



ROMAN CATHOLIC
**DIOCESE of
SPRINGFIELD-CAPE GIRARDEAU**

Office of the Bishop

March 13, 2020

Dear Pastors,

After taking the advice of the College of Consultors, given the declared pandemic of the COVID-19 virus and confirmed cases new in our diocese, I issue the following directives immediately:

1. **A general dispensation is offered to anyone in the Diocese of Springfield-Cape Girardeau who does not want to take the risk of attending Mass, regardless of age.**
2. Anyone **60 years (CDC designation) or older should not attend Mass**, since they are the most vulnerable to this virus. They are dispensed from the obligation to attend Mass.
3. Persons who have **underlying medical issues** that put them at risk, or persons with compromised immune systems, **should not attend Mass**. They, likewise, would be dispensed from the obligation to attend Mass.
4. Persons who are **not feeling well, no matter how mild the symptoms, should not attend Mass**. They also are dispensed from the obligation.
5. The faithful who are in attendance at Mass are reminded to **avoid physical contact** with others and should attempt to keep a safe distance from each other. These directives and dispensations will remain in effect until further notice. The diocese will continue to monitor and evaluate the situation, and offer further directives as circumstances change or as further direction is given by public officials.
6. Stations of the Cross/Adoration etc. with smaller numbers are allowed.
7. The provision of **Canon 962.1,2 allowing for General Absolution for a Penance Service** may be utilized following **Form C**, Rite for Reconciliation of Penitents with General Confession and Absolution. **However, priests should make themselves available if private Confession or Anointing of the Sick is needed.**
8. Limit music and preaching so as not to prolong the gathering.
9. **All non-liturgical events should be cancelled.**
10. **Ushers/money handlers/gift bears** should sanitize their hands regularly.

Those who make use of the dispensation are encouraged to watch Mass via television or via Livestream on the Internet. Some parishes may wish to Live-stream their own parish Mass and make it available Online. In addition, there is a beautiful tradition of making an **Act of Spiritual Communion**. Below is an example of a prayer for spiritual communion:

**My Jesus, I believe that You are present in the Most Blessed Sacrament.
I love You above all things, and I desire to receive You into my soul.
Since I cannot at this moment receive You sacramentally, come at least spiritually into my heart. I embrace You as if You were already there and unite myself wholly to You.
Never permit me to be separated from You. Amen.**

In times past, during an outbreak of disease, drought, or some natural disaster, the Church would offer public prayers asking the assistance of Almighty God. In our own time, with growing concerns over the pandemic, many practical precautions have been put in place to stop the spread of the virus. Now is the time to also turn to spiritual remedies as well.

With the upcoming Solemnity of St. Joseph, March 19, and the Solemnity of the Annunciation of the Lord, March 25, I recommend the following:

+Include the recitation of the **rosary and the Litany of St. Joseph before or after Mass** on March 19.

+Include the recitation of the **rosary and the Litany of the Blessed Mother before or after Mass** on March 25.

+If you currently don't offer it, facilitate **Adoration of the Blessed Sacrament** (Implement Adoration of the Blessed Sacrament on a daily, weekly, or monthly basis if you currently do not offer it)

+Plan a special Mass such as "**For the Sick,**" or "**For Any Need,**" found in the Roman Missal following the stipulations set forth by the Ordo for special Masses during the Lenten Season. A selection of readings can be found in the Lectionary, Volume IV, pages 924-935, or the daily readings.

The *Catechism of the Catholic Church* teaches, "**The whole liturgical life of the Church revolves around the Eucharistic Sacrifice and the sacraments**" (CCC 1113). The decision to limit the celebration of any sacrament is a difficult decision that some will support and others will not. **The reality is our Churches are not germ-free, no matter how much we try to disinfect.**

As stated above, the Diocese of Springfield-Cape Girardeau will continue to monitor the situation. We must certainly be proactive for the health and well-being of our priests and the People of God. Asking the intercession of St. Joseph, Patron of the Universal Church and Our Lady, Help of Christians, I am,

Sincerely Yours in Christ,

+ 

Bishop of Springfield-Cape Girardeau