

# Coronavirus Update Diocese of Joliet

April 8, 2020

Dear Priests and Deacons:

My continued assurance of prayer and support is with you. Thank you for your ministry under trying circumstances.

Two updates:

## 1) **Blessing of Easter food baskets and Easter food**

In order to accommodate this time-honored tradition, three possibilities for a blessing have surfaced:

1. I will extend a blessing via live-stream at the conclusion of the 9:00 am Holy Saturday Morning Prayer at St. Raymond Cathedral.  
(<http://www.youtube.com/DiocesefofJolietLL>)
2. Any priest or deacon may invoke the blessing via the established parish electronic platform.
3. The father or leader of the family may invoke the blessing at the home at an appropriate time.
4. The Archdiocese of Chicago has distributed a beautiful blessing for this purpose, which is attached<sup>1</sup> for use in the parishes and homes of the Diocese of Joliet.
5. In keeping with Governor Pritzker's stay-at-home order, the blessing may not be administered in parish buildings or property.

## 2) **Funerals and Weddings**

- a) Funerals. I wish to clarify issues in regard to funerals.

The parish priest or deacon is able (indeed encouraged to do so) to lead or participate in a prayer service at the mortuary, for a deceased individual. The mortuary is responsible for assuring that those assembled for this occasion be no more than ten.

Pastoral care is highly valued in the time after death and before the service and burial. In this regard, the telephone is a means of communication. In addition, the funeral director ordinarily meets with the surviving family to make the immediate arrangements. I suggest the parish be in touch with the funeral director and that

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<sup>1</sup> Attachment I: Blessing of Easter Food, courtesy of Archdiocese of Chicago

a representative of the parish (priest, deacon, pastoral minister) also meet separately in the same time frame at the mortuary to extend support to the family. In this manner, the Governor's stay-at-home directive will be honored:

- The family will only have to leave home once; and
- The parish offices will remain closed.

The minister can also lead/participate in the burial rites at the cemetery, observing precautions in conjunction with coronavirus.

Many families have indicated that they intend to have a formal Church memorial service once the present crisis has passed.

- b) Weddings. A private wedding with no more than ten total persons can be conducted and in this rare exception in a church or chapel.

At a later date, once the directives of the Governor for coronavirus have elapsed "renewal" of vows may take place with appropriate blessing. This can occur within the context of a reception. It should take place prior to the reception in a respectful manner. Once completed, the formal reception can begin.

Thank you again for your pastoral outreach and understanding. We're ploughing new ground. I look forward to being with you tomorrow.

Sincerely yours in Christ,

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Most Reverend Richard E. Pates  
Apostolic Administrator  
Diocese of Joliet