

MEMO

To: All Clergy
FROM: Father Peter Langevin
RE: Coronavirus Precautions UPDATE
DATE: 13 March, 2020

As the situation concerning the spread of COVID-19 (*coronavirus*) continues to evolve, the Diocese is closely monitoring the situation and consulting with state and local officials as well as health professionals as needed in order to respond in a responsible way. To this end, His Excellency, the Most Reverend Michael R. Cote, Bishop of Norwich has decreed the following measures to be implemented, in addition to those already issued, in all parishes and which apply to all the faithful of the Diocese of Norwich, effective immediately:

- Those who are ill or experiencing symptoms of illness are dispensed from the obligation to attend Sunday Mass. Pastors should continue to reassure people that not only are they dispensed from the obligation, but out of charity, are encouraged to stay home so as not to expose others to their illness.
- For those who are elderly or considered vulnerable (over 60 years of age or those who have chronic illnesses, immune system deficiencies or underlying health conditions), those who care for them and their children, **the obligation to attend Sunday Mass is commuted (i.e., can be fulfilled in lieu of their participation at Mass) by doing one of the following and making an Act of Spiritual Communion:**
 - Watching Sunday Mass on TV or online. Encourage people to consult local schedules for the ORTV Mass broadcast from the Archdiocese of Hartford, EWTN, Salt + Light TV, CatholicTV and other media outlets. We are working on livestreaming the 9:00 a.m. Mass from the Cathedral on the Diocesan website additional information on which will be forthcoming;
 - Reading and reflecting upon the Scriptures for Sunday – available on the Diocesan website, USCCB website and in print through hand missals, missalettes and subscription services;
 - Praying 5 Decades of the Rosary – the Sorrowful Mysteries being particularly suited to both the current situation and the Lenten Season; or
 - Meditating on the Stations of the Cross – there are many online and print resources available. Please consult the Diocesan website for additional information and resources.
 - For sample prayers to make an Act of Spiritual Communion please see below.
- As noted in yesterday's MEMO, **public Masses ARE NOT being cancelled at this time. All Priests of the Diocese are expected to continue offering Mass for their people**, even if there are no faithful in attendance. All scheduled Mass intentions are to be honored. In the event that you become ill and are not able to fulfill these obligations, please contact the Chancery.
- All Clergy need to be diligent about washing their hands and observing appropriate hygiene in general, but especially when celebrating Mass and the Sacraments. To the extent that it is possible, due to decreased numbers of faithful in attendance, please limit the number of additional individuals (i.e., extraordinary

ministers) distributing Holy Communion and ensure that those who are handling the Holy Eucharist also have washed their hands prior to the distribution of Communion.

- **All Confirmation liturgies** scheduled to take place before Easter (12 April) are postponed to a future date. Parishes will be contacted to reschedule once we have a better understanding of how this current situation will unfold in the weeks to come.
- All Priests have the grave responsibility of ministering to the sick and the dying by providing them with the Sacraments of the Church. Please follow the directives of local health professionals, hospitals, nursing facilities, etc. when ministering to the sick. **See the attached letter to Clergy from Hartford Healthcare**, which includes helpful links to websites with up to date information concerning COVID 19.
- The Office of Communications is in the process of developing a page on the Diocesan website (www.norwichdiocese.org) that will have updated information and resources related to the situation as it continues to evolve. We will also be posting updates concerning Diocesan events which may be cancelled or postponed/rescheduled. **Please note the salient portion of the Executive Order issued by the Governor yesterday concerning “Large Gatherings” of over 250 people, reproduced below**. The applicable portion of the text has been highlighted for your reference.

These measures remain in effect until further notice. As noted yesterday, I am certain that other liturgical and logistical matters will continue to arise and additional directives will be issued, as necessary. Please do your best to reassure your people that we are united in prayer for an end to this pandemic and that the Diocese is working and committed to cooperating with local and State officials as well as consulting with healthcare professionals as we enact further directives. **Thank you for your efforts and cooperation in this regard.**

From the Executive Order of the Governor (12 March, 2020):

WHEREAS, the Connecticut Department of Public Health and my administration continue to manage the public health aspects of this incident;

NOW, THEREFORE, I, NED LAMONT, Governor of the State of Connecticut, by virtue of the authority vested in me by the Constitution and the laws of the State of Connecticut, do hereby ORDER AND DIRECT: 1. Prohibition of Large Gatherings. Throughout the State, gatherings of 250 people or more for social and recreational activities including, but not limited to, community, civic, leisure, or sporting events; parades; concerts; festivals; movie screenings; plays or performances; conventions; and similar activities; are prohibited. Such prohibition shall remain in effect until midnight on April 30, 2020, unless modified by a future Executive Order. **Nothing in this order shall prohibit any spiritual gathering or worship service.** Violators of this order may be subject to criminal penalties pursuant to Section 28-22 of the Connecticut General Statutes.

Sample prayers suitable for making an Act of Spiritual Communion:

An Act of Spiritual Communion by St. Alphonsus Liguori

My Jesus, I believe that You are present in the Most Holy 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.

Prayer to the Most Holy Redeemer (Anima Christi)

Soul of Christ, sanctify me.
Body of Christ, save me.
Blood of Christ, embolden me.
Water from the side of Christ, wash me.
Passion of Christ, strengthen me.
O good Jesus, hear me.
Within thy wounds hide me.
Never permit me to be parted from you.
From the evil Enemy defend me.
In the hour of my death call me.
and bid me come to thee,
that with your saints I may praise thee
for age upon age.
Amen.

Prayer to Our Lord Jesus Christ Crucified

Behold, O good and loving Jesus, that I cast myself on my knees before you and, with the greatest fervor of spirit, I pray and beseech you to instill into my heart ardent sentiments of faith, hope and charity, with true repentance for my sins and a most firm purpose of amendment. With deep affection and sorrow I ponder intimately and contemplate in my mind your five wounds, having before my eyes what the prophet David had already put in your mouth about yourself, O good Jesus: They have pierced my hands and my feet; they have numbered all my bones (Ps. 21: 17-18).

The Prayer of Pope Francis to Mary during the Coronavirus Pandemic

O Mary, you always shine on our path as a sign of salvation and of hope. We entrust ourselves to you, Health of the Sick, who at the cross took part in Jesus' pain, keeping your faith firm.

You, Salvation of Your People, know what we need, and we are sure you will provide so that, as in Cana of Galilee, we may return to joy and to feasting after this time of trial.

Help us, Mother of Divine Love, to conform to the will of the Father and to do as we are told by Jesus, who has taken upon himself our sufferings and carried our sorrows to lead us, through the cross, to the joy of the resurrection. Amen.

Under your protection, we seek refuge, Holy Mother of God. Do not disdain the entreaties of we who are in trial, but deliver us from every danger, O glorious and blessed Virgin. Amen.