



CORONAVIRUS FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS FOR THE FAITHFUL

During the time in which public Masses are suspended in the Diocese of St. Petersburg, are Catholics in the Diocese dispensed from their obligation to attend Sunday Mass?

Yes, the Bishop has dispensed the faithful of the Diocese and visitors present in the Diocese, from the obligation to attend Sunday Mass for as long as the suspension of public Celebration of the Mass is in effect.

I live near a diocese that is still holding public Masses. Is it permissible for me to attend Mass outside the Diocese of St. Petersburg during this time?

All of the Dioceses of Florida have agreed to suspend public Masses for public health reasons. All Catholics are urged to follow the cautions of Public Health Officials and choose to observe the Lord's Day at home or with others through virtual means.

Does Bishop Parkes have the authority to suspend Sunday Mass and our Mass obligation? I don't want to commit a mortal sin.

The Church's law anticipates that there will be circumstances when participation in the celebration of Eucharist will be prevented because of a grave cause. Public health threats from epidemics have often been considered a grave cause throughout the Church's history. Therefore, the Diocesan Bishop can determine that a grave cause exists which prevents the faithful from attending Mass and give directives on how the Faithful ought to observe the Lord's Day in appropriate ways.

It is not a sin to miss Mass during this period.

Where can I watch Mass now that there are no public, in-person options?

The Diocesan Website www.dosp.org lists how Catholics can watch or listen to the Celebrations of the Mass.

Do I have a moral obligation to watch one of the Masses that are being livestreamed or recorded on social media, websites, and television?

While you are encouraged to find ways of listening or watching Mass, your obligation is to observe the Lord's Day as Holy and celebrate your faith in Christ by drawing upon the Church's rich spiritual tradition of prayer and devotions. Suggestions for other ways to observe the Lord's Days during the suspension of Masses can also be found on our Diocesan Website as well as your Parish's website and social media postings.

How should Catholics respond to the Coronavirus?

Catholics should intensify their prayer and follow the guidance that is issued for the common good. Also, by phone or virtual means Catholics who are self-distancing should sustain the bonds of family, friendship and neighborhood so that none of our brothers and sisters feel abandoned.

What can my family and I do at home if we're not attending Mass?

Families can watch or listen to celebrations of the Mass broadcast by livestreaming, TV, and Radio. A list of these opportunities can be found at www.dosp.org. Also, at that website there are suggestions for other appropriate ways to observe the Lord's Day as Holy.

How do Church closures affect other Sacraments and Sacramentals, specifically the Sacrament of Reconciliation during Lent? I'm concerned since I thought Catholics are supposed to make a good Confession before Easter.

As always, Catholics in need of confession are encouraged to make a sincere Act of Contrition and promise to make a good confession as soon as possible. Consult your Parish for the availability of individual confessions.

Bishop Parkes has instructed Pastors to postpone the celebration of other Sacraments and Sacramentals unless there is an emergency situation or danger of death.

If my loved ones need Anointing of the Sick, who should I call? Will a priest be able to visit hospitals, nursing homes, etc.?

The Anointing of the Sick ought to be requested only for those who have not been previously anointed and are in danger of death. Each parish has an emergency phone line for this purpose. Priests will attend the dying following the protocols for the circumstances. (i.e. wearing gowns, mask and gloves as directed by medical professionals)

What if a loved one dies? Can I still have a funeral Mass?

Funerals can be celebrated. Families should work with their priest to determine the most prudent means to do so. Also, as much as possible, the guidance about limiting gatherings ought to be observed.

What about weddings?

Weddings can be celebrated. Couples should work with their priest to determine the most prudent means to do so. Also, as much as possible the guidance about limiting gatherings ought to be observed.

My child is scheduled to receive the Sacrament of Confirmation during this time. Will that still occur?

Confirmations will be postponed. Your Parish will give guidance on how they will be rescheduled.

My child was scheduled to be baptized during this time, now what?

Unless there is an emergency situation, celebrations of Baptism will be postponed. Consult your parish on how Baptisms will be rescheduled.

What about First Communions?

First Communions may be postponed depending on when they are scheduled to take place. If postponed, the local Parish will give guidance on how they will be rescheduled.

I'm currently in the RCIA process at my parish and I've been looking forward to my full entrance into the Catholic Church at the Easter Vigil. Is that postponed?

It has yet to be determined how the Diocese will celebrate Holy week, including the Easter Vigil. Updates will come as the circumstances become clearer. Entrance into the Church may need to be celebrated in smaller gatherings and at different times than the Easter Vigil.

Is the suspension of Masses unprecedented in the Diocese of St. Petersburg?

During the lifetime of most Catholics the suspension of Masses is unprecedented. During the H1N1 pandemic of 1918 (“Spanish Flu”) Churches were closed and Masses were suspended in the territory that would become the Diocese of St. Petersburg.

Why were Masses suspended in the Diocese of St. Petersburg?

The outbreak of Coronavirus in the United States poses a particularly grave threat to the public health, particularly for the aged and other vulnerable populations. Out of pastoral concern for all of the faithful and for our fellow citizens, like many Bishops in our country and around the world, including Pope Francis, Bishop Parkes felt it was prudent and necessary to observe the cautions of public health officials about limiting public gatherings. Spiritual Solidarity in times of crisis is a way the Church serves its primary mission in the world, the salvation of souls.