



March 17, 2020

Dear Brothers and Sisters,

I wish to communicate the following restrictions and guidelines in reference to the continuing threats related to the Coronavirus. I ask for your cooperation in adhering to these guidelines together with your pastors and fellow parishioners in order to protect and keep safe every parishioner especially the most vulnerable.

As you know the situation of the Coronavirus pandemic and the health orders related to it change throughout the day. Stay informed through our website and your local Health Agencies. Below is Corpus Christi's Health District website and the National Center for Disease Control:

Nueces County Health District

<http://www.cctexas.com/departments/corpus-christi-nueces-county-public-health-district>

National Center for Disease Control

<https://www.cdc.gov/>

The following guidelines and restrictions are in effect until March 31st at which time they will be reevaluated. They may change sooner according to the latest information.

1. **All parish retreats are canceled.** This includes (but not limited to) Confirmation retreats, youth retreats, ACTS retreats, Journey retreats, TRUE Presence retreats.
2. **No parish meetings or groups should gather that include more than 10 people.** When it is determined that a meeting is necessary, please ask the attendees to abide by the precautions and recommendations for good hygiene. If anyone is not well or shows signs of the COVID-19, they should not attend.
3. **All diocesan and parish pilgrimages are cancelled** effective immediately until September 1, 2020.
4. **Religious Education classes** should follow the local school districts schedule. Should schools re-open on a Monday during this period, R. E. classes could resume the following week on the regularly scheduled day.
5. **All parish festivals and other activities** that exceed the numbers recommended by **Public Health Authorities** should be postponed or canceled for another time.

Sacraments

Sunday Masses:

As of yesterday, March 16th, **a limit of 250 people gathering together was recommended** by Nueces County and the City of Corpus Christi. For parishes in counties other than Nueces County, please check with your local county and city health authorities regarding the number of people who should assemble in one place. **If a county does not have a restriction, I advise parishioners to follow the same limit of the 250 number.**

When gathered in a church, the social distancing recommended by the pastor is to be observed. Everyone, especially the **elderly and sick are encouraged to remain home during this period** and watch the Mass on TV (KDF-TV Channel 47 – please check your local cable listings) instead of putting themselves at risk. A spiritual communion can be expressed in anticipation of returning to the reception of the Lord's Body and Blood.

In all cases the obligation to attend Sunday Mass is dispensed.

Continue observing the previously published recommendations for Mass:

- a. Do not use the common Holy Water fonts at the doors of the churches.
- b. Reception of the Lord's Blood will not be distributed to the faithful.
- c. Holy Communion is to be received in the hand during this crisis to avoid any possible contagion passed on through mouth fluids.
- d. Shaking hands for the Sign of Peace is dispensed. Instead a simple gesture or a moment of silence is to replace the normal gesture.

Daily Masses:

Daily Mass will continue for now until recommendations are received from **Public Health Authorities** that recommend otherwise. Those attending smaller chapels for daily Mass (parish, convent, or hospital chapels, etc.) should observe social distancing of at least 6 feet and not overcrowd the chapels.

Penance:

Confessions can continue for now; however, I encourage you to use screens or the confessionals as the preferred option in observation of healthy social distancing.

Funerals:

For now, Funerals can be celebrated, but should be attended by immediate family members and close friends up to the number suggested by **Public Health Authorities**.

Ministry to the Sick:

Over the next few months visits to the sick are limited to those who are in need of Viaticum, the Anointing of the Sick or Confession.

Homebound visitations:

Please understand that visiting homes to bring Holy Communion -- which may be a normal ministry in the parishes -- must be suspended at this time in order to lessen the threat of spreading infection of COVID-19.

Brothers and Sisters, this is the situation as it is now. I do not know what tomorrow or next week will bring. Nevertheless, our desire is to be prudent in protecting one another and maintaining a safe and healthy environment as much as possible for everyone especially for the elderly and most vulnerable in health.

Our dedication to do so as a community is living proof that we understand the commandment to love our neighbor as ourselves and to do to others as we would have them do to us. I am sure that this is the underlying desire that all of us have, as difficult as it may be to adhere to the guidelines that strike at the heart of our faith expressions, especially with regards the Holy Eucharist.

I encourage you to give God time in prayer. And in our prayer to remember all those who have died from the COVID-19 throughout the world, for those now infected with the virus and for their families. And let us ask the Lord to bring this contagious virus to an end as soon as possible.

I pray for all of you daily and ask you to pray for me.

Bishop Wm. Michael Mulvey
Bishop of Corpus Christi