



OFFICE of the ARCHBISHOP

## ARCHDIOCESE OF LOUISVILLE

Pastoral Center, 3940 Poplar Level Road, Louisville, KY 40213-1463  
(502) 585-3291 | (502) 585-2466 (Fax) | [archbishop@archlou.org](mailto:archbishop@archlou.org)

March 16, 2020

Dear Pastors/Pastoral Administrators:

As promised, below are some liturgical guidelines to assist during this time of uncertainty. I also am forwarding information about social services for parishioners in need. I thank the Office of Worship and Catholic Charities of Louisville for their assistance with this information.

With my announcement of the suspension of public Masses, I expect there will be many pressing liturgical questions. In this time of uncertainty, we seek God's guidance in balancing pastoral care with concern for the health and safety of our staffs and parishioners. Please refer to these guidelines in making decisions for your parish.

For the duration of the time that public Mass is suspended in the Archdiocese of Louisville:

- Any liturgical celebrations that can be delayed will be postponed and rescheduled. This includes but is not limited to:
  - Confirmations
  - Weddings (see further information below)
  - Baptisms
  - Communal reconciliation services
  - Anointing services
  - Stations of the Cross
  - Other communal prayer, such as Liturgy of the Hours
- Funerals may be attended only by close family in accordance with social distancing and capacity requirements (no more than 50)
  - It is appropriate to use the Funeral Liturgy Outside Mass (*Order of Christian Funerals* #177-203), which can be done at the church, funeral home, or elsewhere; or the Rite of Committal with Final Commendation (*OCF* #224-233) at the gravesite.
  - A record of those who die during this period is to be kept, and memorial Masses offered once public celebrations resume.
  - It may be possible to delay a funeral with cremains until public Masses resume.
- Weddings, if at all possible, should be postponed. If weddings are held, they must be in accordance with social distancing and capacity requirements (no more than 50)
- Pastoral Care to the Sick and Dying:
  - In all cases, comply with all regulations at medical and care facilities.



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- Gloves and masks may be necessary for pastoral visits, including for the Anointing of the Sick. Gloves smeared with oil are to be placed in a sealed bag and later burned or buried. In case of necessity, the priest may use a suitable instrument (e.g., a cotton-tipped swab) to anoint in order to avoid direct physical contact. In such cases, the instrument must also be disposed of by burning or burial.
- In keeping with *cic.* 861.2, please note the special forms of the Rite of Baptism to be used in the danger of death (for adults *RCIA* #375-399; for children *Order of Baptism for Children* #157-164), or even if an ordinary minister is not available. I grant permission for baptism to be celebrated in the home, if necessary, at the discretion of the local pastor (*cic.* 860).
- The Sacrament of Reconciliation may still be offered at this time, if it can be done in a space where the proper social distancing is observed (6 feet apart at minimum).
- Depending on your parish's ability, it may be possible to open your church for private prayer or even allow for Adoration of the Blessed Sacrament in the tabernacle during some hours of the day, provided that there are clear safeguards in place that honor the need for social distancing.
- Please suspend choir rehearsals and any other liturgical rehearsals during this time. Even if these groups are small, they present a particularly ripe environment for disease transmission. At least two cases of COVID-19 in Harrison County, KY are linked to choir rehearsals.
- As you offer Mass privately in the coming weeks, continue to offer the intentions of your parish, and consider the use of the following on weekdays of Lent:
  - *Masses and Prayers for Various Needs and Occasions* #45 "For the Sick"
  - *Masses and Prayers for Various Needs and Occasions* #48A "In Any Need"
- The Office of Worship is compiling a list of opportunities to view Mass via live-stream; please communicate these resources and any others that may assist parishioners with at-home worship.

There will certainly be more questions than those addressed here. The Office of Worship can be reached at either of the following numbers: 502-471-2128 or 502-471-2148. Please continue to monitor email for additional instructions.

There will be significant pastoral and practical challenges in the weeks ahead. I ask you to pray for me and for each other as we seek ways to adapt to these challenges and serve the people of the Archdiocese of Louisville.

Fraternally yours in our Lord,

Most Reverend Joseph E. Kurtz, D.D.  
Archbishop of Louisville