



**OFFICE OF THE VICAR GENERAL  
DIOCESE OF BROOKLYN**

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**CORONAVIRUS UPDATE FOR PASTORS**

**March 16, 2020**

Bishop DiMarzio has requested that the following be provided to all Pastors and Administrators for your information and for the benefit and safety of your parishioners. Please read it carefully and know that we are monitoring the situation closely and will present updates and clarifications as needed.

The Centers for Disease Control has given the recommendation to avoid social gatherings of 10 persons or more. For this reason, and to promote the health and safety of all, including clergy who must continue to attend to the spiritual needs of God's people, we are implementing the following until further notice.

**CHURCHES AND LITURGIES**

All public Masses are suspended. This ruling is in effect until further notice. The parish's Mass intentions must be satisfied. Mass must be celebrated privately. When there are more Masses than there are priests, the intentions may be combined (collective mass intentions). The suspension includes devotions or other services which have the potential of drawing together crowds of people.

Churches may remain open for silent adoration, always bearing in mind the need to limit groups. There should be no Communion Services or other types of gatherings such as communal recitation of the Rosary, which could gather crowds. Priests should not distribute Holy Communion at scheduled times but should respect the reasonable requests of the faithful to receive individually.

Priests are encouraged to make necessary Communion Calls, following necessary health precautions. The Sacrament of Penance may be celebrated (not communally) and precautions such as social distancing practices should be observed. Perhaps a space larger than the normal reconciliation room could be used.

Reconciliation Monday, since it normally attracts large numbers who might congregate in groups, is cancelled. However, the faithful should be made aware that priests are available for confessions, as needed, throughout the Lenten Season and through this crisis.

The Sacrament of Anointing of the Sick may be administered to individuals as needed, exercising prudence and common sense when interacting with people. Priests who visit the sick who may have the COVID-19 virus or who are in isolation or quarantine must take necessary and extra precautions. When administering the Anointing of the Sick, "an instrument" may be used instead of the thumb. This could be done by wearing a glove and using some cotton. (Steps to avoid contaminating the oil stock should be taken: applying oil to the cotton ball before entering the room, leaving the oil stock outside and retrieving it later. The cotton should be isolated and contained to be disposed of reverently, for example, by burning or burying).

Confirmations scheduled up until May 15 are to be postponed. We will revisit the question of rescheduling Confirmations. If the situation allows, the Bishop will be granting the indulgence as usual for Pentecost. First Communion celebrations should be postponed.

### **OTHER CONSIDERATIONS**

Pastors should inform Bulletin companies to print fewer copies of the parish bulletins for the time being and making use of the space in the bulletins for catechesis and the printing of prayers, reflections, etc. Bulletins should be posted on parish websites. Mass intentions should be listed without the times of the Masses, as they will not be public.

All parish meetings should be cancelled as well as parish events. The general principle here is that gatherings of persons should be avoided. AA meetings may take place if there are less than 10 persons, always observing social distancing practices. Food pantries may remain open to serve people, perhaps limiting the numbers of people entering the premises, a few at a time. Parishes holding blood drives should consult with the organization sponsoring the drive to determine the best practices.

If your church or another parish building has been exposed to Coronavirus by a confirmed case of an employee or parishioner or someone using the building, please contact Bishop Raymond Chappetto, Vicar General, at 718.965.7300 ext.1070.

### **HOLY WEEK**

As there will be no masses celebrated publicly on Palm Sunday, if desired, blessed palms could be left on tables in church for any who might stop in and take some themselves.

The Chrism Mass will **NOT** be celebrated publicly. The Bishop will celebrate the Mass from the Cathedral and the oils will be available for distribution at designated sites around the diocese. Further information about that will be forthcoming.

Holy Week Services and Liturgies will not be celebrated publicly in the parishes. There are **NOT** to be any public celebrations, even outside. Easter sacraments for RCIA candidates and catechumens are to be postponed. The Mass of the Lord's Supper, the Liturgy of the Lord's Passion, and the Easter Vigil will be celebrated by the Bishop in the Cathedral without a congregation and will be broadcast for the benefit of the faithful in their homes.

### **CONCLUDING POINTS**

More information will be forthcoming in the near future regarding financial considerations for parishes. Please know that we are aware of your many concerns during this unprecedented time.

The Diocesan Offices will be closed as of Wednesday, March 18, 2020 but employees will be available to you for questions and concerns. Many are working remotely, so we thank you for your understanding and patience as we travel these uncharted waters together.

Let us continue to pray for healing, strength and courage as we continue to serve God's people in Brooklyn and Queens during this crisis. May Our Lady intercede for us.