



DIOCESE OF WINONA-ROCHESTER
OFFICE OF THE BISHOP
55 West Sanborn Street, P.O. Box 588
Winona, Minnesota 55987
507-454-4643
507-454-8106 (Fax)

STATEMENT REGARDING SUSPENSION OF PUBLIC MASSES

March 18, 2020

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

I greet you with the words of Jesus Christ, "Do not be afraid." During these days of great uncertainty due to the many changes and unwanted consequences of the COVID-19 virus, we are reminded that the Lord is with us and His love surrounds us.

In response to the guidance by the Center for Disease Control and the Governor of Minnesota, to provide for the health of our community, and after much prayer and consultation, I have made the following decisions.

Beginning Friday, March 20, 2020, in the Diocese of Winona-Rochester, all public Sunday and weekday Masses will be suspended for the next eight weeks, through Friday, May 15, 2020. On or before that date, a decision will be made to continue or to lift the restriction on public Masses. The faithful of the Diocese of Winona-Rochester will continue to be dispensed from their Sunday obligation for the duration of time that public Masses are suspended. During this time, Perpetual Adoration will also be suspended.

- Priests will continue to offer daily a private Mass for the intentions of their parishioners.
- Churches may remain open for private prayer.
- Sacramental ministry will be available for the Sacrament of Penance, Anointing of the Sick, and Viaticum, on an individual basis.
- Funeral Masses, Baptisms, and Weddings will continue, but only a small number of immediate family members are to attend.

The decision to suspend public Masses is the most difficult decision I have ever made. It is based on my desire to protect our people as advised by public officials and health care experts. By not coming together and having personal contact, we hope to limit the spread of the COVID-19 virus. A "Frequently Asked Questions" will be available on the diocesan website (www.dowr.org), and will be updated regularly. Questions may be submitted to diocese@dowr.org.

I encourage you to take advantage of the many Masses that are broadcast on radio and TV in English and in Spanish and unite yourself spiritually in deep communion with the Lord. You can find the full list on our diocesan website, www.dowr.org.

St. Paul faced numerous dangers and challenges in his missionary travels, yet he was able to say, "In Christ I can do all things" (Philippians 4:13). Remain steadfast in hope, because "Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, today, and forever" (Hebrews 13:8). The Lord is with us and His Providential care will guide us.

Sincerely in Christ,

Most Rev. John M. Quinn
Bishop of Winona-Rochester