

LITURGICAL AND FAITH LIFE CHANGES DUE TO CORONAVIRUS IN THE DIOCESE OF SPRINGFIELD IN ILLINOIS

Given the unprecedented developments related to the Novel Coronavirus, our shared faith life in the Diocese of Springfield in Illinois is undergoing significant change. As Christians, we embrace these changes as a spiritual sacrifice on behalf of all those affected by the virus, especially in light of the particular risk posed to some of the most vulnerable among us. During this remarkable time, when many of the liturgies and public practices of the faith are on hold, Bishop Paprocki has asked us to increase, rather than decrease our prayer and fasting, in solidarity with our brothers and sisters locally, nationally, and worldwide. Below is a summary of the changes and guidelines for changes in our shared faith life. These changes, unless otherwise noted, remain in effect until further notice. It is simply not possible, at this point, to predict when public gatherings will once again be allowed.

Masses

In response to Bishop Paprocki's call for a diocesan fast from the Eucharist, effective March 18, 2020 and until further notice, the Diocese of Springfield in Illinois has replaced all public Masses and liturgical celebrations with private Masses, celebrated by priests "*sine populo*," that is, with no congregation physically present. The Catholic faithful are dispensed from their Sunday obligation until further notice.

During this time, the faithful are encouraged to pray with the scripture readings of the Mass, which can be found [here](#), and watch the mass on EWTN or on one of the local, private Masses being streamed live by one of our priests. In place of reception of the Blessed Sacrament, the faithful are encouraged to make a [spiritual communion](#), pray the rosary, and to [pray this particular prayer](#) for the end to the spread of the Coronavirus, the healing of those afflicted, and strength for those caring for the sick.

Confirmations and First Communion Masses Cancelled, New Schedule to be Established

All Confirmations and First Holy Communion Masses in the Diocese of Springfield are cancelled through December, 2020.

Given the number of Confirmations and First Holy Communion Masses on the schedule for the next several weeks, an entirely new schedule will need to be built for the year. Further, it is not possible even to begin planning for rescheduling until there is clarity on when public gatherings will be allowed to resume. So, the entire schedule is being withdrawn, and it will be rebuilt as soon as we have clarity on how long large gatherings of people are to be suspended.

We understand that the postponement of these sacraments of initiation is deeply disappointing to all involved. We also appreciate the desire for clarity on the rescheduling, but it simply will not be possible to work it out at least for several weeks. We beg for patience as this is sorted out, as all those involved are doing the best they can in times of uncertainty and unprecedented change and disruption.

Last, all students who have prepared for Confirmation will not be required to re-do their course work and other preparation.

RCIA

Initiation into the Church will not be possible during the Easter Vigil this year. Instead, the Rite of Initiation will be rescheduled to another time this year, outside the Easter Vigil, when it is safe to resume regular public gatherings.

Weddings

Regrettably, government guidelines and mandates regarding gatherings of any kind will impact most weddings. It may be possible to celebrate a private wedding mass, in keeping with the government restrictions regarding crowd size, and reschedule the reception at a later date. If you have a wedding scheduled within the next several weeks, we encourage you to contact your

parish directly. It is unclear how long restrictions will remain in place. This will make it nearly impossible to reschedule concrete dates at this point. Please recognize that pastors and parish staff are doing their best in this difficult time.

Funerals

Private funerals will continue to be offered, limited to the immediate family only, in keeping with the government restrictions regarding crowd size, with the option to schedule a public Memorial Mass at a future date. The specific dates and scheduling of Memorial Masses will not be possible at this time, given the indefinite period of restrictions on public gatherings. Please contact your parish to schedule a Mass of Christian Burial and discuss these matters with your pastor.

Baptisms

Baptisms may still be celebrated but must be celebrated privately and limited to immediate family and godparents only.

Anointing of the Sick

Clergy remain committed to caring for the sacramental needs of the faithful, especially in a time of concern. Please remember that, at this time, the Anointing of the Sick is reserved primarily for those in danger of death. Please call your parish office to request the sacrament of the Anointing of the Sick.

Non-Sacramental Parish Activities

All non-sacramental parish activities are cancelled across the diocese, until further notice.

Church Buildings Open for Private Prayer

While we encourage the faithful to adhere to guidelines of social distancing and avoidance of public spaces, etc., we also acknowledge the importance of prayer at this time. Our churches will generally remain open during normally

scheduled hours for prayer before the Blessed Sacrament in the tabernacle. Please confirm hours and availability via your parish website. Also, anyone who is sick or believes he or she may have come into contact with the virus is to remain home, and anyone visiting a Church or any other public place for prayer is strongly encouraged to follow [CDC guidelines](#) for prevention and hygiene.

Confessions

While communal penance services are cancelled, individual Confessions remain available. Confessions will be heard either behind the screen or face to face with a minimum of six-foot physical separation. Please refer to your parish website for schedules and specific details. Anyone in need of confession who is sick or believes he or she may have come into contact with the virus should contact the parish office for a private visit with a priest. Further, just as with visiting churches during this time, anyone visiting a church for the Sacrament of Reconciliation is strongly encouraged to follow [CDC guidelines](#) for prevention and hygiene.

Parish Support

Amid the many concerns currently facing us, please also remember that your parish depends on your generosity and support. With the cancellation of masses, our parishes have lost offertory collections that are essential to pay staff and bills for the maintenance of our churches. Please visit your parish website and consider making your offertory gift online during this unprecedented time.

Support for those in Need

Many people will suffer disruption, health challenges, and economic hardship during this time. The faithful are encouraged to support Catholic Charities and/or their parish St. Vincent DePaul Society or other charitable groups.