



## DIOCESE OF DULUTH

2830 East Fourth Street • Duluth, Minnesota 55812-1501 • Tel: (218) 724-9111 • Fax: (218) 724-1056

March 13, 2020

Dear Faithful of the Diocese of Duluth,

As Catholics, we are obliged to attend Mass on Sundays and Holy Days of Obligation. This precept of the Church emphasizes the importance and centrality of the Mass as an encounter with our Risen Lord and the source of our Christian life. As important as this is, however, the Church also holds that this obligation may be dispensed for a just cause when it is for the spiritual good of the faithful.

With the appearance of the Coronavirus (COVID-19) and its rapid spread worldwide, we find it necessary to put into place protocols and procedures that will hopefully lessen the severity of any outbreak and the harm done to those who contract the virus especially the elderly and others who are at increased risk.

Wishing to assist in containing the spread of this virus and to protect the faithful from undue exposure to illness, I hereby dispense all Catholics within the boundaries of the Diocese of Duluth from the obligation to attend Sunday Mass until the current crisis should pass.

During this time, Masses will be celebrated at the usual times in our parishes and institutions. However, should a member of the faithful decide that attending a Mass would pose a risk either to themselves or others, they can, in good conscience, refrain from attending.

Should it be the case that someone chooses not to attend Mass for a time, it is our belief that we must still do what we can to keep holy the Lord's Day. Mass could be followed on television, radio or online. While those at Mass receive Holy Communion, those at home make a Spiritual Communion until it is possible for them to return. Other practices such as a period of silence, scripture reading, the Rosary and other devotions could also be part of a Sunday observance.

As all of us rise to the challenges presented by the Coronavirus, let us remember to pray for one another and to support one another as children of God and brothers and sisters of the Lord, most especially those affected by this virus and those who care for them.

In these Lenten days, may we trust in the love God has for each of us as we journey toward Easter and eternal life; and may our Diocesan Patroness, Mary, Our Lady of the Holy Rosary, watch over us.

Yours in Christ,

Reverend James B. Bissonette  
Diocesan Administrator