



OFFICE OF THE BISHOP

March 18, 2020

*Commemoration of St. Cyril of Jerusalem*

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

Peace be with you.

As the Church reminds us, *"The joy and hope, the grief and anguish of the men of our time, especially of those who are poor or afflicted in any way, are the joy and hope, the grief and anguish of the followers of Christ as well. Nothing that is genuinely human fails to find an echo in their hearts. For theirs is a community composed of men and women who, united in Christ and guided by the Holy Spirit, press onwards towards the kingdom of the Father and are bearers of a message of salvation intended for all persons. That is why Christians cherish a feeling of deep solidarity with the human race and its history."* (Gaudium et Spes, N. 1)

The history of our time involves all of us in a worldwide effort to slow the spread of a dangerous pandemic. Reluctantly and out of a great concern for those who are most vulnerable to this new coronavirus and after prayer and consultation with the Presbyteral Council, I am suspending all public Masses and liturgies throughout the Diocese of Tulsa beginning Friday, March 20, 2020 until Wednesday April 8, 2020. Thursday, March 19<sup>th</sup>, is the Solemnity of St. Joseph. Throughout the Diocese, we will dedicate our faith communities and concerns to his paternal care and intercession during this troubled time.

I am instructing the priests to celebrate Mass every day privately for the intentions of the faithful. The faithful of the Diocese are now dispensed from their Sunday Mass obligation during this time of trial. In order to ensure the spiritual enrichment of the people of God, I offer these directives:

1. Priests will be expected to celebrate daily and Sunday Masses only with the assistance of a deacon or server as necessary. No private Masses will be celebrated in homes.
2. Only the Vicars Forane will be present for the Chrism Mass. They will bring the oils back to the parishes of their vicariate. The Chrism Mass will be live-streamed.
3. Communal penance services will be canceled, but the Sacrament of Penance will continue to be celebrated. Pastors will need to make new arrangements to ensure a six-foot distance between them and the penitents. This expectation also applies for those waiting in line.
4. During this absence from personal presence in the Mass, the laity and religious are invited to cultivate their spiritual lives through the Liturgy of the Hours, meditation on the Holy Scriptures, prayers, praying with a televised or streamed broadcasting of the Mass, and the practice of other devotions keeping in their hearts the intentions of the Church, especially for the sick and the vulnerable.

Diocese of Tulsa • P.O. Box 690240 • Tulsa, Oklahoma 74169-0240

918-294-1904 • Fax 918-252-1168

5. Churches and chapels should remain open for prayer and, where possible, given the limitations of social distancing practices, some hours of adoration.
6. The Sacrament of the Anointing of the Sick should be administered by priests to those who are gravely ill and always observing the necessary precautions due to a suspicion of an infectious disease.
7. Should these restrictions have to be extended to the Holy Week celebrations, parishes will arrange for catechumens and candidates currently in RCIA to be received into the Church at a later date in the Easter Season.
8. Funeral Masses and weddings will have to be either postponed or limited to the immediate family only. In funerals, friends and relatives can be invited to join in the graveside service subject to the policies of the funeral home and/or the cemetery observing social distancing as much as possible.
9. All visits to prisons, hospitals and nursing homes will now be subject to the policies of those institutions. Those in Catholic hospitals should rely on the assistance of their local Catholic chaplains. If the patient is in a non-Catholic institution, proper consultation with health providers will be needed to determine the appropriateness of the visit. Jail and prison chaplains should follow the instructions given by the pertinent authorities.
10. Parish offices should be prudent in keeping normal business hours with essential staff as possible, observing public health advisories regarding social distancing.
11. Parish ministries may continue as prudent and if able to observe public health advisories regarding social distancing by limiting to small groups of people only.
12. Religious Education programs will be closed for the time being.
13. Pastors are invited to explore and implement creative ways to maintain a connection with the faithful in these challenging times. I encourage the faithful to please pray for your priests and, as possible, continue to financially support your parishes and schools. The priests have given their lives to make the Eucharist available to God's holy people. This time of separation will be difficult for them as well.

A Centurion once approached Jesus and asked him to heal his servant who was at home sick. Jesus offered to come to the man's home immediately, but the Centurion, with deep faith in the power of Jesus to heal, replied with the words we still say at every Mass and can profitably say every day of this crisis: "Lord, I am not worthy that you should enter under my roof, but only say the word and my soul shall be healed." (Mt. 8:8). May God grant us healing and hope as we long for the day when we can receive Him in the Eucharist again.

Sincerely in Christ,



Most Rev. David A. Konderla  
Bishop of Tulsa



OFFICE OF THE BISHOP

MOST REVEREND  
**DAVID A. KONDERLA**  
Bishop of Tulsa

By the grace of God and the Apostolic See

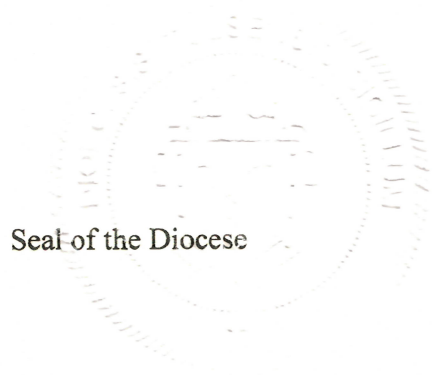
**DECREE**

I, Most Reverend David A. Konderla, Bishop of Tulsa, having considered the recommendations of public health officials to reduce the number of persons attended public gatherings and in consultation with the Presbyteral Council, decree:

That all public Masses within the Diocese of Tulsa are suspended from March 20th until April 8<sup>th</sup>, 2020 (unless revoked or extended by subsequent decree), and

That the faithful are dispensed from the obligation to attend Mass on Sundays and other holy days of obligation and are asked to make other acts of a spiritual devotion such as the Liturgy of the Hours, meditation on the Holy Scriptures, praying with a televised or streamed broadcasting of the Mass, and praying for the sick and the vulnerable.

Given on 18<sup>th</sup> day of March, A.D. 2020 at the Chancery office.



Seal of the Diocese

*Bishop David Konderla*

Most Rev. David A. Konderla  
Bishop of Tulsa

*Harrison Garlick*  
Harrison Garlick  
Chancellor