



DIOCESE OF ALLENTOWN
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MEMORANDUM

16 March 2020

TO: *All Parishes, Priests, Deacons, and Seminarians*
FR: *Most Reverend Alfred A. Schlert*
RE: *Suspension of Public Masses: Liturgical Guidelines*
CC: *Reverend Monsignor David L. James, V.G.*
Reverend Keith A. Mathur

x *ps.*

Today, Bishop Schlert after consultation with public health officials announced that the Public Celebration of Mass has been suspended in all parishes, schools, and diocesan institutions, until further notice.

As the Diocese enters this unprecedented time in the life of our nation and the Church, the following liturgical guidelines are provided:

- (1) Celebration of Public Mass – Both daily and Sunday Masses in public are not permitted. Priests will celebrate Mass privately for the intention of the health and well-being of the flock entrusted to their care. Also, in an effort to fulfill the Mass Intention of the day, the Priest is encouraged to celebrate the Private Mass for the daily intention of his parish.
- (2) Open Church – While the public celebration of Mass is not permitted at this time, the Bishop asks Pastors to have their Church open for extended hours of private prayer so that the faithful can make visits. Adoration is encouraged during this time, with simple reposition.
- (3) Confessions – All Penance Services or communal gatherings for the Sacrament of Penance are cancelled. Individual Confessions should be heard, but must take place in the church, not in any rectory office.

- (4) Communion Calls – Extraordinary Ministers of Holy Communion are not permitted to bring Communion to the sick during this temporary suspension. A priest may bring Holy Communion to the homebound, if the priest enjoys good health and the homebound person is comfortable with the visit. The priest should use hand sanitizer before entering the home and should limit his visit to a brief time.
- (5) Hospital Visits – All major hospital networks in our region are only permitting clergy visits to patients in danger of death.
- (6) Stations of the Cross – The public recitation of the Stations of the Cross is not permitted during this time of suspension. The faithful are encouraged to pray the Stations of the Cross individually.
- (7) Weddings – Weddings scheduled during this period of suspension are permitted to take place. However, Pastors are granted permission to celebrate all Weddings using the “Order for Celebrating Matrimony without Mass.” In addition, only family members are permitted to attend the Wedding (CDC guidance – no more than 50 people).
- (8) Funerals – Funerals are permitted during this period of temporary suspension. Only family members are permitted to attend (CDC guidance – no more than 50 people). Pastors may also encourage the family to wait until the threat of the virus has passed for a Memorial Mass.
- (9) Baptisms – The Sacrament of Baptism is permitted only for one child at a time. Parents, godparents, and immediate family only are permitted to attend (CDC guidance – no more than 50 people). Water for the celebration of the Sacrament should be refreshed for each baptism.
- (10) Sacrament of Confirmation – All Spring Confirmations are cancelled while this temporary suspension is in place. A plan is being created for *confirmandi* to have the opportunity to receive the Sacrament from the Bishop once the concern has subsided.
- (11) Live-stream Masses – the Diocese of Allentown is currently compiling opportunities for the faithful to watch Live-stream Masses during this temporary suspension. If you offer Mass privately and are able to live-stream the Mass, please send the link for the Mass to Mr. Matt Kerr (mkerr@allentowndiocese.org) so that we can promote it to the entire Diocese.

As we are in a period that the Diocese has not experienced in her fifty-nine years, it will be natural to have many questions regarding liturgical considerations that have not been considered at this time, I invite you to email Reverend Keith A. Mathur, Director, Office for Divine Worship at kmathur@allentowndiocese.org, and he will be happy to assist you.

A plan for the celebration of Holy Week is currently under study. Additional information on this matter will be available at the end of March.

Thank you for your cooperation and pastoral ministry during this difficult time in the life of our nation.