operation of our schools.

I want to assure everyone in the Diocese of Joliet of my unfailing support and assurance of prayer at this time.

Sincerely yours in Christ,

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Most Reverend Richard E. Pates  
Apostolic Administrator  
Diocese of Joliet