



Office of the Bishop

Roman Catholic Diocese of Lubbock

March 13, 2020

My Dear People of the Diocese of Lubbock:

As you are probably aware, President Trump has declared a National Emergency regarding the COVID-19 (Coronavirus) Pandemic. Included with that declaration are some restrictions on visiting nursing homes and facilities caring for the elderly and those whose health is compromised. We are being increasingly encouraged to curtail unnecessary gatherings of groups of people. At this time, however, a nationwide closure of all churches is NOT being called for.

We on the West Texas Caprock and South Plains, the Diocese of Lubbock, are blessed to have no confirmed cases of the virus, as of yet. However, as good citizens and people of charity, I am asking us to abide by the following precautions:

- Effective immediately, the following categories of individuals are dispensed from the obligation to attend Mass on Sundays and Holy Days of Obligation (under the authority given me by Canon 1247 of the Code of Canon Law):
 - o Individuals over the age of 60.
 - o Individuals with chronic medical conditions, such as heart disease, diabetes, lung disease and cancer.
 - o Individuals with severely compromised immune systems.
 - o Mothers who are pregnant.
 - o Caretakers of the at-risk individuals listed above.

This dispensation remains in effect until I revoke it. I encourage those persons who deem it unwise to attend Mass in person to consider watching Sunday Mass at our Christ the King Cathedral, live or recorded, via the internet at CTKCathedral.org.

- I am asking parishes who have ministries to nursing homes, care facilities, and correctional institutions to work with administrators of those facilities to see if it might be possible to bring Communion to the facility and for a Catholic employee or resident to distribute Holy Communion to those Catholic residents in the facility who wish to receive the Eucharist.
- I am asking that serious consideration be given to canceling any non-sacramental gatherings of more than 50 people sponsored by parishes of the diocese or diocesan entities. I have taken the initiative to cancel some such gatherings in my own name.
- Should local school districts cancel classes, I ask that Faith Formation classes in parishes within those jurisdictions be cancelled.

It is very important that we maintain a faith perspective on this emerging situation. We want to keep the Sacraments of the Church available to our people. But we must also be prudent on our personal decisions regarding our own reception of the Sacraments in public settings if we are feeling ill. I invite you to join with me in praying the prayer which Pope Francis has offered for divine intervention during this pandemic:

O Mary, you shine continuously on our journey as a sign of salvation and hope.

We entrust ourselves to you, Health of the Sick.

*At the foot of the Cross you participated in Jesus' pain,
with steadfast faith.*

You, Salvation of the Roman People, know what we need.

We are certain that you will provide, so that,

as you did at Cana of Galilee,

joy and feasting might return after this moment of trial.

Help us, Mother of Divine Love,

to conform ourselves to the Father's will

and to do what Jesus tells us:

*He who took our sufferings upon Himself, and bore our sorrows to bring us,
through the Cross, to the joy of the Resurrection. Amen.*

We seek refuge under your protection, O Holy Mother of God.

Do not despise our pleas – we who are put to the test – and deliver us from every danger,

O glorious and blessed Virgin.

May you stay healthy, be at peace, and know of God's Blessing!

Sincerely yours in Christ,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "+ Robert M. Coerver". The signature is written in a cursive style with a cross at the beginning.

Most Reverend Robert M. Coerver
Bishop of Lubbock