

**DIOCESE OF FRESNO**  
**PASTORAL CENTER**  
1550 NORTH FRESNO STREET  
FRESNO, CALIFORNIA 93703-3788  
TELEPHONE (559) 488-7400

***A Pastoral Message From***  
***The Most Reverend Joseph V. Brennan, D.D.***  
***March 18, 2020***

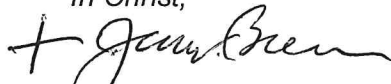
*My Brothers and Sisters,*

*The early Church was, by definition and of necessity, a truly 'domestic' Church, though certainly not in the sense of being docile and tame; far from it. No, it was domestic in terms of being based in the homes and the hearts of the Christians of the first three centuries or so, Anno Domini. They prayed at home, they stayed at home and clearly wrestled with their own fears in the midst of persecution and, yes, even disease. In the midst of it all they learned how to be family together and grew in faith together. They learned how to suffer and sacrifice. They trusted in the Lord who they loved and knew as the first fruits of those who have fallen asleep, that is, as the Risen Lord! We do, too.*

*This week has been challenging for us all, to say the least. The situation with the Covid-19 virus seems to literally change on an hourly basis. It has been hard to keep up with and we do not know how long it will last. Through it all, at least for a time, we are perhaps being called to remember and to even imitate the faith and experience of our early Christian ancestors. While we painfully embrace a temporary fast from the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass in our churches, we can embrace as well the opportunity to beautifully maintain or, maybe for the first time in our lives, create a domestic Church. Our homes can be and ought to be places where faith flourishes through family prayer, through the reading of the Scriptures, through a home-bound commemoration of the Stations of the Cross, a recitation of the Holy Rosary or, above all, making a spiritual communion among many other possibilities. We can grow in the faith as we yearn for the Eucharist and begin, again, to hunger for it and to crave it with all our heart. It will make the day on which we once again celebrate and receive the Eucharist at a Sunday or weekday Liturgy all the sweeter. Ultimately and quite literally, the 'home' work we do now, as difficult as it is for all of us, has the potential for enhancing the living out of our Catholic faith. We will bring everything we will learn and experience in this time of trial to the altar of God. We will bring an even deeper appreciation for the Eucharist to the table of the Lord when the time comes.*

*As this situation continues to change and challenge us, we will also continue to give updated guidelines and instructions. Be patient and kind to one another. Above all, keep those suffering from the virus and those who care for them in your good prayer. Pray for this beautiful Diocese of ours, too. Lift up a prayer or two for me once in a while. Know that you remain in mine.*

*In Christ,*

  
Bishop Joseph V. Brennan

# ROMAN CATHOLIC DIOCESE OF FRESNO

## COVID-19 PROTECTIVE MEASURES

UPDATE AS OF MARCH 18, 2020

  
Approved by: Most Reverend Joseph V. Brennan, D.D.

3-18-20  
Date Signed

### 1. Catholic Schools

The closure of all Catholic schools, including all preschools, has been extended for an indeterminate amount of time. Distance learning will continue Monday through Friday from 8:00 am to 3:00 pm. All fundraisers are also canceled until further notice.

If you have any questions regarding this closure and suspension of activities please call the Office of Catholic Education at (559) 488-7420.

See Addendum A: Frequently Asked Questions– School Closure – Distant Learning

### 2. Parish Life

The closure of **ALL** Churches, Missions and Stations; including all grounds and facilities such as chapels, halls, meeting rooms and classrooms, has been extended for an indeterminate amount of time. The Diocese of Fresno intends to notify the faithful and general public at least 7 – 10 days in advance of the date selected for the celebration of the Mass to be restored, along with other parish activities.

Information, resources, links to online Masses through our partnership with The CatholicTV Network and local diocesan productions may be found on our website at: [www.dioceseoffresno.org](http://www.dioceseoffresno.org). Also, the diocesan television station, KNXT, will remain on the air during this health crisis at least through May 2020.

### 3. Funerals

Funeral Vigil and Mass services should be postponed. A graveside service with the option of a Memorial Mass at a later date is **strongly** recommended and attended only by the **immediate** family. If a Funeral Vigil and Mass does take place, the same restriction regarding attendees applies. Immediate family includes: spouse, parents, grandparents and siblings of the deceased only.

Various counties or cemetery districts within the Diocese of Fresno may implement restrictions that will require parishes to adhere to even more restrictive guidelines/orders. Clergy will need to be as pastorally present as possible to the grieving families so that they do not feel abandoned by their Church.



#### **4. Care of the Sick**

We continue to pray for and care for the sick and the homebound in our midst to the best of our ability at these difficult times. Extraordinary Ministers to the sick should take every precaution if they choose to attend to a sick parishioner. Those same ministers should NOT do so if they belong to one of the at-risk categories of people either by virtue of their age or their own underlying health condition.

Priests should consider only visiting sick parishioners who are in dire need, that is, those who are seriously ill or in danger of death who have requested the Anointing of the Sick and perhaps in need of Viaticum. Again, as in all cases, every precaution should be taken by the priest in such circumstances.

#### **5. Baptisms**

Only emergency baptisms are allowed while the protective measures are in effect.

#### **6. Confirmations**

Scheduled Confirmations will be postponed until after the protective measures are lifted. At that time, Bishop Brennan will consider various options, such as: rescheduling where possible, combining parish celebrations or delegation of pastors.

#### **7. Weddings**

Couples with scheduled weddings should be encouraged to postpone. If a wedding is celebrated, only the priest/deacon, the bride and groom, their respective parents, and two witnesses may be present.

#### **8. Quinceañeras**

Scheduled Quinceañeras are to be postponed until after the protective measures are lifted or the blessing may be conducted with only the young lady, her parents and godparents.

#### **9. Parish Office Staffing During Closures**

Parish offices will remain closed until further notice. Employees who have the capability to work remotely are required to do so. When necessary, designated employees may come onsite to receive and respond to phone calls; however, the office must remain closed to the public.

The Vicars Forane will receive from the Pastors/Administrator the names and contact information for one or two employees at each parish site who will be responsible for assisting with receiving and responding to phone calls. The designated employees should be well informed of this responsibility. Parishes that do not have employees are asked to provide names and contact information for trusted volunteers for this responsibility. They will be added to the Chancery contact list for assistance in the event that assigned clergy cannot be reached.

## **10. Parish/School Employees**

**See attached Addendum B: *Department of Human Resources Frequently Asked Questions***

## **11. Social Services**

Social Services such as Catholic Charities and parish-based programs/ministries to provide food for those in need will continue with the appropriate protective measures in place, as defined by state and federal agencies.

The reception and distribution of clothing donations and other items should be suspended until all protective measures are lifted.

## **12. Social and Restorative Justice Ministry**

Chaplaincy is limited and volunteer ministry is suspended until further notice. Updates will be provided by the diocesan Office of Social Justice Ministry, as needed.