



## DIocese of Superior Office of the Bishop

March 17, 2020

To the faithful of the Diocese of Superior,

My dear brothers and sisters, as we find ourselves in the uncertainty, confusion, and fear of the day, may we find comfort and hope in the One in whom we can be certain of. In the words of the breast plate prayer of St. Patrick:

Christ be with me, Christ before me,  
Christ behind me, Christ in me,  
Christ beneath me, Christ above me.

In my letter of March 12, I stated that I would keep you updated as the COVID19 situation warrants. With all that has happened over the weekend and especially with the CDC limiting public gatherings to 50 or less, (with the high probability that will be reduced further) I find it necessary to take this next drastic step.

Effective Wednesday, March 18, I am suspending the public celebration of Masses until further notice. This action is something I take very seriously. The celebration of the Eucharist is the “indispensable source and summit” of the Christian life. Historically, in times of crisis the faithful naturally turn to the Church for comfort and direction and we need to do whatever we can to support our people. Therefore, although the public celebration of the Mass is suspended, I ask that we as bishop and priests, the spiritual shepherds of the Diocese, continue to celebrate weekday and Sunday Masses including the Sunday “pro Populo” Mass as required by canon law. I also ask, that where possible, our churches remain open at least part of the day for private prayer and that you encourage your people to reserve some part of their day for private prayer and devotions.

We know that a natural part of parish life includes the celebration of weddings, funerals, and baptisms. At this time, these celebrations should still take place. HOWEVER, you need to work with families to try and limit attendance. Communal reconciliation services should be cancelled and confessions should be limited to individual confession, and I suggest behind a screen. Some of you have called about communal Anointing of Sick services. I suggest these be cancelled. If you would want to do anything, set a time for 30-60 minutes where you will be available for any who would want to come to be anointed. Also, as we find ourselves in the middle of the Lenten season, one of the important elements for our elect is participation in the scrutinies. Please let all those involved know that I am dispensing individuals from these.

In this time of uncertainty, while it is important that we remain as pastoral as possible, it is also important that we be prudent in our course of action. Therefore, effective Wednesday, March 18, ALL non-essential Parish gatherings should be postponed (including Friday evening fish fries). During times like this, we know how important it is to let those who are in elderly living situations and the homebound know that they are not forgotten. Although many of these facilities are probably locked down to outside visitors, it is important that we keep in touch with them via the telephone or technological forms of communication.

As you also know, our Catholic and Public schools are discontinuing in-school instructions as of the 18<sup>th</sup> and all classroom Religious Education programs should be stopped as well. Mrs. Peggy Schoenfuss, Superintendent of Catholic Schools and Director of Catholic Formation, has been in contact with school principals in helping to develop plans for online and other homeschooling possibilities. She is also going to be meeting with our Religious Ed leaders to help them move forward with home-based catechesis at this time.

The Priests Assembly has been cancelled as well as the “public” celebration of the Chrism Mass. I do plan to celebrate the Chrism Mass and we are looking into having it live streamed from the Cathedral.

Once again, if you have any questions or concerns, please do not hesitate to let me, Deb Lieberg, or Paul Birch know.

Lastly, let us hold each other in prayer during this time of concern. Together, we can pray this Spiritual Act of Communion.

#### An Act of Spiritual Communion

My Jesus,

I believe that You are present in the Most Holy Sacrament.

I love You above all things, and I desire to receive You into my soul.


Since I cannot at this moment receive You sacramentally,  
come at least spiritually into my heart.

I embrace You as if You were already there and unite myself wholly to You. Never  
permit me to be separated from You.

Amen.

As we journey through this most difficult time may the Lord guide, guard, bless and protect each and everyone of us.

Sincerely yours in Christ,



†James P. Powers

Bishop, Diocese of Superior