

Coronavirus Update Diocese of Joliet

April 7, 2020

My Brother Priests and Deacons:

1) Conference Call with Governor Pritzker

Monday, April 6th, Governor Pritzker along with his coronavirus task force conducted a conference call with religious leaders of the State of Illinois.

The outcome carried two significant messages.

I. CHURCH PARKING LOT ACTIVITY OF ANY SORT IS BANNED UNTIL THE STAY AT HOME DIRECTIVE IS LIFTED.

Please cancel now any Church parking lot activity that may have been scheduled such as confessions, blessing of Easter food baskets, etc.

The Governor emphasizes that his directive is intended to keep people at home. Ultimately, the goals we all envision of reducing the spread of the virus and returning to normalcy will occur soonest with this restriction in place.

I ask that you explain this directive to your parishioners as the Governor has stated. We must appeal to their best religious instincts namely the recognition that our joining Christ in the daily carrying of the Cross is expressed in these days in this manner. It is a service to all of our brother priests if we are together in this.

II. The Governor and his associates also spoke directly to the reality that religious leaders exercise great influence on parishioners' cooperation in these matters. Thus, again, let us be mindful of what truly is in the long-term best interests of those whom we are privileged to serve.

2) Utilization of Technology, Live Streaming

We have been especially blessed in this pandemic moment with the gift of technology. Our people have been particularly grateful for this means of prayer and connection.

A question has surfaced as to the timing of our services given the "ever present" availability of live streaming. It is asked that the actual service occur at a time which is convenient for the community. In any case the date, time and identification of a particular liturgy should be presented in the course of the liturgy. The exercise of common sense is to be utilized in providing an explanation of the recipients' time availability and their actual viewing and participating in the liturgy. Obviously, they can engage when they can. In a sense, time is suspended.

3) Easter Blessing of Baskets of Food and Easter Meals

After the 9:00AM Prayer Service on Holy Saturday, I will bless the Easter baskets and foods in recognition of the time honored traditions of the Polish and Italians among others. The link to that service is: <http://www.youtube.com/DioceseofJolietL>

I am attaching the text of the blessing of the food which you may choose to utilize in your own electronic transmissions.¹

In addition, I attach the Table Liturgy, for the Feast of Easter Sunday². The text has been graciously provided by Father Don McLaughlin, Pastor of Our Lady of Mercy Catholic Church. The prayer is from: "Prayer for the Domestic Church – A Handbook for Worship in the Home" by Edward Hayes. In making the prayer available, Father McLaughlin notes: "*reprinted with Permission of Forest of Peace Publishing, Inc. P.O. Box 269, Leavenworth, KS 66048.*"

4) Bishop's Telephone Message – Will be activated Easter Sunday Morning

The message in English and Spanish is able to be transmitted only through land lines and not cell phones. I attach copies of the texts³. You are welcome to circulate the message in any way you find helpful.

5) Prayers and Celebration of Mercy Sunday – April 18th and 19th

We are currently researching the Order of Celebration for Mercy Sunday in the context of the Governor's "stay at home" directive. It is our intention to relay this information as soon as it is available.

My brothers, thank you for the extraordinary ministry you are exercising in this once-in-a-lifetime event. Your leadership and cooperation with the directives of the civil authorities are invaluable.

I look forward to our gathering on Holy Thursday. In the meanwhile, please contact me if I can be of assistance.

Sincerely yours in Christ,

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Most Reverend Richard E. Pates
Apostolic Administrator
Diocese of Joliet

¹ Attachment 1: Blessing of the Easter Food

² Attachment 2: Table Liturgy, Feast of Easter Sunday

³ Attachment 3: Easter Sunday phone call text, English & Spanish