

Additional Archdiocesan Directives Related to Coronavirus 13 March 2020

- All Catholics within the Archdiocese of St. Louis are dispensed from their obligation to attend Sunday Mass for the next three weekends (March 14-15, March 21-22 and March 28-29). As with the Lenten practice of abstinence, we remind the faithful to exercise good judgement and not “excuse themselves lightly” from their obligation. **Churches will remain open, and Mass schedules will remain mostly unchanged.** (*At St. Rita, the Tuesday morning Mass and Thursday morning Communion Service will remain as scheduled, as will Stations of the Cross on Fridays at noon.*)
- **We urge everyone who is sick, elderly or vulnerable because of a medical condition to remain at home.** Please understand that Mass schedules and availability, as well as parish and diocesan events, may change—especially if our clergy are affected by illness. (*The St. Rita website will be kept up-to-date with any scheduling or other changes, and parishioners should check the parish website periodically for those updates. The eBlast system will also be used as needed.*)
- **Catholics who attend Holy Mass are not required to receive Holy Communion more than once per year.** No one is under any obligation to receive nor distribute Holy Communion. Catholics who choose to temporarily refrain from receiving Holy Communion may make an act of Spiritual Communion, uniting themselves worthily to our Lord’s true presence in the Most Holy Eucharist through prayer. (*See attached for examples of an Act of Spiritual Communion. An Act of Spiritual Communion is also on the back of the missalette.*)
- **We strongly recommend that parishioners receive Holy Communion in the hand.** Holy Communion distributed by **extraordinary ministers** will be administered in the hand only. However, as this is a celebration of God’s love for us and the most important part of our Mass, **parishioners who still wish to receive Holy Communion on the tongue should receive from the Mass celebrant or concelebrant only.**
- **Continue to suspend the physical exchange of the sign of peace.** Use a hand gesture or bow instead. Consider suspending the sign of peace altogether during this time. You can omit the words “Let us offer each other the sign of peace.”
- **Holy Mass can be viewed on TV or online** at catholicstv.org, EWTN, and the Catholic Faith Network.
- **Weddings/Funerals/Baptisms:** The decision regarding whether to continue with weddings and funerals should be made by the parish pastor. The Archdiocese of St. Louis recommends limiting attendance at these sacred events to immediate family members only, or rescheduling to a future date when possible. Parish pastors should determine whether to continue with baptisms. Where possible, the Archdiocese of St. Louis recommends postponing baptisms to a later date.
- **Sacrament of Reconciliation:** It is recommended that the Sacrament of Penance be celebrated using a screen (anonymously) to ensure the health department’s social distancing guidelines.
- **Parish fish fries:** The decision regarding whether to continue with fish fries should be made by pastors. The Archdiocese of St. Louis recommends limiting your fish fry to pick-up or drive-through options only, or where possible, canceling the fish fries until further notice.
- **Parish retreats and other group parish activities:** The decision regarding whether to continue with retreats and other group parish activities should be made by parish pastors. The Archdiocese of St. Louis recommends postponing retreats and other group activities/gatherings until further notice.

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- **Collections:** Essential to the continued operation of our parishes and their missions, please encourage parishioners to use online giving, drop-off or mail their contributions if they choose to remain home during this health crisis.

The Archdiocese will continue to monitor official health advisories and update these directives accordingly.

We are called to encourage our archdiocesan community to pray, and I ask you to do so by implementing and sharing the prayer that USCCB gave us regarding COVID-19. (See *attached*)

Most Reverend Robert J. Carlson
Archbishop of St. Louis