



Office of Archbishop Alexander K. Sample

March 16, 2020

My dear brothers and sisters in Christ,

Praised be Jesus Christ!

This is by far one of the most difficult communications I have ever written because of the impact it will have on the spiritual and faith lives of so many of us.

Today, March 16, 2020, Governor Kate Brown announced new directives governing the social gathering of people in the State of Oregon. Beginning tomorrow gatherings are not to exceed 25 people for the next four weeks. At the same time, although she did not make it the law, she urged that such gatherings be kept under 10 people. Earlier today, President Trump made a similar recommendation that gatherings not exceed 10 people. I suspect that at some point 10 people will become the law.

In light of this, it becomes impossible for us to manage a schedule of Masses in the parishes and missions of the Archdiocese observing this 10 to 25 limit. With a very heavy heart, I am therefore announcing the cancellation of all public Masses in the Archdiocese of Portland beginning tomorrow through April 14, 2020. At the same time, I am dispensing all of the faithful from the obligation to attend Mass on Sundays and Holy Days of Obligation for the same period of time.

This will be particularly hard because this will take us through Holy Week and Easter.

Further information, direction, suggestions, pastoral guidance etc. will be forthcoming as we navigate together these uncharted waters. For now, I felt it urgent to let you know of this necessary decision. I will be reminding the priests of the importance for them to still offer daily Mass, though not publicly, for the good of the faithful and for an end to this crisis.

I am sorry beyond words to have to make this decision. It is very painful for me to do so. In the midst of this we must remember that the Holy Eucharist remains the source and summit of the Christian life.

May our hunger for the Mass and the Body of Christ be a source of grace for us.

MOST REVEREND
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DECREE

ENACTING FURTHER MEASURES IN RESPONSE TO THE COVID-19 VIRUS

Whereas the Honorable Kate Brown, Governor of Oregon, has prohibited for the next four weeks gatherings exceeding 25 persons and further recommended that they be limited to less than 10 persons, consistent with statements issued by federal authorities, including the guidelines of the President of the United States of America;

Whereas it is the duty of the diocesan bishop as pastor to be concerned for all of the faithful entrusted to his care (c. 383 §1) and to act with charity toward all (c. 383 §3-4);

Further to the dispensation issued on the 12th of March 2020, with all the reasons listed therein remaining applicable, and fervently desiring to cooperate with efforts to combat the spread of the COVID-19 virus;

I hereby decree, in virtue of my duty to direct, promote, and guard the liturgical life including the celebration of the sacraments (c. 835 §1), the cancellation of all public Masses within the territory of the Archdiocese of Portland in Oregon.

Therefore, in virtue of canon 87 §1 and for the reasons expressed above and previously, all the faithful of the Archdiocese of Portland in Oregon and others actually present in the Archdiocese are *dispensed* from the obligation to attend Mass on Sundays and other holy days of obligation (c. 1247).

All, nonetheless, are bound to keep holy the Sabbath by abstaining “from those works and affairs which hinder the worship to be rendered to God, the joy proper to the Lord’s day, or the suitable relaxation of mind and body” (c. 1247) and by “devoting themselves to prayer for a suitable time” (c. 1248 §2).

I order that this decree and dispensation be made known to all concerned, especially pastors and administrators, who are to be attentive, also, to forthcoming pastoral guidelines.

This decree and dispensation shall take effect on the 17th of March 2020 and remain in force until the 14th of April 2020.

Given at the Pastoral Center of the Archdiocese of Portland in Oregon on this 16th day of March 2020, everything to the contrary notwithstanding.

Most Rev. Alexander K. Sample, J.C.L.
Archbishop of Portland in Oregon

Sr. Veronica Schueler, F.S.E.
Chancellor

