

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

Last night, Archbishop Gregory made the difficult decision to close all Catholic Schools in the Archdiocese of Washington from March 16 to March 27 and to cancel all public Masses in the Archdiocese, effective March 14, until further notice, while dispensing the faithful from their Sunday obligation.

This decision was not an easy decision. Archbishop Gregory recognizes his obligation to ensure the health of the faithful, both spiritual and physical. By implementing effective social distancing measures the archdiocese supports the common good of all citizens and prioritizes the dignity of every human life, especially those most vulnerable at this time. We know that many Catholic faithful are saddened or upset by the decision to cancel Masses. We ask for your public support and fervent prayer, especially on behalf of the sick and dying. The decisions of the Archdiocese are based on the recommendations from local public health professionals and by legal requirements from the local governments. The decisions will continue to be assessed and reevaluated based on both public health officials and local government restrictions and guidelines. We are continually monitoring the situation and will communicate any updates.

Our hope is that this restriction of the public celebration of the Mass will be for a very limited period. For the time being, it is necessary to keep in mind the common good of public health and the importance of doing our part in preventing the spread of the coronavirus by avoiding large gatherings.

As Catholics, caring for our spiritual and sacramental lives is paramount. Therefore, the Archdiocese is providing the following pastoral guidance and resources for your use:

- The Archdiocesan website has a page with informational resources on coronavirus: <https://adw.org/coronavirus/>.
- At the pastor's discretion, churches may remain open for personal prayer. Please follow all protocols recommended by health professionals about maintaining safe interpersonal distance.
- The Archdiocesan website has resources on how to receive spiritual communion: <https://adw.org/coronavirus-dispensation-and-prayers/>.
- Take time to read and reflect upon the readings from Sunday Mass. You can find the readings at usccb.org and a Sunday Gospel reflection on our [YouTube channel](#).
- The Archdiocesan website has audio and written Stations of the Cross: <https://adw.org/coronavirus-dispensation-and-prayers/>.
- Our archdiocesan Sunday TV Mass is available online: <https://adw.org/parishes-masses/sunday-tv-mass/>.
- Here is a prayer by Pope Francis to Mary during the coronavirus pandemic: <https://adw.org/text-of-popes-prayer-to-mary-during-coronavirus-pandemic/>.
- Pastoral care to the sick will continue incorporating protocols recommended by health professionals.

The Archdiocese will continue to make additional spiritual and informational resources available and provide regular updates on our website. Please know of Archbishop Gregory's prayers and love for you.

In Christ,

Reverend Daniel B. Carson
Vicar General and Moderator of the Curia