



ROMAN CATHOLIC ARCHDIOCESE OF REGINA OFFICE OF THE ARCHBISHOP

445 Broad Street N., Regina, SK, CANADA S4R 2X8
Tel: (306) 352-1651 Fax: (306) 352-6313 E-mail: chancery@archregina.sk.ca



March 18, 2020

Dear brothers and sisters in Christ of the Archdiocese of Regina,

Grace and peace to you in our Lord Jesus Christ.

In this challenging time, it is as important as ever for the Church to be close to the People of God, and I want to assure you of my spiritual closeness as we face the threat of the COVID-19 pandemic in our community. Please know of my prayers and pastoral concern.

At this time, the Church must weigh what appear to be competing values: the health and safety of our broader civic community, especially of the most vulnerable; saving lives; and the immense spiritual value of access to the liturgy of the Church and the sacraments. We are blessed by our longstanding spiritual tradition that the grace of the sacraments is available outside the sacraments themselves, in particular through an act of spiritual communion.

After careful and serious discernment – in light of directives from all levels of government (including a provincial declaration of a state of emergency and the closure of our schools), consultations with Catholic and secular healthcare representatives, with the Council of Priests, and with reference to the decisions of other dioceses – we recognize the serious threat to public health that large gatherings create at this time. This is a matter of protecting the vulnerable who might be exposed to the virus at such gatherings. It is also about slowing the spread of this disease and mitigating the burden on our healthcare system. Having witnessed the situation in Italy, we dare not contribute to an overwhelmed system in which the vulnerable are unable to access the care they need.

In light of this, and in this time of Lent where we join our sacrifices to Christ's in a special way, I am calling on our pastors and the faithful of the Archdiocese to offer what may be the most profound spiritual sacrifice of our generation. As of Friday, March 20, 2020, the following measures are to be enacted throughout the Archdiocese:

- 1. Sunday and Weekday Masses are hereby suspended until further notice. We will be constantly monitoring the situation and issuing updates accordingly.**

Further, in keeping with the Code of Canon Law no. 87, I grant to all the Catholic faithful dispensation from their Sunday obligation until further notice.

Recognizing that the celebration of the Eucharist lies at the very heart of our spiritual lives, a roster of clergy, including myself, will celebrate daily and Sunday Masses from Resurrection Parish in Regina to be livestreamed, available at the following link: <https://livestream.com/accounts/17094656>.

- 2. I will preside at the Chrism Mass scheduled for Monday, March 30, 2020, joined by the Deans. Oils will be distributed by the Deans to their deaneries. While this celebration will be closed to the public, it will be livestreamed. Information about the livestream will be disseminated through our website, email**

lists, and social media channels.

3. Baptisms, funerals, and weddings should be strictly limited in size, with immediate family only. Larger celebrations should take place at a later date when all restrictions have been lifted. Discernment should take place in consultation with families and their pastor, keeping in mind all government limitations on group size, travel restrictions, and health criteria surrounding social distancing and at-risk groups. For funerals, a graveside service with a memorial Mass at a later date is encouraged. Pastors are encouraged to arrange for **private confessions** ensuring all health and safety guidelines are followed.
4. Only essential gatherings (e.g., of Parish Pastoral and Finance Councils) are to take place. These must adhere to all government restrictions and health guidelines. Holding such meetings electronically should be strongly considered.
5. Information regarding Holy Week celebrations, sacramental preparation, First Communions and Confirmations, Initiation for Adults, ministry to the sick, and considerations for the ongoing financial needs of parishes will be forthcoming. Please refer to our special COVID-19 page on our website: <https://archregina.sk.ca/content/covid-19-updates>.
6. Recognizing the great importance for our Church to continue to foster and support the spiritual lives of the faithful, at the discretion of the pastor or administrator churches may remain open to the public for private prayer and devotion. A separate communication will contain important considerations for doing this as safely as possible.
7. Community Care: The Archdiocese is organizing a comprehensive "Good Samaritan" care program to coordinate outreach efforts to those who may lack the necessary social supports to effectively meet their spiritual and material needs at this time. If you are interested in volunteering for this important initiative, please contact outreach@archregina.sk.ca.

As we have all watched this pandemic develop and spread, I have been asking myself, and continually take to prayer, the question, "How am I being called to serve and be close to the people of God at this time?" I conclude this letter by asking that every pastor and administrator in our Archdiocese take time to pray and dialogue with lay leadership about how they can most meaningfully and helpfully reach out to their people and provide for their spiritual needs through this crisis. And I encourage every member of the faithful in our Archdiocese to prayerfully consider how they are being called to reach out to one another and to those in need, keeping in mind all relevant health directives.

The Lord is never absent from us. We are called, not only in times of joy and celebration, but in times of trial and sorrow, to live faithfully, meaningfully, and compassionately. Even as we follow the most prudent health directives and honour our Christian duty to protect the vulnerable, we are called to be present to and with one another, if not physically, then spiritually. May we join together in prayer and service this Lent so as to open ourselves to God's grace, that the God who raised Jesus from the dead may also use this experience of suffering to show us a glimpse of the resurrection.

Yours in Christ,

✠ Donald J. Bolen
Archbishop of Regina

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