

## Diocese of Springfield-Cape Girardeau

Letter from Bishop Rice suspends all public celebrations of the Mass until further notice, including daily Mass, effective 6 p.m., March 17, 2020. If you haven't already done so, please "like" your local parish's social media site and monitor its Webpage. Encourage friends to "like" the Diocese of Springfield-Cape Girardeau here, on this page, where Bishop Edward Rice will celebrate Mass LIVE from Springfield on Sun., March 22, at 9 a.m. Should you have questions regarding a particular parish/mission/chapel, please contact them directly. Thank you for your patience as we navigate this new environment.

The text of Bishop's letter is to follow:

Dear Clergy, Religious, and Faithful of the Diocese of Springfield-Cape Girardeau,

It is with a heavy heart, yet with confidence that this is the correct decision, that I decree that effective at 6 p.m., March 17, 2020, and until further notice, all public celebrations of the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass in the Diocese of Springfield-Cape Girardeau are suspended. The general dispensation to attend Sunday Mass remains in force until further notice.

I will be celebrating Mass in Springfield "Live" via the diocesan Facebook page on Sun., March 22, at 9 a.m. Please encourage parishioners that if they haven't already done so, to "like" the Diocese of Springfield-Cape Girardeau on Facebook as well as follow the local parish or mission on social media for the most recent information available.

I make the decision to suspend public Masses out of an overabundance of concern for the long-term health and wellbeing of the People of God of the diocese. In addition, I must be concerned for the health and wellbeing of the priests entrusted to my care. Finally, local health departments and government agencies are now setting limits on how many people can gather in one place. We must cooperate with our local government leaders for the common good. Therefore:

\*All Masses offered by priests are to be private, according to the Liturgical Norms and not open to the public. Pastors are reminded of their canonical obligation to offer one Mass per week for the people.

\*All the faithful should participate in "local" Live-streamed Masses, or on EWTN, or their local Catholic radio station on Sundays and Holy Week.

\*Praying the Sunday Scriptures as a family, along with a Spiritual Communion, the Rosary, Chaplet of Divine Mercy and other devotions are encouraged.

\*Funeral Masses are to be offered for the deceased with only immediate family present. Christian Burial could be recommended with a Memorial Mass at a later date. No funeral meals are to be held.

\*Weddings may be celebrated with only the couple, parents, witnesses, and priest/deacon.

\*Baptisms outside of Mass may be celebrated with only the parents, godparents, and immediate family present.

\*Quinceaneras are to be postponed.

\*Confessions/Anointing of the Sick/sick calls to the home should be arranged privately.

\*All Stations of the Cross, Liturgy of the Hours are to be cancelled or Live-streamed.

\*All events, meetings, bible study, etc., are to be cancelled until further notice.

\*Confirmations, First Reconciliation, First Communions are to be postponed until after this crisis has ended.

\*Unless otherwise determined at a later date, this also applies to Holy Week and Easter Sunday.

\*The Chrism Mass will be celebrated but with priests ONLY. These may be Live-streamed. Will notify parishes at a later time.

\*As our churches are typically open in the morning, I encourage visits to the Blessed Sacrament, especially for St. Joseph Day, March 19, and the Annunciation, March 25.

\*The Triduum could be celebrated for the Elect/Candidates only (at the discretion of the pastor).

\*The Elect/Candidates can also be received later in the Easter Season.

I am grateful for the suggestions of so many of the priests who have called with their ideas. I want to echo the words of Pope Francis, and “thank the ‘creativity of priests’ who think of ‘thousands of ways to being close to the people, so that the people do not feel abandoned, priests with apostolic zeal.’” I encourage pastors to be creative in meeting the spiritual needs of the people without violating the local health departments.

Dr. Gene Aug, Interim Superintendent of Catholic Schools, has been working with the principals of our schools so that the education of our children continues while they are at home. On behalf of our pastors, I ask our people to continue to support your parish financially with your weekly donations so the bills can be paid and payroll met. This may be a good time to participate in Online giving. I thank you for your generosity.

Let us remember to pray for all medical personnel who come in contact with the virus. Let us pray for those searching for a cure. Let us remember those who have fallen ill. Let us pray for those who have died. May Our Lady, Help of Christians along with St. Joseph, Universal Patron of the Church, pray for us and grant us peace and protection.