



OFFICE of the ARCHBISHOP

ARCHDIOCESE OF LOUISVILLE

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My Brother Priests,

May God bless you during this holy season of Lent! Allow me to begin by thanking you for your great pastoral care of your people and for the many efforts that you have taken to mitigate the transmission of COVID-19 among the faithful. Thank you also to so many for sharing your experiences with me from this past weekend; we have heard from more than 50 pastors.

In addition and very importantly, we have received new information from the Centers for Disease Control (CDC). **Based on the new information, I am calling all priests to suspend the public celebration of the Holy Eucharist, effective immediately and until further notice.**

Concerning gatherings other than Mass, I urge you to follow the CDC directive that people not participate in gatherings of more than 50 people. Thank you for applying these rigorous safeguards to other parish events, such as fish fries, education/formation events, and parish meetings. A number of parishes have already canceled fish fries, and others have limited social contact by using only take-out service.

I also ask that you communicate to the faithful options readily at hand to assist them during these difficult days, such as Mass of the Air and the recitation of the Holy Rosary. I also thank you for your creativity in seeking to keep your church accessible for prayer and even Adoration of the Blessed Sacrament, provided that there are clear safeguards in place that honor the need for social distancing. Others have begun to live stream a private celebration of Mass or send daily spiritual messages. The Office of Worship will be in touch to survey parishes about these opportunities so that we can share ideas with everyone. It may be helpful for your parishioners to know that you will say Mass privately each day and that you will continue to offer Masses for parish intentions.

There are a number of other questions related to this directive, including questions about funerals, weddings, the Sacrament of Reconciliation, and social service outreach to parishioners in need. I am working with staff to obtain further information about these questions and will send additional guidance shortly.

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I will continue to seek regular communication with you, and I invite you to share your insights, suggestions, or concerns with me in the days ahead. I am preparing a video message for the faithful, and this message, as well as further guidance, will be included on our website at www.archlou.org/covid-19. I encourage you to share this information with parishioners through all parish communication vehicles.

Through this cooperation, we pray that the COVID-19 pandemic will be limited in its spread and that those who suffer will be kept to the absolute minimum.

Fraternally yours in our Lord,

+ Joseph E. Kurtz

P.S. Please also join me in the beautiful prayer that Archbishop Gomez president of USCCB provided for us:

Holy Virgin of Guadalupe,
Queen of the Angels and Mother of the Americas.
We fly to you today as your beloved children.
We ask you to intercede for us with your Son,
as you did at the wedding in Cana.

Pray for us, loving Mother,
and gain for our nation and world,
and for all our families and loved ones,
the protection of your holy angels,
that we may be spared the worst of this illness.

For those already afflicted,
we ask you to obtain the grace of healing and deliverance.
Hear the cries of those who are vulnerable and fearful,
wipe away their tears and help them to trust.

In this time of trial and testing,
teach all of us in the Church to love one another and to be patient and kind.
Help us to bring the peace of Jesus to our land and to our hearts.

We come to you with confidence,
knowing that you truly are our compassionate mother,
health of the sick and cause of our joy.

Shelter us under the mantle of your protection,
keep us in the embrace of your arms,
help us always to know the love of your Son, Jesus. Amen.