



WILLIAM T. MCGRATTAN



BISHOP *of* CALGARY

March 16, 2020

Dear Faithful in the Diocese of Calgary,

Over the last two weeks, guided by the information provided by Alberta's Chief Medical Officer, Dr. Deena Hinshaw, the Diocese has implemented gradual and proportionate measures in response to the developing situation of COVID-19.

Following the March 15 Public Health Measures, which mandated the cancellation of all school classes in the Province and the introduction of further restrictions on places of worship, the Bishops of Alberta and the Northwest Territories discussed today the need to implement more comprehensive and aggressive measures in our dioceses.

On that same date, there was an exemption on public gatherings of more than 250 people in places of worship which has now been rescinded. It is now a public safety health imperative that gatherings in excess of 250 people should not take place. There is a further prohibition on gatherings of 50 people or more when high-risk individuals such as seniors and those with pre-existing health conditions are anticipated to be present. These AHS directives are difficult and not practical to monitor during the weekend celebrations of the Eucharist or even the weekday masses that have many seniors attending. **For these reasons, the following measures are effective immediately until Sunday, April 5, 2020.**

Holy Mass

All Masses are cancelled throughout the entire Diocese of Calgary. A Decree dispensing the Faithful from their Sunday obligation will be issued by me.

8:30 a.m. Weekday Mass will be live-streamed from St. Peter's Church. www.st-peters.ca/live

10:00 a.m. Sunday Mass will be live-streamed from St. Mary's Cathedral with me as the celebrant. (TBD)

Funeral Masses

Funeral Masses may be celebrated in the parish church but attendance is restricted to the immediate family. Funeral services without a Mass may be held in the funeral homes. Funeral receptions are prohibited.

Confessions

The Sacrament of Penance may be celebrated in a space that provides for the balance between anonymity and the requirements mandated by Alberta Health Services, such as social distancing and sanitizing confessional screens after each use. Face to face confessions are

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also allowed but with the proper precaution taken in the distance between the penitent and the confessor. Public gatherings such as penitential services are prohibited.

Anointing of the Sick

Anointing of the Sick may be celebrated by priests provided that the directives provided by the Diocese are strictly followed. If the person to be anointed is in a health care facility, the priests are obliged to check for any restrictions that may be in place for the facility.

Lenten Missions

Only live-streamed Lenten missions are permitted.

Sacrament Preparation

All sacrament preparation workshops or sessions are cancelled. Parents who are the first teachers of the Faith, will be responsible for the formation of their children using the prescribed program materials provided by the parish and will be asked to attest to their child's readiness to receive the sacraments of Baptism, First Communion, and Confirmation. The parish priest will be responsible for their reception of these sacraments.

RCIA

Formation of catechumens and candidates is suspended. It will be left to the Pastor to determine their readiness. The celebration of the sacraments for full initiation will be postponed to later in the year as determined by me in consultation with the parish priest.

Holy Week

Prior to the week of April 5, a new directive will be issued to address Holy Week and the celebration of the Paschal Triduum.

Access to Churches

Parishes are asked to keep the churches open during the day so that you may be able to individually visit and pray before the reserved Blessed Sacrament in the tabernacle. However, it is important to state that groups are not allowed to assemble in churches. In our Adoration Chapels, there is a restriction on the number of people in attendance so as to observe the AHS recommendations for social distancing.

I am conscious that these measures will be for some insufficient or not aggressive enough, for others it will provide some relief for those who have asked for such safety measures, but I am also keenly aware that this response will sadden all of us who as Catholics know through our faith that "the Eucharist is the source and summit of the Christian life." (Lumen Gentium no. 11).

As the Diocese of Calgary begins its spiritual renewal, I pray that we realize, with all humility, our need for the Lord in the Eucharist and our deep spiritual longing for Him. May this difficult time of fasting from the celebration of the Eucharist deepen our Lenten observance of prayer and solidarity with those who suffer and provide for us the necessary grace of growing in our missionary discipleship.

Let us turn to Saint Joseph, Patron of the Universal Church and Canada, for his intercession in these difficult times. I share with you an adaptation of an ancient prayer to St. Joseph, our Lord's foster-father.

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“O St. Joseph, whose protection is so great, so strong, so prompt before the throne of God, I place in you all my interest and desires.

O St. Joseph, do assist me by your powerful intercession, and obtain for me from your divine Son all spiritual blessings, through Jesus Christ, our Lord.”

Relying on the grace of our Lord, I remain

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "William T. McGrattan". The signature is written in a cursive style with a cross at the beginning.

+Most Reverend William T. McGrattan
Bishop of Calgary