



Archdiocese of Newark
OFFICE OF THE ARCHBISHOP

March 17, 2020

Dear Brother Bishops, Priests, and Deacons,

Our Eucharistic fast continues, and we pray for its quick end. Please be assured of my continued prayers for you and for the communities we serve. During this challenging time in the life and mission of the Archdiocese of Newark, I ask for your cooperation and leadership as together we mobilize the resources and support needed to care for the faithful. Please continue to visit our COVID-19 resources page at <https://www.rcan.org/covid19> for the most up-to-date information.

I write with updated guidance for conducting your ministry considering the rapidly changing landscape of the Coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic, which the Archdiocesan Coronavirus Task Force carefully assesses each day. The Task Force is comprised of clergy, religious, lay leaders, and medical professionals and partners with state and local officials to determine the most appropriate course of action in maintaining safe, healthy and environments. The justification for these decisions is a deep concern for the well-being of the faithful and wider community, especially those most at risk of serious illness or death.

Protective Quarantine and Isolation

Please visit the CDC website for a comprehensive guide to isolation and quarantine protocols along with resources and additional information at <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/index.html>.

For those who have had direct exposure or potential exposure to COVID-19, please carefully follow the guidance from the Center for Disease Control (CDC) regarding isolation and quarantine protocols. Isolation "separates sick people with a contagious disease from people who are not sick." Quarantine "separates and restricts the movement of people who were exposed to a contagious disease to see if they become sick (CDC)."

Protocol for quarantine includes:

- No physical contact with others for a period of at least 14 days
- No shared use of facilities (e.g., bathrooms) if you live with others in your rectory or home

Additionally, all Priests and Deacons with previously-arranged travel that they have not cancelled must provide the following information to their Dean and the Vicar for Clergy in writing: **1)** where you plan to go, **2)** when you plan to leave, **3)** when you plan to return. This decision is made out of concern for the health and safety of our Priests and Deacons and the communities they serve.

Archdiocesan Center

Worship

Beginning Wednesday, March 18, 2020, and until further notice, public celebration of both Sunday Mass and daily Mass is suspended. This decision comes after exhaustive discussion and with an especially heavy heart. **It is crucial that you comply with this directive to protect the faithful as well as your own health.** Public celebration of the Sacraments and other public forms of worship are suspended until further notice. This includes, but is not limited to previously scheduled Confirmations, celebrations of First Communion, penitential services, Communion services, and Liturgies of the Word. The following exceptions are permitted:

- Funerals, burial services, and previously scheduled weddings are permitted, however, attendance must be limited to a maximum of 10 participants, including the celebrant. The celebrant should consider carefully with the next of kin or wedding couple who will attend. Celebrants should also remind families that the same limitations are being applied across all relevant Archdiocesan institutions, including Catholic cemeteries.
- The Anointing of the Sick and Reconciliation will remain available, as needed. The celebrant should take every prudent precaution where indicated, such as use of gowns, masks and gloves.
- A priest may use a cotton-tipped swab or cotton ball as an instrument to anoint the sick person (cf. can. 1000 §2). The priest dips the cotton swab in the Oil for the Sick.

Parishes are encouraged to expose the Blessed Sacrament for the faithful. Clergy should continue to remind the faithful to maintain a prudent distance from one another.

Information and guidance for the Chrism Mass and Paschal Triduum will be provided in a future communication.

You are reminded

- Holy water should be removed from all fonts
- Churches are to remain open for individual prayer, however, the faithful should be encouraged to maintain a prudent distance from one another
- Any physical contact (e.g., shaking hands) must be avoided.

Schools and other youth ministries

The State of New Jersey has mandated that all schools, including public, private, and parochial, will remain closed until it is deemed safe for students to return. All Catechetical education and events sponsored by the Catholic Youth Organization (CYO) are suspended and will resume with the reopening of schools as directed by the State of NJ.

Chancery and parish operations

The Chancery is closed to all employees beginning, tomorrow, Wednesday, March 18, 2020, until further notice. Regular updates will be provided. Our staff will be working remotely and can provide seamless support to you and the communities we serve. Please see my most recent letter, (3/13/20), for contact information for our staff matched to relevant issue-areas.