



OFFICE OF THE BISHOP

## DIocese OF LAFAYETTE

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March 16, 2020

Dear Clergy, Religious and Lay Faithful of the Diocese of Lafayette:

As a Diocesan family, our top priority remains the health and safety of the people of our community, especially the most vulnerable among us. Upon consultation with my fellow Bishops of the State and out of an abundance of caution, **all public Masses (weekday and weekend) in the Diocese of Lafayette will be suspended until April 13, 2020.** Therefore, my earlier dispensation from Sunday Masses remains in place. Funerals (with immediate family only) are to be celebrated with graveside services only. A Memorial Mass is to be scheduled at a later date. Weddings are to be celebrated according to the Rite for celebrating marriage outside of Mass with immediate family only. Engaged couples may wish to consider rescheduling their weddings, if possible. All Confirmation ceremonies scheduled prior to April 13 are to be postponed. Pastors are to make contact with my office in the near future for rescheduling. Confirmations will be rescheduled for dates after August 1, 2020. All parish gatherings, i.e. Lenten Missions, are also to be suspended until further notice. We must do our part to help “flatten the curve” and stop the spread of COVID-19.

Though public Masses have been suspended, our obligation to praying and to sanctifying Sundays and Holy Week (beginning Palm Sunday through Easter Sunday) as a sacred time remain an important obligation of faith. Parishes will make arrangements for the faithful to have outside pick up of blessed palms (e.g. by automobile, under a canopy or some suitable place outside) beginning at 5:00 p.m. on the eve of Palm Sunday and a locally scheduled time during the day of Palm Sunday. Please check with your parish for further details. Some form of devotion should be substituted, especially on Sundays and most especially on Easter Sunday.

I remind everyone of the opportunities to remotely view Holy Mass, including Holy Week services.

- The daily noon Mass and the Sunday 11:00 a.m. Mass from the Cathedral are live streamed on the home page of the Diocese of Lafayette website.
- St. Mary Mother of the Church is live streaming their 8:00 a.m. Sunday Mass on their website.
- St. Pius X is live streaming their 9:00 a.m. Sunday Mass on their website.

Please consult the Diocese of Lafayette website ([diolaf.org](http://diolaf.org)) and Facebook page for the most up-to-date availabilities.

Below are some of the recommended spiritual practices you may consider:

- 15-30 minutes of intentional prayer
- Reading and meditating on the Bible, especially the readings of the day

- Praying the Stations of the Cross. There are outdoor Stations of the Cross available in various locations through the Diocese. If prayed in groups, please remember to keep appropriate spacing.
- Praying the rosary individually or in small well-spaced groups, perhaps outside
- Praying the Litany of Saint Joseph, and/or of the Blessed Mother, Sacred Heart and of all the Saints

Churches and chapels will remain open for private prayer (pending further regulations) with appropriate social distancing. Check with your parish for opening and closing schedules.

Further, the Sacraments of Anointing of the Sick and Confession will remain available, as needed by the faithful. Priests should take necessary precautions if there is suspicion of COVID-19. Consultation with the medical professionals when caring for these patients would be most prudent, taking care not to unnecessarily alarm the sick person. Priests who are ill or with vulnerable immune systems should seek the assistance of a brother priest.

Parish offices will be open with reduced schedules according to the discretion of the Pastor. Chancery offices will remain open (pending further regulations). In both cases, the faithful are encouraged to conduct as much parish business by phone or email.

It is with deep regret that these changes are put in place. It is especially difficult for us as Catholics to be without the celebration of the Mass and of the Holy Eucharist. This is truly a sacrifice. Perhaps we can take this occasion to grow our desire and devotion to the Most Holy Eucharist. Our priests will continue to celebrate the Mass privately for your intentions.

I encourage the faithful to pray, fast and offer generosity as we continue our journey through the holy season of Lent. Please, offer prayers and sacrifices for those suffering from this virus, and our heroic healthcare workers, first responders and civil officials. The faith of our Diocesan family is strong and I trust that this unique Lent and Easter season will be an opportunity for an even greater trust in the victory won for us by the cross and resurrection of our Divine Savior.

With prayers for your health and wellbeing, I remain

Faithfully yours in Christ,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, reading "J. Douglas Deshotel". The signature is written in black ink and is positioned above the typed name of the signatory.

Most Reverend J. Douglas Deshotel, D.D.  
Bishop of Lafayette