



OFFICE OF THE BISHOP

March 16, 2020

Dear Faithful of the Diocese of Charlotte,

Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.

In the past few days and weeks people from around the world and now our own communities are learning about viruses and community health. Like so many other groups and organizations that regularly meet and congregate, churches have been asked to meet the challenges set before us. Rest assured that your local priests and I are working hard to make responsible decisions about meeting the pastoral and spiritual needs of the faithful while exercising prudence. That you might better understand, I would like to share with you the thoughts guiding our decision-making process with respect to the Covid-19 virus provisions in place for the next few weeks.

As pastors it is our primary role to provide for the spiritual and pastoral needs of the faithful. Additionally, as members of the community we are committed to participate in the larger community response. These concerns have guided my decision to dispense from the obligation to attend Sunday Mass as well as canceling or curtailing all other liturgical events and gatherings according to CDC and state government guidelines while allowing local priests to provide for the needs of their parishioners within these parameters.

We understand these and similar measures to be temporary and are in no way a minimizing of the importance of sacraments in the lives of the faithful. It is both reasonable and responsible to comply with these temporary CDC guidelines. Because these temporary spiritual sacrifices are for the health and well-being of the physically weak and vulnerable, it is also a response to our Lord's command to love our neighbor. Without a community response our vulnerable family, friends and neighbors would be severely impacted. Therefore, as a diocese we will continue to follow the CDC guidelines. Please consult with your local parish as to how their schedule and operations have been affected.

In addition to making spiritual sacrifices, even in challenging situations like these there are spiritual opportunities. I recommend we take this opportunity to greater sympathize with those throughout the world who do not have regular access to the full sacramental life of the Church. We can create more space at home and in our daily lives for prayer and family devotion. We can reflect upon the things that truly matter and gain a greater sense of perspective and the true meaning of life. We can look beyond ourselves and ask how we can help others. We can reflect upon the interrelatedness of our lives with the larger community. We can focus our gaze on Christ, the one who brings true healing. In short, our experience throughout history and as reflected time and again in sacred scripture, God offers his people profound lessons in the most challenging of circumstances.

You and your family remain in my prayers. As Easter draws near, I look forward to celebrating the hope Christ brings with hearts renewed.

Sincerely yours in Christ,

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Most Reverend Peter J. Jugis
Bishop of Charlotte