



ROMAN CATHOLIC  
**DIocese** of  
**SPRINGFIELD-CAPE GIRARDEAU**

*Office of the Bishop*

**MEMORANDUM**

**TO:** All Priests, Deacons, and Religious Sisters  
**FROM:** Most Reverend Edward M. Rice + EMR  
**DATE:** March 26, 2020  
**SUBJECT:** **Very Time Sensitive Directives and Updates**

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**Protecting Human Life During the COVID-19 Emergency**

Confirmed cases of COVID-19 are now in more than 10 counties in our Diocese, including those counties containing our three largest cities. Responding in faith and love during the current international emergency requires all of us to do our part. Some of these necessary actions are deeply sad, but I must do what is right.

As Bishop of the Diocese of Springfield-Cape Girardeau I am requiring that all church buildings and facilities, including adoration chapels, be closed and locked, effective immediately and until further notice. The faithful are not to be admitted but staff may attend to essential activities. Exceptions to this policy may only be granted by the Vicar General. This is the right thing to do. We must do our part to help stop the spread of the virus and save precious lives. An open Church will tempt people to travel to make a visit. We are cooperating fully with the civil authorities throughout southern Missouri. While some areas may not be affected at this time, we are, "One Church, east to west." Let us support one another in prayer.

Please pray for all those stricken by the virus, all healthcare workers, and those seeking a vaccine in your prayers. These individuals are on the front lines and often working at great personal risk to themselves and their families.

Please encourage the members of your parish to donate any unused medical or construction masks to their local hospital. There is a desperate shortage of these personal protective devices. Masks may be donated to Saint Francis Medical Center in Cape Girardeau by dropping them off at any facility or by contacting Mary Jane Mayfield at [mjmayfield@sfmc.net](mailto:mjmayfield@sfmc.net) Masks may also be donated to the Cox Hospital System by calling (417) 269-7150. The Mercy Healthcare System is accepting donations via its Foundation, which can be contacted by emailing [renee.paulsell@mercy.net](mailto:renee.paulsell@mercy.net)