



DIOCESE *of* LACROSSE

OFFICE OF THE BISHOP

16 March 2020

Dear Brothers:

Peace and Good in the Love of God.

As you might suspect, this is a note regarding the future and our course in line with current secular legislation and some new ecclesial norms for our Diocese. Some of you have already made contact with me (and I thank you for your comments and advice) regarding the lifting of the obligation for Mass attendance in the Diocese. I am writing to follow up on some of your thoughts to go further and announce some new regulations for the future.

In light of the continued concern surrounding the coronavirus, and the advice of medical experts, across the country, and especially in our State, all Masses in the Diocese of La Crosse will be canceled beginning 20 March 2020 until further notice. I do encourage each of you to say a private Mass daily for your people, the diocese and the world. All fish fries, parish gatherings, etc. are also canceled. This development follows Governor Evers decision to prohibit gatherings of more than fifty (50) people at all public meetings. It is also intended to provide clarity and consistency throughout the nineteen counties that comprise our Diocese in western and north central Wisconsin.

Funerals and weddings should continue to be celebrated for the faithful, only reducing the amount of people in attendance to below 50.

Please note, however, churches will remain open for private prayer. I am urging the faithful to remember in their prayers all of our brothers and sisters whose personal lives and the lives of their families have been affected by this disease.

I ask you, my priestly brothers, to offer more and creative times for hearing confessions. Invite healthy volunteers to come forward and give the church a cleaning at various times during the day in service to those who wish to take advantage of making a private visit or for coming to confession. I ask the local Deans to make contact with public health officials (hospitals, doctors, etc.) and local nursing home directors to make provisions for visits with the sick and elderly for sacramental anointing and/ or Viaticum.

The Chrism Mass will be celebrated on Tuesday, 7 April 2020 and will be open only to the Deans. Deans or their representatives can bring their oil stocks to the Cathedral on 7 April or drop them off at the Diocesan Center prior to that date. Members of the Curia will fill them as usual. The Chrism Mass (as well as all other Masses and services of the Triduum) will be live-streamed electronically for viewing on the diocesan website, <diolc.org>. I ask pastors to celebrate the sacred Triduum in their parishes with members of the Elect and Candidates for full communion minimizing the numbers of people present. No out-of-state guests should be invited.

The Diaconate Ordination will be celebrated on 2 May. We should be out of this ordinance by that time (please, God!). In any event, due to the trials and rigors of planning, etc., we will not be planning for a luncheon after the ceremony—we may still need to plan for only fifty people. The dinner with the bishop on the night before 1 May, will happen with the deacon candidates as previously scheduled.

I know that there will be economic hardships on many of our parishes and we are working with our development office to provide an online giving option for all of our parishes as well as with St. Ambrose Financial to see what kind of relief or assistance they may be able to offer during this challenging period. As soon as we get more details, we will keep you updated.

At this point, my dear brothers, we are looking at a time frame from 20 March to 1 May. As you know, these plans and regulations change every day. Nothing would give me greater pleasure than to shorten this time frame or any of these regulations. I do once again advise you to instruct the faithful in all charity to follow along in faithful prayer and patience. This, of course, is unprecedented in our lives and we rely on the providence of Almighty God and His Holy Mother. Please stay well and take every precaution to do so. Be aware of my prayers and my confidence in our protection under the Sacred Heart of Jesus and the Immaculate Heart of Mary. With fond affection for all of you and your great ministry for God's people, I am

Fraternally yours in Christ,
+ William
Your Bishop