



Diocese of Helena

Date: March 17, 2020
Re: **UPDATE #3** — Diocesan Response to COVID-19

Approved: *+ Austin A. Vetter*

As things continue to unfold and develop in regard to the COVID-19 pandemic, there is still no reason to panic, but we can no longer do business as usual. Therefore, in collaboration with Bishop Warfel of the Diocese of Great Falls/Billings, Bishop Vetter is enacting the following additional regulations for the Diocese of Helena, which become effective today and continue until at least March 30, 2020. We will continue to monitor the situation and issue updates as necessary.

- **All public Masses are suspended. The general dispensation for all the faithful from the obligation to participate at Mass on Sunday continue.**
- Each priest is asked to celebrate a Mass privately every day, with particular intentions for those who are sick, care givers and first responders and for their parishioners.
- We invite everyone to celebrate Sunday as a household church by taking time to pray together, reflect on the Scripture readings, pray the Rosary, and make a spiritual communion.
- Generally, the Bishop will celebrate a private, livestreamed Mass: at noon Monday through Friday; Saturday at 5:00 pm and Sunday at 11:00 am from the Cathedral. You can view these livestreams on the Diocesan website, diocesehelena.org.
- Sacraments:
 - Baptisms: will be delayed at this time, unless in an emergency.
 - Confirmations: as scheduled, at this time.
 - Weddings: postponed or celebrated with only the couple and 2 witnesses
 - Reconciliation: Communal celebrations of the Sacrament of Reconciliation are suspended. Priests should provide additional times and opportunities for the private celebration of Reconciliation, providing for social distancing.
 - Anointing of the Sick: taking all appropriate precautions and protocols, priests are called to courageously and generously respond to requests for the Sacrament of the Sick.

- Funerals may be celebrated, but only with members of the immediate family, no vigils and no luncheons. Committal services with the immediate family are permitted.
- The Diocesan Chrism Mass will be celebrated privately. Oils will be distributed to the parishes.
- All parish activities are suspended, including, but not limited to, Reconciliation Services, Stations of the Cross, Adoration, in-person study groups and meetings, devotional gatherings, Soup and Bread, and Fish Fries.
- Parish Churches will remain open for private prayer; times will be announced locally. Respect the restricted numbers that are in place, currently 10 people.
- The Diocesan website (diocesehelena.org) will be the primary source of updates during these times.

Even though many things have had to be canceled, love is not one of them. Do what you can to help others, especially the elderly, the disabled, the poor and the isolated, taking all necessary precautions. As Christians, it is our duty to help others.

We will continue to communicate more information as it becomes available. Please continue to the diocesan web site (diocesehelena.org) for updates and helpful informational resources.