



OFFICE OF THE BISHOP

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Letter of Most Rev. Michael J. Hoepfner, Bishop of Crookston Regarding the COVID-19 March 18, 2020

Dear Clergy and Faithful of the Diocese of Crookston,

Lent is always for us a special time of prayer, sacrifice, and charity. The invasion of the coronavirus has certainly now provided us with added reason for prayer, sacrifice, and charity. We join with our brothers and sisters in America and throughout the world to adjust our way of living for our own health, the health of our neighbor, and to do our part to slow the spread of COVID-19 coronavirus. In addition to the steps that we have already taken, with this letter/decreed the following applies to all parishes, chapels and religious houses in the Diocese of Crookston effective March 20, 2020:

-All public celebrations of the Holy Mass are cancelled (with the exception for funerals and weddings noted below). All Masses offered by priests are to be private, according to the Liturgical Norms and not open to the public. Pastors are reminded of their canonical obligation to offer Mass *pro populo*. I give my permission and encourage priests to pray, during a weekday of Lent each week, the Mass seeking the intercession of the Blessed Virgin Mary, Health of the Sick (#44) from the collection of Masses in Honor of the Blessed Virgin Mary and suggest that Saturday would be an appropriate day each week.

-Sunday remains a holy day and, although dispensed from the obligation to attend Holy Mass on Sundays, the faithful are encouraged to observe the Lord's Day by watching Mass online or on TV and by making a "spiritual communion." For contact information go to www.crookston.org/covid19. Parishes that are able to livestream Mass are encouraged to do so.

-There are to be no Communal Penance Services. Form 1 (Individual Celebration) of the Sacrament of Penance may be celebrated. Additional hours when the priest(s) are available may need to be offered. It is recommended that penitents make use of the screen in reconciliation rooms. The present circumstances do not constitute the grave necessity required for use of form 3 (General Absolution).

-Baptisms, may be celebrated outside Mass with only the parents, godparents, and immediate family present and no more than 10 persons present.

-Funerals and weddings with Mass may be celebrated with no more than 10 persons present.

Church buildings should remain open, according to the local custom, for visits and personal prayer. All gatherings, meetings, events of more than 10 people are to be cancelled for this time. The faithful are encouraged to continue attending Adoration, practicing "social distancing" and limiting the number of persons present to no more than 10 persons.

These steps are preventative. We do not want this virus to come here; once it is here, it's too late. The above directives will remain in effect until further notice. We will continue to keep you up

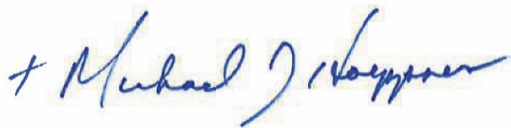
to date on developments through the Communications Office of the Diocese of Crookston. In the near future, we will communicate the plans for this year's celebration of the Chrism Mass.

My dear People of God, let us continue our Lenten journey of prayer, sacrifice, and charity, particularly mindful of all who suffer because of the coronavirus and any other disease or illness. Let us ask our Good God to grant us good health, to help us show concern for the health of our neighbor, and do all we can to slow the spread of the coronavirus. And let us ask the intercession of our Dear Mother Mary, Health of the Sick. I invite you to make good use of the following prayer, adapted with the help of Fr. Augie Gothman from the Mass in her honor:

O Mary, Health of the Sick who shared in the joys and sorrows of your Son,
And merited in a wonderful way a special share in the mystery of pain;
You shine radiantly as a sign of health, of healing,
and of divine hope for the sick who call on you.
You are the model of perfect acceptance of God's will
and of wholehearted conformity with Christ
who endured our weakness and bore our sufferings because of his infinite love for us.

Intercede for us and for all who suffer, grant health to all the sick.
In your motherly concern, present our cares to your Son
who is our Savior and always rises to help us whatever our troubles.
Pray, Dear Mother, that we be strengthened in all our sorrows in this life
and be given a share in the everlasting joy in heaven
where we hope to see you and your Son,
Our Lord Jesus Christ, who lives and reigns forever and ever. Amen.

Sincerely, in the name of the Lord Jesus,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Michael J. Hoepfner". The signature is written in a cursive style with a cross at the beginning.

Most Rev. Michael J. Hoepfner
Bishop of Crookston