



# Diocese of Altoona-Johnstown

*Office of Vicar General*

2713 W Chestnut Avenue  
Altoona, PA 16601  
Phone: 814-695-5579  
www.dioceseaj.org

## MEMORANDUM

**TO:** All Clergy  
**FROM:** (Very Rev.) Alan E. Thomas, VG *AET*  
**RE:** COVID-19 Restrictions  
**DATE:** March 17, 2020

### **COVID-19 RESTRICTIONS**

In light of the COVID-19 epidemic, Bishop Mark requires that priests and deacons of the Altoona-Johnstown Diocese observe the following directives, effective immediately.

#### **Suspension of Public Masses**

Churches and other public places of worship in the Altoona-Johnstown Diocese are to remain open for private prayer. However, effective immediately, there will be no public liturgies of any sort. That is, there will be no public daily Masses or weekend Masses, no public novenas, communal stations of the cross, ecumenical services, or other public worship until the current COVID-19 crisis has passed. The purpose of this is to retard the spread of the coronavirus. The Bishop will be reviewing the situation daily and will alert priests and deacons immediately when Masses and other public worship can be resumed.

The Bishop authorizes and expects priests to celebrate a private Mass each day during this crisis. This should be done in the rectory or at a private chapel. Priests should celebrate a single Mass in place of Saturday evening and Sunday Masses. The Bishop directs that, in light of the unprecedented situation in which we find ourselves, multiple Mass intentions should be coalesced in the one Sunday Mass. Provisions regarding the accounting of Mass stipends continue to pertain. That is, priests may keep the stipend of one Mass intention per day. All other stipends from additional intentions should be forwarded to the Diocese in keeping with canon law and diocesan policy. Coalescing Mass intentions into a single Sunday Mass includes the pastor's pro populo obligation. The Mass will continue to be broadcast at 11:00am on Sundays. The Bishop will be the presider at this liturgy and these broadcasts will be available on the Diocesan website and social media.

