

## Current Status of the actions of the Archdiocese of Washington and Ascension Catholic Church regarding COVID-19

Following Governor Hogan's announcement Thursday, March 12, 2020, closing all public schools in the State of Maryland from March 16<sup>th</sup> through March 27<sup>th</sup> and limiting public events to gatherings of no more than 250 people, Archbishop Gregory announced

- All Catholic Schools in the Archdiocese of Washington will be closed during the same time frame (3/16/2020 – 3/27/2020); and
- All Masses open to the public in all archdiocesan parishes, missions, and campus ministries will not be celebrated, beginning Saturday, 3/14/2020 until further notice.

The governor has since restricted gatherings to no more than 10 people.

In the Archdiocese of Washington (and several others) public Mass may not be celebrated. This applies to all settings, including churches, chapels, missions, campus ministry chapels, homes, parking lots, and fields. As of this posting, we are unsure how long this restriction will be in place.

Archbishop Gregory has issued a dispensation from the obligation to attend Mass during this time to all parishioners of the Archdiocese of Washington.

Confession and Anointing of the Sick may continue. Funerals may be celebrated; however, attendance is restricted to family.

### Dispensation

The Archbishop has dispensed parishioners from the obligation to attend Mass during this period of closure. "A dispensation from the diocesan Bishop releases Catholics from fulfilling their Sunday obligation (Mass). Since public Masses are cancelled in the Archdiocese of Washington until further notice, this means that if you live in the Archdiocese of Washington, the right thing to do is to stay home for your safety and the safety of others. Though there is a sadness for not being able to participate at Mass, one should not feel guilty for not going to Mass. You have a free conscience to stay home. Catholics are encouraged to offer up their sickness or pastoral care for the sake of those who are seriously ill and for those who have died" (<https://adw.org/coronavirus-dispensation-and-prayers/>)

We should also remember once this period of cancellation passes, even though Catholics are obliged (required) to attend Mass on Sundays and Holy Days of obligation; we are not obligated to attend when we are sick or caring for someone who is ill or unable to care for themselves.

### Church Open for Private Prayer

The church will be open this Sunday from 8:00 am until 1:00 pm for private prayer. Please make sure you maintain 'social distancing' of at least 6 feet when in the church. Please also bring wipes to wipe down the area around you when you leave.

We want to reinforce that while Archbishop Gregory is providing this opportunity, it is in no means obligatory. Please do not feel you have to come to the church. We are opening it during this time in response to parishioner requests and with permission of the archbishop.

### Watching Mass on TV/online and Spiritual Communion

#### Spiritual Communion

As our spiritual father, Archbishop Gregory requests, “Catholics are encouraged to make a ‘spiritual communion’. St. John Paul II writes that ‘it is good to *cultivate in our hearts a constant desire for the sacrament of the Eucharist.*’ This was the origin of the practice of ‘spiritual communion’, which has happily been established in the Church for centuries and recommended by saints who were masters of the spiritual life. Saint Teresa of Jesus wrote: ‘When you do not receive communion and you do not attend Mass, you can make a spiritual communion, which is a most beneficial practice; by it the love of God will be greatly impressed on you.’ (*Ecclesia Eucharistia*, no. 34) Catholics in the archdiocese are also encouraged to watch our local TV Sunday Mass” (<https://adw.org/coronavirus-dispensation-and-prayers/>).

Below are recommendations for how to make a ‘spiritual communion’ when unable to participate in the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass. The recommendations can be adapted based upon personal and family needs.

- Gather with others in your household and begin a time of prayer with the sign of the cross.
- Take time to read and reflect upon the readings from Sunday Mass. You can find the readings at [usccb.org](http://usccb.org) and a Sunday Gospel reflection on the ADW YouTube channel.
- Share prayer intentions quietly or aloud.
- Pray the Lord’s Prayer.
- Pray one of the following prayers of spiritual communion (see below).
- Close with the sign of the cross.

Fr. Larry will continue to post his Sunday homily to YouTube and the parish website. Beginning this weekend (3/22/2020), he will also post the celebration of the Sunday Mass.

#### Mass and readings are available on TV and online through:

- Parish website and YouTube: Sunday Mass from Ascension celebrated by Fr. Larry
- The Mass airs every Sunday at 10:30 a.m. on WDCW-50 and through free online streaming at [adw.org/tvmass](http://adw.org/tvmass)
- Eternal Word Television Network (EWTN)
  - Mass 8a and noon; online at: <https://www.ewtn.com/tv/watch-live>
    - Verizon channel 285
    - Comcast channel 291
    - RCN Cable channel 260
    - DIRECTTV channel 370
    - DISH Network channel 261
    - C-Band – Satellite channel G1-11
  - Readings and reflections: <https://www.ewtn.com/catholicism/daily-readings>

- Bishop Barron: daily and Sunday Mass (<https://www.wordonfire.org/daily-mass/>)
- Basilica of the National Shrine of the Immaculate Conception: Sunday Mass at noon ([www.nationalshrine.org](http://www.nationalshrine.org))
- CatholicTV: [www.catholictv.org](http://www.catholictv.org)

Readings are also available at:

- United States Conference of Catholic Bishops: <http://www.usccb.org/bible/>
- Magnificat (free during this time): <https://us.magnificat.net/free>

#### Readings, Reflections, and other spiritual resources on Formed.org

Parishioners have free access to Formed.org. an online resource with reflections, movies, books and instructional videos in English and Spanish for all ages. To access it, go to [www.formed.org](http://www.formed.org) and sign in. If you have not created an account, go to [www.formed.org](http://www.formed.org).

- Click the SIGN UP button
- Select "I belong to a Parish or Organization"
- In the Find your Parish or Organization box, type in: 20720
- Hit the 'enter' button on your keyboard
- Click on our parish (Ascension Catholic Church)
- Click the Next button
- Enter your name and email address in the boxes provided
- Click the Sign Up button

#### Where Mass is available

We are not aware of any arch/diocese near Bowie celebrating public Mass. As of this posting (3/18/2020, 12:00 pm), Mass is not being publicly celebrated in the Archdiocese of Washington, the Archdiocese of Baltimore, the Diocese of Arlington or in many other arch/diocese in the country.

We recognize your longing and desire to receive Him and to worship Him in the highest form of prayer He gives us. As difficult as it is, we encourage all to remember the direction given by the Archbishop and his dispensation during this time and to unite the suffering and longing with those who are sick, the poor and those out of work.

#### Mass Intentions

Fr. Larry is celebrating "private Mass" ('Mass without a Congregation') each day, offering it for the Mass intentions previously requested. On Sundays, he is offering Mass for the intentions of parishioners. We will be reaching out to those who have requested Mass intentions on Sundays to reschedule the intention. You may also call the office during regular hours or email us at [office@ascensionbowie.org](mailto:office@ascensionbowie.org).

#### Donation Envelopes

Our parish depends on your donations to cover parish expenses, including electricity, water, and cleaning services. We are hopeful we will again be able to offer public Mass in a few weeks. In the interim, if you are able to do so, please mail your envelopes to the parish office:

Ascension Catholic Church  
12700 Lanham Severn Road  
Bowie, MD 20720

Donation envelopes may be left at the parish office during and outside of normal business hours. Please do not come into the office unless it is absolutely necessary.

If you wish to convert to online giving for this period or on an ongoing basis, please use the link to Faith Direct: <https://membership.faithdirect.net/MD467>

#### Office Hours

We are working to keep the office open for normal hours for essential/critical business. We love you; however, in the interest of minimizing risk, we ask that visits to the office be limited to essential activities. We will update the website and voicemail with any changes to our office hours.