



Very Reverend Michel J. Mulloy  
Diocesan Administrator  
Diocese of Rapid City



Most Reverend Donald E. DeGrood  
Bishop of Sioux Falls

## **JOINT STATEMENT: THE SPIRITUAL LEADERS OF THE ROMAN CATHOLIC DIOCESES OF SIOUX FALLS AND RAPID CITY**

*Suspension of all public Masses due to the COVID-19/Coronavirus pandemic*

**March 17, 2020**

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

Our national Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, relying on data that shows the real progression of the COVID-19 virus, has now updated its recommendation to limit gatherings to ten people. The recommendation limits the potential for transmission of the virus. Ultimately, the recommendation is rooted in serving the common good, including those most vulnerable to the virus and its devastating effects on the body.

Mindful of our own call as Catholics to seek the common good, we have directed that all daily Masses and all Sunday Masses prayed in parishes are suspended until further notice. This suspension takes effect on March 18, 2020 and includes all gatherings for social and educational purposes in Catholic facilities. It will remain in effect until further notice. This extraordinary measure has been directed after prayerfully asking God for His assistance in guiding His Church, in collaboration with the diocesan consultors and careful study of information gathered by government officials and recommendations given by medical professionals. We believe it is the prudent decision in keeping with the directives of many bishops throughout the United States who have made this prudential decision.

This decision is one of the most exceptional pastoral decisions we have faced and its impact on the Catholic faithful of South Dakota weighs heavily on our hearts. We will continue to monitor the situation with the intention of restoring the full access to the Sacraments and public prayer within our communities as soon as it becomes appropriate to do so. Projecting a timeline has been difficult to do accurately in the wake of this pandemic. So, we ask for your patience and flexibility when further adjustments become necessary.

While no decision has been made on Holy Week liturgies at this time, we acknowledge that current recommendations for limiting the size of gatherings extend beyond April 5-12, 2020. Therefore, it is probable the suspension announced today will also impact these liturgies prayed during the most solemn moments in our liturgical calendar. Mechanisms for live streaming these liturgies are already in place.

Until then, some practical ramifications of the suspension of public Masses and public events will be shared with the priests and people of our two dioceses in a separate memorandum. This will be available later today or tomorrow.

Most especially during these trying times, let us continue to remember that the Sabbath is God's command, not His Church's. We can unite ourselves to the sacrifice of Jesus Christ through our participation in televised Masses which are readily available. In addition we are urged to make "Spiritual Communion" while joining in radio, television, or online broadcasts of the Sunday Mass. Again, more information about these opportunities as well as additional resources for sustaining our spiritual lives during this extraordinary fast from the regular reception of the Sacraments will be made available through the memorandum each of our dioceses will issue.

We continue to urge all Catholics to offer additional prayer during this pandemic. We would ask all Catholics to pray for the intercession of Mary, Mother of the Church and St. Joseph, Protector of the Church. Let us continue to pray for the sick and dying, for those caring for them and for those working to minimize the impact of COVID-19. Let us pray for our own protection and care, for those who fear illness or death without knowing the Lord's loving care.

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References

[www.sfcatholic.org](http://www.sfcatholic.org)

[www.rapidcitydiocese.org](http://www.rapidcitydiocese.org)