



DIOCESE OF PALM BEACH

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Office of
THE BISHOP

March 18, 2020

Dear Sisters and Brothers in the Lord:

As we approach the midpoint of Lent, we face a truly penitential situation we never expected as we began this holy season on Ash Wednesday. The threat of the coronavirus has caused a serious health emergency, a fear-filled panic and a continuing isolation that must be dealt with carefully and prudently. In line with this need for proper care and in accord with public directives, guidelines and procedures, I have made the very difficult decision, in accord with the prayerful discernment of all the Bishops of Florida, that in our Diocese all Catholic churches will not be available for the attendance or personal visits by the faithful, effective Friday, March 20, until further notification. This decision puts us in conformity, with good reason, with that of almost every other diocese in the United States.

I want to stress that the celebration of Masses by the dedicated priests of our Diocese is not suspended and will continue to be celebrated in each of the churches of our Diocese on a daily and Sunday basis *even though public participation is excluded*. The celebration of the Eucharist is the center of the life of the Church and joins the entire Body of Christ no matter who is present or not. We are able to be in spiritual communion with the celebration of the Eucharist even though we cannot be present for it and we can continue to rely upon its graces especially at any difficult time. Additionally, the diocesan website, www.diocesepb.org, will publish a list of all parishes that are livestreaming daily and Sunday Masses, as well as other websites and television stations that air the Catholic Mass. The Diocese of Palm Beach continues to televise the Sunday Mass on Channel 34 (WTVX) at 10:30 am.

Someone will always be available through our parish offices to arrange for whatever assistance is needed and for the availability of a priest especially in regard to confession and anointing of the sick, always in accord with the necessary precautions and directives. We are all deeply grateful to our priests for their faithful service, especially in such extraordinary circumstances. Funerals, weddings and baptisms, that cannot be postponed, will be accommodated, provided the necessary precautions of limited attendance and recommended distancing are followed. Attention will be given to the rescheduling of the celebration of Confirmations at an appropriate time.

While this is a very difficult situation, it is essential for us to realize that the life of the Church continues and is with us no matter how isolated we may be or feel. We are the Church. The challenge of what is before us during the season of Lent affords us the opportunity to support each other, to listen to and reflect upon the word of God, to offer prayers, perhaps in a new manner, and to hear God speaking to us. Our Lord, who isolated Himself in the desert where He was fiercely tempted by Satan, has shown us that He will never abandon us and that we can always rely upon Him. We pray in a special way for those directly suffering from the virus as well as those who have passed away through it and for the families who mourn their loss.

With the assurance of my prayers for you and all your families, I am

Sincerely yours in Christ,

Most Reverend Gerald M. Barbarito
Bishop of Palm Beach