



DIOCESE OF VENICE IN FLORIDA

OFFICE OF THE BISHOP

DATE: March 19, 2020
TO: All Priests on Official Assignment
FROM: Bishop Frank J. Dewane
RE: Pastoral Directives

ON-GOING LIFE OF PARISHES AS PUBLIC MASSES ARE SUSPENDED

On March 18, 2020, Bishop Dewane met with the priests of the Presbyteral Council at Epiphany Cathedral Hall for a discussion of best practices to be observed in the Parishes of the Diocese of Venice and to hear from the priests regarding the pastoral prudence of suspending Public Masses. The guidelines given here are based on much prayer and discernment, as well as the consultations that took place.

The guidelines should be read with the understanding that the decisions made are intended to demonstrate our pastoral concern for the health and safety of all the Catholic Faithful, as well as our brothers and sisters who make up the greater community of the Diocese of Venice.

Together, the Clergy and Faithful of the Diocese face the threat posed by the Coronavirus outbreak, a crisis that is unprecedented in our lifetime. This requires unity and open lines of communication as well as cooperation. In addition, it must be recognized that this time requires a sacrifice for the Catholic Faithful, who have a great love for the Holy Eucharist and depend on the Most Blessed Sacrament for their spiritual lives.

Bishops and Priests are entrusted with spiritual care and wellbeing of the Catholic Faithful. Therefore, drawing upon the Church's rich tradition of prayer and devotion, we strive to ensure that parishioners continue to be nourished in the life of faith and that our Parishes are sources of strength and courage.

Sacramental Life

In general, for the safety of the Faithful and the Clergy, Pastors/Administrators are always to ensure sufficient social distance is observed and regular sanitizing is done as the Sacraments are administered.

Holy Mass

Out of pastoral concern for the Faithful and Clergy:

- Public celebration of the Eucharist is suspended, effective March 20, 2020 and until after Easter, when this situation will be re-evaluated.
- While priests may celebrate the Mass daily in the church or rectory chapel, **the Faithful are not to be present at those Masses.** In addition, Masses with groups of the Faithful in churches, chapels or in private homes are not permitted.
- Parish Offices will remain open and it is expected that when people call the Parish that there will be a response. Remember, proper distancing and sanitizing needs to be observed in the workplace.
- Parishes should begin Live Streaming the Mass as soon as possible. For the safety of the Faithful and the Priests, nobody is to be present at Masses except the Priest.
- For assistance with Live Streaming, refer to Guidelines and Technical Recommendations sent out on March 18, 2020 by the Diocesan Communications Department.
- Pastors/Administrators are to ensure that Holy Mass is Live Streamed in the different languages in which Mass is normally celebrated in the Parish.

Mass Intentions

- All Mass intentions are to be celebrated.
- In the case of parishioners wanting to schedule a Mass intention, add the intention to the Mass Book, and allow for the reception of the stipend/donation at a later date.
- A notice that the Mass intention was fulfilled should be sent to the person who requested it (by phone notification or other suitable means).
- Canon Law allows for priests to binate for daily Masses and to trinate on Sundays.
- Intentions may be transferred to other priests to say the Mass (perhaps a retired priest, or religious order priest sent to the Chancery for reassignment). However, all Mass intentions must be fulfilled.
- If there are any doubts or canonical questions about Mass intentions, contact the Chancellor at smeryk@dioceseofvenice.org.

Holy Week and Easter

- At this time, it is not foreseen that there will be public celebration of the Holy Week Liturgies.
- The manner of celebrating the Chrism Mass is yet to be determined and may need to be held in a different format. Further guidance will be communicated.
- There needs to be consistency and a unified response with regard to the celebration of the Easter Vigil and Easter Liturgies, these should only be celebrated by the Priest without a congregation.

- It is essential that the Easter Vigil be celebrated for the sake of the Faithful at home. Therefore, the Easter Vigil is to be Live Streamed.

Weddings and Funerals

- Recognizing that the Faithful have a right to the Sacraments, they are to be celebrated if the gathering is limited to 10 people.
- If they cannot be postponed, Weddings are to be celebrated simply (*i.e.* no flowers etc.) and with only immediate family members present.
- Priests are to communicate with the couple regarding the necessity of limiting the gathering.
- If there are doubts or canonical questions about Weddings, contact Fr. Robert Dzieziak at Dzieziak@dioceseofvenice.org
- Parishes are to limit Funeral services to immediate family.
- Funeral Masses may be celebrated, however, the guidance about limiting the number attending is to be observed.
- If there are doubts or questions about Funerals, contact Bishop Dewane.
- At Weddings and Funerals, previously given precautions for celebrating the liturgy are to be observed, particularly regarding Holy Communion (not under both species) and restrictions concerning the sign of peace and social distancing.

Anointing of the Sick

- Anointing of the Sick is to be requested only for the dying.
- Priests need to respect any policies put into place by facilities which restrict regular pastoral visits. Parishes should make the family aware if the facility is refusing them entry.
- When priests go to a healthcare facility, they are to observe a safe distance until the time of anointing and anoint wearing a glove, as well as observing the safety precautions of the facility.
- When visiting private homes, protective equipment is to be sought from local medical facilities or others. Priests are to exercise discretion in order to protect themselves and the Faithful. Normal rules of distancing are to be observed.
- If gloves are not available, with necessary caution, a Q-tip or cotton ball can be used to anoint.
- When the anointing is complete please dispose of the glove, Q-tip or Cotton Ball according to the facility's protocols. It is the understanding that medical waste is normally burnt.

Sacrament of Penance

- Regular confession times and communal penance services are suspended for the same period as public Masses.
- In hearing individual confessions, an outdoor place is to be chosen where a safe distance and confidentiality can be maintained, and the sacramental seal respected.

- Possible outdoor arrangements could be:
 - Hear individual confession in a carline, ensuring that there is only one penitent in their car at a time.
 - Confession stations can be set-up with the penitent standing on the opposite side of a tall screen from the priest.
 - If the penitent must be seated, then appropriate sanitizing needs to be done after each penitent.
 - When confessions are heard outdoors, penitents should be instructed to create appropriate social distance between each other when forming lines as they wait to go to confession.

Baptism

- Baptisms are only to be celebrated in cases of emergency. Recognizing the right to the sacraments, other Baptisms are to be postponed, not denied.
- Parents and godparents are the only people who are to attend the ceremony.
- Freshly drawn water is to be used for each Baptism.

Visitation to Churches

While public celebrations of Mass are suspended, all visits to churches are also suspended.

Parish Activities

- Along with public Masses, all Parish activities are suspended — this includes: Stations of the Cross, Youth Group meetings, CCW, Knights of Columbus, and all other activities.
- Some Devotions, for example, Stations of the Cross or the recitation of the rosary, can be Live Streamed for the spiritual benefit of the Faithful.
- The only exception to the suspension of activities are those food pantries that have been approved to remain open by the Diocese.
- Parish Offices are remaining open. The Pastors/Administrators are to observe precautions regarding safe distances between parish staff and visitors.

Parish Personnel

- A form has been sent to parishes to identify essential personnel and parishes were to respond by 5:00 PM, March 19, 2020. Identifying essential employees is necessary to insure uninterrupted operation.
- In every case there needs to be appropriate social distance between people working, and not every employee needs to be present on site.
- Some employees can rotate duties.
- Pastors/Administrators need to recognize that given public health guidelines, some

employees are to stay home and not come to work (for example because of advanced age or compromised immune system).

- Volunteers are not to be asked to work and new volunteers are not to be brought on board.
- Hiring will be temporarily suspended. If there are essential positions that need to be filled, Pastors/Administrators are to contact the Diocesan Human Resources Director.
- If there are employee/workplace questions, contact the Human Resources Director at Stine@dioceseofvenice.org

Schools/Religious Education

- Catholic Schools have suspended in-person instruction until at least April 15, 2020 and online learning will be provided to students on March 31, 2020.
- Religious Education classes are suspended during the same period as are schools. Religious Education Directors are to post materials online for parents to use with their children.

Parish Finances

Pastors/Administrators are to refer to the Memorandum sent by the Diocesan Finance Director for guidance in Parish Administration while regular offertory income is affected by the suspension of Public Masses.