



Office of the Bishop  
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March 13, 2020

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

We are living in a time of considerable uncertainty as the Coronavirus (COVID-19 virus) continues to cause illness and death across the global community.

Health officials are advising that this virus continues to spread through person-to-person contact, affecting most especially the elderly and medically vulnerable members of our community.

In light of the danger and uncertainty of this serious emergency, and in consultation with Chancery officials and pastoral leaders, I am authorizing precautionary measures related to the celebration of the Eucharist in the parishes in the Diocese of Las Vegas. These measures are taken to mitigate the spread of this illness in our local community.

Because of this grave and unprecedented moment, I hereby dispense all Catholic faithful of the Diocese of Las Vegas and those Catholics visiting within the geographic boundaries of our Diocese, from the obligation of attending Sunday Masses for the weekends of March 14-15, March 21-22, and March 28-29. This dispensation will be revisited as further medical information becomes available through our local and national health authorities.

I encourage those of you who cannot come to Mass to stay home and read the Gospels (these can be found at [www.usccb.org/bible/readings](http://www.usccb.org/bible/readings)), pray with your families, and to join yourself to the sacrifice of the Mass by making an act of spiritual communion. I also encourage all the faithful that cannot come to Holy Mass to participate via the internet or on television. The Diocese of Las Vegas offers a televised Mass each Sunday at 7:30 am on KFBT-TV (Cox Channel 6). Holy Spirit Parish livestreams the 5:00 pm Sunday Mass ([holyspiritchurch.org/live-stream-mass/](http://holyspiritchurch.org/live-stream-mass/)). There are also multiple Masses available online, some can be found at [facebook.com/lacatholics/](https://www.facebook.com/lacatholics/), [www.ewtn.com/tv/watch-live](http://www.ewtn.com/tv/watch-live), and [mass-online.org/daily-holy-mass-live-online/](http://mass-online.org/daily-holy-mass-live-online/).

It is important to be reminded that the celebration of the Eucharist is the "source and summit" of the life of the Church, and the obligation to participate is dispensed only for grave cause. I believe that the present circumstances meet that criteria.

At this time I am asking Pastors to continue with the regularly scheduled Masses, exercising the precautionary measures that we have already addressed in prior correspondence (see attached). Decisions regarding religious education classes and retreats will be made at the parish level on a case-by-case basis.

Given the seriousness of this health emergency, I am asking you to include prayers of the faithful, asking our Lord and His Blessed Mother to protect and bless our families, parishioners, and residents of this Diocese from harm and illness. I am asking Pastors

Diocese of Las Vegas  
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March 13, 2020  
Page 2

and Administrators to include in the prayers of the faithful for these weeks the intentions suggested by the USCCB (see attached).

We ask special blessings on those whose families are suffering from the loss of a loved one, and special blessings on physicians, nurses, and health care providers, public health officials and civic leaders.

Please be certain of my prayerful support throughout these difficult days, I remain,

Sincerely Yours in Christ,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "George L. Thomas". The signature is written in a cursive style with a small cross at the beginning.

Most Reverend George L. Thomas, Ph.D.  
Bishop of Las Vegas



February 27, 2020

Dear Pastors and Administrators,

Since the worldwide outbreak of the Corona Virus, we have received a number of inquiries concerning reception of Communion from the Cup and the exchange of the Sign of Peace during the celebration of the Eucharistic Liturgy.

After reviewing information made available to us by both national and regional health district officials, and in consultation with the USCCB, I have decided to introduce the following precautionary measures:

- Suspending the distribution of Holy Communion to the faithful via the chalice;
- Suspending the exchange of peace (or instructing that it be exchanged without physical contact).

While there are no reported cases of COVID-19 in Clark County or within our State at this time, there is widespread focus on preventive measures recommended by health officials to stem the potential spread of this highly communicable virus.

In the past, we have dealt with issues related to the prevention and spread of other communicable diseases by recommending common sense measures that help to inhibit the transmission of respiratory and saliva borne illnesses.

Fundamentals that always apply:

- urging priests, deacons, and extraordinary ministers of Holy Communion to practice good hygiene, washing their hands before Mass begins or even using an alcohol based anti-bacterial solution before and after distributing Holy Communion;
- assuring the faithful that if they are sick or are experiencing symptoms of sickness they are not obliged to attend Mass, and even recommend that out of charity they ought not to attend.

We will monitor information provided by officials from the Southern Nevada Health District and the CDC and make changes based on recommendations from the health care community.

I appreciate your understanding and cooperation.

With warm personal regards, I remain

Sincerely yours in Christ,

The Most Rev. George L. Thomas, Ph.D.  
Bishop of the Diocese of Las Vegas

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## Office of the General Secretary

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### MEMORANDUM

To: All Bishops

From: Reverend Monsignor J. Brian Bransfield, General Secretary

Date: February 28, 2020

Subject: Liturgical Celebrations and Public Health Concerns

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Your Eminence / Your Excellency,

I take this opportunity to convey to you the enclosed memorandum from Most Reverend Leonard P. Blair, Archbishop of Hartford and Chairman of the Committee on Divine Worship, regarding liturgical celebrations amid public health concerns regarding the spread of the coronavirus.

I am pleased to offer one final consideration on this topic: sample petitions, below, which may be included during the Prayers of the Faithful at Mass.

- For those who are suffering in the current outbreak of sickness that they might be healed, and for the happy repose of all who have died from this sickness in recent weeks; let us pray to the Lord
- For scientists, health professionals, public officials, and all who are serving the common good in this difficult and uncertain time, that they will be filled with wisdom and understanding; let us pray to the Lord.
- That in times of illness our merciful and loving Father will strengthen our faith and trust in his goodness and divine providence; let us pray to the Lord.
- That our compassionate Father would touch all affected by the current outbreak with healing and peace; let us pray to the Lord.

Thank you for your kind attention to this memorandum.