

SPECIAL NOTICE AS OF FRIDAY, MARCH 13, 2020

After taking the advice of the College of Consultors, given the declared pandemic of the COVID-19 virus and confirmed cases new in the diocese, Bishop Rice issues the following directives. These directives and dispensations will remain in effect until further notice. The diocese will continue to monitor and evaluate the situation, and offer further directives as circumstances change or as further direction is given by public officials.

- A **general dispensation** is offered to anyone in the Diocese of Springfield-Cape Girardeau who does not want to take the risk of attending Mass, regardless of age.
- **Anyone 60 years or older** should not attend Mass and are dispensed from the obligation to attend Mass, since they are the most vulnerable to this virus, according to The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.
- Persons who have **underlying medical issues** that put them at risk or persons with compromised immune systems should not attend Mass and are dispensed from the obligation to attend Mass.
- Persons who are **not feeling well**, no matter how mild the symptoms, should not attend Mass and are dispensed from the obligation to attend Mass.
- The faithful who are in attendance at Mass are reminded to **avoid physical contact** with others and should attempt to keep a safe distance from each other.
- Stations of the Cross, Adoration, and other parish **gatherings with smaller numbers** of people are allowed.
- The provision of Canon 962.1,2 allowing for General Absolution for a **Penance Service** may be utilized following Form C, Rite for Reconciliation of Penitents with General Confession and Absolution. However, priests should make themselves available if private Confession or Anointing of the Sick is needed.
- Limit music and preaching so as **not to prolong a gathering**.
- All **non-liturgical events** should be cancelled.
- Ushers, money handlers, and gift bears should **sanitize their hands** regularly.

The Catechism of the Catholic Church teaches, “The whole liturgical life of the Church revolves around the Eucharistic Sacrifice and the sacraments” (CCC 1113). The decision to limit the celebration of any sacrament is a difficult decision that some will support and others will not. The reality is our Churches are not germ-free, no matter how much we try to disinfect.

As stated above, the Diocese of Springfield-Cape Girardeau will continue to monitor the situation to be proactive for the health and well-being of priests and the People of God.