

April 4, 2020

Dear Friends,

In the best of times, when we experience the loss of a loved one it is a very painful and difficult moment. In this time of the pandemic, grief and sorrow are compounded exponentially. I would like to clear up some information about what we can and cannot do regarding celebrating a funeral liturgy.

Living as close as we do to the Archdiocese of Boston, folks often think that if Cardinal O'Malley issues a directive then we are automatically bound by that directive. *This is not the case at all.*

Each diocese has their own bishop and it would be the very rare situation when the Cardinal would exercise any real authority over another bishop in the same province. In other words, the Cardinal is not the Bishop's "boss" as some have thought. While the Cardinal has suspended funerals in the Archdiocese, Bishop McManus has not done that for the Diocese of Worcester. In fact we, that is the priests of the Diocese, have received further liturgical instructions on what to do in the event of a funeral.

While there are a couple of options, ***I want to assure you that we will continue to have funeral masses celebrated here at Our Lady of the Lake if that is your desire.*** We would have to follow the directives that Governor Baker has issued about the fact that only ten people, including the priest, server, and musician, may be in attendance and no exceptions will be made. The rule of social distancing will also apply. Those guidelines are issued for our safety and we will respect them. Another option is to have a graveside service and then have a memorial Mass at a later date if that is convenient for the family. Regardless, on the day of burial, I will offer a funeral Mass for the deceased.

I hope that provides some clarity and a measure of comfort for you. It is so easy to become confused when we haven't the proper information at hand. Please pass this information along to those who do not use technology or who are in a situation where they will need this information in the near future.

Recently we recorded a funeral Mass here and then sent a link to the family for them to send to those who could not attend the funeral. This is a private link and only open to those whom the family wishes to see it.

This entire experience is as surreal to me as it is to you. Needless to say, I wish we could all be together, especially when a loved one passes away.

The Holy Father said the other day in his *Urbi et Orbi* message from the Vatican, "How many are praying, offering and interceding for the good of all. Prayer and quiet service: these are our victorious weapons." Indeed they are just that, the victorious weapons of our great Catholic faith! Be strong, dig deep into the well-spring of grace. You can do it, I know you can. Just try, with God's help.

Peace,

Fr. Michael