

DIOCESE OF SALT LAKE CITY  
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OFFICE OF THE BISHOP

## MEMORANDUM

**DATE:** March 12, 2020

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

**FROM:** Bishop Oscar A. Solis

**WHAT:** ***EMERGENCY UPDATE on CORONAVIRUS (COVID-19): Closure of Churches, Missions, Schools and other Diocesan Entities from March 13-31, 2020 or Until Further Announcements***

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I wish to provide the latest update based on my consultation with senior staff and the announcement from Governor Gary R. Herbert regarding the precautions to be taken with regard to the coronavirus disease. We continue to be in touch with government agencies as well as the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops for current information. We know that Utah has an increased number of people infected with the disease and the clear warning is that it will be worse. The World Health Organization has declared it as a pandemic.

In view of the very serious development of the growing, unpredictable and uncontrolled spread of the coronavirus and with an abundance of caution, it is critical to have clearly defined measures to guide us in facing this pandemic and protecting everyone. It is no longer about containment of the spread of the disease but preventing the loss of lives and the greater well-being of the faithful.

It is for this reason that I am declaring the following mandates for full implementation in all churches, schools and other entities throughout the Diocese of Salt Lake City. Please make the necessary announcements.

### I CHURCHES & MISSIONS

1. For pastoral and safety reasons, the Diocese is suspending the public celebration of worship, including Sunday, weekday and other Holy Masses from March 14-31, 2020 or until further announcements.

By reason of this emergency, a general dispensation is given from the Sunday and Holy Day obligation. Catholics are asked to pray at home, with the rosary, biblical prayer, personal devotions and/or to devoutly watch televised Masses. It is appropriate to pray for the

healing of those suffering the current outbreak of illness, for health professionals, public officials and those serving the common good, our merciful and loving Father will strengthen our faith and trust in His goodness and divine providence;

The Diocese will try to provide “live streaming” of Daily and Sunday Mass will be live from the Cathedral of the Madeleine through the diocesan website

2. Suspend other parish or school meetings, public gatherings and other events.
3. Cancel all Weddings and Funerals if possible, otherwise these are to be private and limited to immediate family members only;
4. Private Confessions depend on the availability of the priest;
5. In case of emergency priests may administer the Anointing of the sick and Viaticum. You may wear gloves and dispose of these reverently by burning or burying in the ground;
6. Churches can remain open for private visit to the Blessed Sacrament and personal prayer as appropriate; holy water fonts must be emptied to help avoid transmission of virus;
7. Announce and post pertinent information for parishioners and others on Church and school doors, the parish bulletin and website, email and other forms of social media;
8. Provide information how to reach priests or office staff in case of emergencies;
9. Pastors put up and maintain key working staff for daily operations and emergency calls; establish basic work schedule and rotation with staff and other workers; provide health cautionary measures for staff.
10. Pray for God’s grace and intervention for the sick, health workers and our community.

## **II CATHOLIC SCHOOLS and RELIGIOUS EDUCATION PROGRAMS**

1. The Superintendent of the Catholic Schools represents the Diocesan Task Force in communication and consultation with the Diocese and Principals;
2. Principals make necessary and pertinent announcement reiterating the reason for the closure;
3. Establish means of communications with teachers, parents and student; Principal or other designated staff will act as official liaison;
4. Implement school strategy during the closure of school;
5. Provide weekly lesson plans for students and information to parents;
6. Provide cautionary directives to teachers, students, parents and staff by sharing pertinent information and recommendations from the Diocese and Utah Department of Health.
7. Add other information or recommendation you deem necessary,

### **III PASTORAL CENTER / CHANCERY**

1. Special “Diocesan Coronavirus Task Force” will implement Emergency Directives and Oversee/Monitor implementation. Note: Fr. Langes Silva acts as our government liaison,
2. Provide information and establish communication System with Government Special Task Force, Pastors, Principals and other Diocesan staff.
3. Minimum staff will continue the essential daily operations of the diocese:
  - i. Senior Staff
  - ii. Building and Temporalities
  - iii. Finance
  - iv. Human Resources
  - v. Communications / Technology
4. Days and hours of work will be defined on a rotation basis
5. Do not go to work when sick or not feeling well. A call will suffice.

### **Basic Practices and Recommendations**

1. Avoid public gatherings, events and socializing: big crowds or socializing and physical contact especially if you are sick with a cold, sneezing, coughing and fever;
2. Wash hands frequently with soap and water or sanitizer;
3. Stay home when sick or not feeling well so as not to infect others;
4. Tune in to the federal and state government websites for news updates and advisories;
5. Follow government advisory or instructions for guidance. Know who to call and how to report your case in order to seek doctor’s help;
6. Be conscious of the symptoms of the coronavirus: fever, cough and shortness of breath
7. If you have novel coronavirus symptoms, make a simple call to your clinician or public health department to ask about your symptoms. Always use Telehealth First!
8. Visit the website [coronavirus.utah.gov](https://coronavirus.utah.gov) or call the Utah COVID-19 information line to answer your questions: 1-800-456-7707. Most likely you will be told to stay home, self-isolate and recover as you would with a flu.

9. If you have serious symptoms of COVID-19, do not arrive at a doctor's office, emergency room, or urgent care facility without calling ahead. You could potentially infect everyone in the office. Follow their instructions.
10. Preparation is helpful. Make sure you have a little extra food and medications in case you have to stay home for a couple weeks. If possible, get a plan with your family and any groups that you lead in case we have school/work closures.

**ADDENDUM:** Special prayers

- For those who are suffering in the current outbreak of sickness that they might be healed, and for the happy repose of all who have died from this sickness in recent weeks; let us pray to the Lord
- For scientists, health professionals, public officials, and all who are serving the common good in this difficult and uncertain time, that they will be filled with wisdom and understanding; let us pray to the Lord.
- That in times of illness our merciful and loving Father will strengthen our faith and trust in his goodness and divine providence; let us pray to the Lord.
- That our compassionate Father would touch all affected by the current outbreak with healing and peace; let us pray to the Lord.



**A Coronavirus Prayer**  
*(Kerry Weber, America Magazine 3/2/20)*

Jesus Christ, you traveled through towns and villages “curing every disease and illness.” At your command, the sick were made well. Come to our aid now, in the midst of the global spread of the coronavirus, that we may experience your healing love.

Heal those who are sick with the virus. May they regain their strength and health through quality medical care.

Heal us from our fear, which prevents nations from working together and neighbors from helping one another.

Heal us from our pride, which can make us claim invulnerability to a disease that knows no borders.

Jesus Christ, healer of all, stay by our side in this time of uncertainty and sorrow. Be with those who have died from the virus. May they be at rest with you in your eternal peace.

Be with the families of those who are sick or have died. As they worry and grieve, defend them from illness and despair. May they know your peace.

Be with the doctors, nurses, researchers and all medical professionals who seek to heal and help those affected and who put themselves at risk in the process. May they know your protection and peace.

Be with the leaders of all nations. Give them the foresight to act with charity and true concern for the well-being of the people they are meant to serve.

Give them the wisdom to invest in long-term solutions that will help prepare for or prevent future outbreaks. May they know your peace, as they work together to achieve it on earth.

Whether we are home or abroad, surrounded by many people suffering from this illness or only a few, Lord, stay with us as we endure and mourn, persist and prepare.

In place of our anxiety, give us your peace. Jesus Christ, heal us. Amen.