

**Diocese of Joliet**  
**Coronavirus Update**

**April 20, 2020**

A heartfelt thanks is extended to our priests, deacons and other diocesan and parish ministers and volunteers who have exercised valued communication and contact with the community of the Diocese of Joliet. I have received constant appreciation from those who are benefiting from your outreach and all this is being done within the strict limitations established by the Governor of Illinois.

Some of the activity that has been cited:

- 1) Live streaming, on-line, or video of some dimension, transmitting the Mass, Eucharistic Adoration, the Rosary and other prayer opportunities.  
If a parish does not have the capacity of technology, I would ask that you refer your people to a neighboring parish or one within the diocese that does. The link to the Diocesan live streaming Mass is: <http://www.dioceseofjoliet.org/parishes>  
I celebrate Mass daily from the Cathedral of St. Raymond Nonnatus – Monday through Saturday at 9:00am and at 10:00am on Sunday. All are welcome to join us for these services.
- 2) The diocesan schools and youth formation personnel have been working constantly with our schools and parishes to assist with the development of on-line content to be utilized by the schools, religious education and youth ministry.

Special commendation is due the administrators of our schools, the teachers, the directors and coordinators of religious education and youth ministry, catechists and others who are doing outstanding work in online formation of young people, an endeavor that is new but to which they are adapting to beautifully. I wish to highly commend all parents who have risen to the challenge as they adapt to at-home learning and greater intentionality within their Domestic Church.

- 3) Catholic Charities of Joliet is reaching out to the homeless, to the poor, to the very young, to the lonely and those otherwise without human connection. The social workers exhaust themselves in their daily routine but are at the very heart, under the restrictions mandated by the “stay at home” directives of the Governor, of where the Church should be serving Jesus among the least of our brothers and sisters. Also, to be recognized are the parishes who have continued, while respecting the directives, their food distribution and food pantries. Demand is higher than ever.

4) The parishes are in contact also through telephone calls, assistance with isolated parishioners, especially the elderly. This has proven to be impactful to those who are alone and are living in fear.

5) **The Sacraments.** Please note some clarifications of past directives.

A. As illustrated above, the Eucharist and other prayer activity is taking place “on-line.”

B. **Funerals**

Funerals can take place with Mass or a service at the funeral home or possibly at a Church or a Chapel if the TEN-person limitation and 6 foot distancing are fully respected and adhered to. I would also encourage, insofar as is practical, the use of masks or other practices meant to stop the spread of infection. Important consideration should also be given to tending to the grieving family by the priest, deacon, or pastoral minister. A meeting with family members should be arranged at the funeral home at the same time the funeral director gathers with the family. Please try to coordinate this pastoral outreach with the funeral director.

C. **Weddings**

As a rare exception, in order to accommodate unusual circumstances (Military assignment, etc.) weddings can be conducted in a Chapel or Church with the strict limitations of ten participating and respecting the 6 foot distancing. Again, I would encourage, insofar as is practical, the use of masks or other practices meant to stop the spread of infection.

An “anniversary” exchange of vows may occur at a later reception or social gathering celebrating the marriage along with a service of prayer and blessing. The vows and prayers should occur at the beginning of the social gathering.

D. **Sacrament of the Sick**

A lengthy direction was provided in the coronavirus update of April 2, 2020 to which I refer all. That update can be found online at:

<http://www.dioceseofjoliet.org/covid19>

E. **Sacrament of Confirmation**

All of those services that have been postponed will be rescheduled once the restrictions have been lifted. The Office of Divine Worship is prepared to assist our parishes in coordinating revised schedules.

F. **First Holy Communion**

These parish celebrations should be placed “on hold” until direction is received from the State of Illinois to either go forward with them or reschedule them.

G. **Sacrament of Reconciliation**

The Sacrament of Reconciliation is suspended until it is able to be resumed.

Theology instructs us that our sins are forgiven through an Act of Contrition, the Penitential Rite of the Mass, etc. Mortal sin is also forgiven by a sincere Act of Contrition and notably so in extraordinary times such as we are experiencing.

Permission has been given in rare circumstances in which a personal meeting with one person (respecting the restrictions) seems especially necessary from a spiritual, psychological or emotional perspective.

- 6) In respect to the Golden Rule: “love of neighbor and oneself,” and the best scientific guidance, our Churches and Church buildings as well as all activity in Church property will remain closed until the restrictions of the State of Illinois are lifted.
- 7) The Catholic Schools and group activity of the Religious Education Programs of the Diocese of Joliet will not re-open this academic year. The actual end date of the school and religious education programs will be determined by each school or parish.

End of the year activities must abide strictly by the directives of the State of Illinois (no larger group than ten with a safe distancing of 6 feet) until otherwise lifted by the State.

- 8) **Finances.** Michael Bava, Chief Financial Officer of the Diocese of Joliet, the diocesan finance staff, the Diocesan Finance Council, along with Pastors, Parish Administrators and Parish Finance Councils have done an exceptional service in guiding us through these very uncertain times in financial matters. Because of the differences and nature of some parish circumstances, the actual financial activity might vary from parish to parish. Please be in contact with Mr. Bava and diocesan finance staff regarding each individual parish situation. They are in a position to provide guidance for the best benefit of the parish. Appreciation is especially extended to those who are able to continue donations to their parishes and the Catholic Ministries Annual Appeal.
- 9) **Diocesan Events.** Important and much looked forward to events such as transitional diaconate and priesthood ordinations have been put “on hold” for the time. This is also the case with the Chrism Mass. These events will be rescheduled as soon as it is prudently advisable to do so.

I close where I began with a heart full of gratitude to all in the diocese who have cooperated so generously and beautifully in the directives provided for us to overcome this horrific pandemic. Motivated by charity, we have exercised patience, discipline and ingenuity in the mode of communication while attending to those, oftentimes forgotten, among us at least through prayer.

To the priests, deacons, religious, diocesan staff, pastoral ministers and the entire diocesan community, I assure you of my wholehearted companionship and support as we seek eventually to reach the finish line in the joy and hope of the Risen Lord, Jesus. Alleluia.

+ *Richard E Pates*

Most Reverend Richard E. Pates  
Apostolic Administrator  
Diocese of Joliet