



NEWS RELEASE

ROMAN CATHOLIC DIOCESE OF SAN DIEGO

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Friday, March 13, 2020

Masses to be Cancelled and Catholic Schools to Close under Temporary Measures Announced by San Diego Bishop Robert McElroy

Decision follows guidance by public health officials to avoid gatherings of 250 people or more

SAN DIEGO – Starting Monday, March 16, all daily and Sunday Masses in the Diocese of San Diego will be cancelled and diocesan Catholic schools will be closed. Churches will remain open, however, for parishioners and others who wish to pray and seek spiritual assistance. Schools will be closed and students shifted to distance learning. A decision on when Masses will resume and schools will reopen will be made in coordination with state and local public health authorities.

In a letter to priests this morning, Bishop McElroy explained his decision:

“I have no need to tell you of the dislocations, legitimate concerns and misplaced fear that are burdening our parishioners and families in these days concerning COVID-19. Being on the ground, you know these realities far more deeply and personally than I do.

“The public health response in our society is changing daily, and it is essential that the Church move in tandem with prudent efforts to stop the spread of this pandemic.

“Both the Governor and San Diego County have issued declarations prohibiting meetings of more than 250 people, and calling for social distancing even within smaller gatherings.

“In light of these government actions, and the public health challenge which underlies them, I consulted with the Presbyteral (Priests’) Council yesterday and again today. As a result, I have concluded that the following actions must be implemented in all of the parishes and schools of the Diocese of San Diego:

1. “Effective Monday morning, March 16, no public daily or weekend Masses will be held. Parishes are encouraged to keep churches open longer hours for personal visitation, intermittent recitations of the Rosary, and Exposition of the Blessed Sacrament.
2. “All Catholics in the Diocese of San Diego are dispensed from the obligation to attend Sunday Mass during the coming weeks.

(MORE)

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Bishop McElroy announces measures

To slow spread of COVID-19

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3. "All parish and diocesan schools and religious education programs will be suspended effective this Monday. The Diocesan School Office is notifying the schools of this suspension; the Office has in prior days sent to the schools substantive materials for long-distance learning for use during the suspension.
4. "We will be providing video-streamed Sunday Masses celebrated by priests and bishops of our diocese in English, Spanish and Vietnamese every week. Your parishioners can access these celebrations by linking to the diocesan website at sdcatholic.org starting this Sunday."

Earlier this week, Bishop McElroy announced other steps designed to reduce attendance at individual services to less than 250 people, including the cancellation of Lenten reconciliation services, changes in liturgy to make Mass times shorter and to prevent overlapping between Masses, and the elimination of non-essential meetings and events.

These abbreviated Masses will be celebrated this weekend, but scheduled Masses and other religious assemblies such as Lenten Reconciliation services will not resume after March 16 until further notice.

"It is vital that we proceed with a blend of prudent concern for public health and the spiritual mission that lies at the heart of the Church and is especially vital in these days," the Bishop told his priests. "I give thanks once again for all of the service which you render to the Church, especially in moments like this."

The diocese remains in close touch with State and County public health authorities and will continue to be guided by the best scientific and medical advice available.

About the San Diego Catholic Diocese

The Roman Catholic Diocese of San Diego (www.sdcatholic.org) runs the length of California's border with Mexico and serves more than 1.3 million Catholics in San Diego and Imperial Counties. It includes 98 parishes, 49 elementary and secondary schools, and, through Catholic Charities of the Diocese of San Diego (www.ccdsd.org), various social service and family support organizations throughout the region. It also includes five historic sites, the most well-known of which is the Mission Basilica San Diego de Alcalá, the first mission established in California by St. Junipero Serra in 1769.

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