



DIOCESE OF WHEELING-CHARLESTON

• P.O. Box 230, Wheeling, WV 26003 •

Friday, March 13, 2020

Hello, my brothers and sisters. I'm Bishop Mark Brennan of the Wheeling-Charleston Catholic Diocese. I wish to speak with you about the current Corona Virus outbreak and how it may affect Church life.

Last week I distributed materials to priests and parishes outlining best practices to help stop the spread of this new virus and other infectious diseases and keep our parishioners safe.

New developments now prompt me to take further measures. Governor Justice has announced that public schools will be closed until further notice. Because we rely on the same public health information that the Governor is relying on, our Catholic schools and child-care facilities associated with them will also be closed until further notice.

In addition, the Governor has strongly urged that people avoid congregating in large numbers as a way to prevent the spread of disease. While there have not yet been any confirmed cases of the Corona Virus in West Virginia, health officials believe that some cases will soon appear in our State and that would affect our parishes.

Therefore, taking what I believe is the safer course for our people, I am suspending for the time being the public celebration of Mass, both for Sunday obligation and daily Masses, beginning with this weekend's Saturday afternoon Masses. I would remind our priests that the Roman Missal makes provision for a "Mass without a Congregation" and I ask them to offer that Mass privately for their people.

All non-essential meetings, gatherings and parish events are to be postponed or cancelled beginning this Saturday.

While I do not want to contribute to panic reactions, I think it wise to listen to our public health officials when they recommend certain steps to keep our people safe and healthy.

We will also be working to provide the daily Mass via our live stream on our website. Mass will continue to air on television in the Wheeling and Clarksburg areas as well.

Faithful Catholic people love the Mass, so it is a hardship not to be able to celebrate it. I encourage you to remain steadfast in faith during this time, by praying the Liturgy of the Hours in your homes, praying the Rosary, and by reflecting on the readings of the day. All of these resources are available online. We can look on this development as a penance we do together during this Lenten season and offer our disappointment and suffering up to God. May the Lord give us the joy of celebrating Easter together in good health!

Finally, I would urge everyone to pray for the sick and for those who care for them, in particular our doctors, nurses and other medical support staff who must deal up close with the sick every day.

Let us pray for a quick end to the Corona Virus outbreak in our country and around the world. May Jesus, the Divine Physician, send his healing grace upon the people he has redeemed. Let us hold one another close in prayer and Christian love.

God bless you and your loved ones!

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