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MEMORANDUM

DATE: May 7, 2020

TO: All Clergy, Religious, Principals, Diocesan Staff and Religious Education Directors

FROM: Bishop Oscar A. Solis

WHAT: Pope Francis' Call to Global Solidarity & Coronavirus Update

Pope Francis' Call to Global Solidarity

Today, I ask all our priests to join Pope Francis and the High Committee for Human Fraternity's call on people of all faiths to pray, fast and engage in good works in global solidarity on May 14. The High Committee brings Catholic, Jewish and Muslim leaders together for the reconciliation of people of goodwill in service of universal peace. Through this global call to prayer during Islam's holy month of Ramadan, we hope to both strengthen the bond of unity and solidarity with other faith groups, especially Muslims, and to seek God's help during this time of pandemic.

The Pope's appeal calls on "all peoples around the world to do good deeds, observe fasting, prayer, and make devout supplications to God Almighty to end this pandemic. It continues that, "each one from wherever they are and according to the teachings of their religion, faith, or sect, should implore God to lift this off us and the entire world, to rescue us all from this adversity, to inspire scientists to find a cure that can turn back this disease."

The grave danger of COVID-19 continues to unite us as one human family around the world. While we respect the role of medicine and scientific research in fighting the pandemic, we also seek refuge and invoke God Almighty, the Father of us all to safeguard the entire world, to help us overcome it, restore security, stability, healthiness, and prosperity, so that, after this pandemic is over, our world will become a better place for humanity and fraternity than ever before."

Let our diocese join in solidarity people of faith everywhere in prayer, remembering in a special way those who died due to the virus, and those who continue to put their lives on the line for all of us, from doctors and nurses to grocery clerks, postal workers and delivery persons.

While maintaining appropriate health protocols, we might join efforts to sew masks through Project Protect, collect and donate bottled water and other items for Catholic Community Services for our homeless brothers and sisters, or prepare and deliver a meal to a neighbor who is self-quarantined.

Together, through the work of scientists and medical professionals and the prayers, fasting and good works, we can overcome the current crisis and strengthen our bonds as one human race. Please remember our Muslim brothers and sisters and unite our prayers with theirs as they celebrate their Holy Ramadan.

CORONAVIRUS UPDATE - DIOCESAN GUIDELINES

Governor Gary Herbert has announced updated government guidelines allowing churches to reopen and services to start again with stipulations required by Centers for Disease Control and Prevention - physical or social distancing, wearing of masks in public and limits on group size.

Do not get too excited or over confident to let our guards down. The spread of the pandemic was slowed down or the “curve was flattened” due to government restrictions such as the closure of businesses, schools and other entities together with “stay at home and social distancing” measures in order to allow the health care system to cope with the high number of people infected by the disease. However, deadly infectious Coronavirus is still with us, no vaccine yet nor effective medications and remains very dangerous for the elderly, sick and vulnerable.

I plea for your cooperation to move our Church to a “new normal”. Pastors and administrators of our parishes and missions are asked to use their prudential discretion in determining when you are ready to re-start public Masses in strict compliance with government guidelines in your individual parishes and missions. Some may be ready to open for the capacity of individuals that can fit into their building sooner than others. Parishioners should check with their local pastors or administrators for details. Please be reminded of the following:

- Have a clear, well thought out and defined plan. Announce the plan to your parishioners before re-starting the Holy Mass.
- Train your parish leaders and volunteers to help to implement the plan
- Enforce the guidelines consistently and make the people observe these faithfully.
 1. Mark the pews for seating with 6 feet distancing. Provide a section for family.
 2. Churchgoers enter the church with mask or face coverings; can remove it when seated.
 3. Designate entrance to and exit from church for social distancing. This applies to clergy and ministers including the choir. Provide markers also in the bathrooms.
 4. Avoid socializing or congregating at the entrance of the church and parking lot. Suspend donuts and coffee before or after Mass.
 5. No procession of offertory gifts, no shaking of hands during the sign of peace and no distribution of the Precious Blood. Distribution of Holy Communion by the hand (not on the tongue) to avoid direct contact with “saliva” which scientists defined as the primary source of transmission and infection.
 6. Use collection baskets with long handles or drop boxes for the Sunday offerings.
 7. Provide sanitizers for ministers and churchgoers. Pews used or seats occupied have to be sanitized after every liturgy.

8. Parishioners who are sick, elderly and vulnerable should refrain from attending the Holy Mass.
9. If needed and you are able, you can add additional Masses
10. Continue to offer live streaming of the Mass for the elderly, sick and homebound. Use protective gears when you visit, anoint and distribute Holy Communion to them.

POSSIBLE RECOMMENDATIONS: (if doable, practical and depending on the local situation)

- A. Possibility of celebrating the Sacrament of Confirmation and Rites of Christian Initiation for the Elect in smaller parishes on the Feast of Pentecost.
All Pastors will be granted delegation so Confirmations could be administered at different Masses. An option will be available for parishes with big number of Candidates to celebrate Confirmation by the bishop at a later date if that is preferred and practical, given requirement for social distancing.
- B. All First Communions can be held on Corpus Christi Sunday depending on the local situation.
- C. Graduations and Baccalaureate Masses will be scheduled according to the plans suggested by the principals.

This is a critical time for our Church to reignite the faith of the people of God and celebrate the Holy Mass as the summit of our faith and Christian worship. Let us proceed with extreme caution, slowly but safely to help our parish community adjust to the “new normal” brought about by the pandemic. We have a grave responsibility to protect life that is sacred and safeguard the health of the people we serve as well as our own. No one has the right to endanger the lives of others by being selfish and doing what they want or think is right. Therefore, let us all work together and observe the guidelines dutifully.

Furthermore, for the interest of the common good and ultimately to best serve our own community, we do not want to contribute to a rebound effect that would actually push normalized Mass attendance even further into the future. The thing we want to avoid is having people get sick because someone disregarded or defied our diocesan guidelines. Follow regulations, and chances are these will work for our greater good.

Finally, as I have said before, let us strive for progress and not perfection. Begin slowly, surely and safely. There will no doubt be challenges and frustrations as well as the risks of contracting the coronavirus for anyone who attends a public Mass. Be patient. If we look for ways to get around the regulations, we will likely create situations that force us to take steps back. However, we believe following guidelines help prevent its spread and it is a reasonable sacrifice.

Thank you for your continued dedication to our priestly ministry and cooperation during these challenging times.

May God bless us all!