



Office of the Bishop

Diocese of Brownsville

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March 13, 2020

To the faithful of the Diocese of Brownsville:

As we continue to take precautions in response to the coronavirus (COVID-19) which will likely impact the Rio Grande Valley, the faithful should stay informed with updates from national, state and local health officials.

I think we have to assume that the coronavirus is in the Rio Grande Valley, or soon will be. The faithful should take steps to protect the vulnerable in our community. The healthy must remember that they could be a cause of infection for the elderly and infirm, and thus should take necessary precautions out of concern for others, not just themselves. Frequent and sustained hand washing at home, school and work is essential. So also is frequent cleaning of surfaces at home, work, school and Church. Persons who feel ill should seek medical attention and avoid work, school and church activities.

All the faithful are dispensed from the obligation to assist at Mass on Sundays and Holy Days until further notice. The sick, anyone over 60 years of age, those who suffer chronic medical conditions or compromised immune systems, and any persons who care for them should avoid attending Mass or other church gatherings.

In addition to the directives I issued last week, I am directing that Catholics not receive Holy Communion directly on the tongue, but only in the hand. For those Catholics for whom this causes great discomfort, I urge you to offer this as an act of charity for the good of the whole community. These directives remain in effect until withdrawn by the bishop.

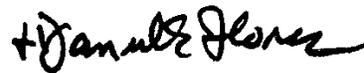
The celebration of scheduled Sunday and weekday Masses has not been suspended in this Diocese. However, the circumstances may require such a decision. If that should happen, priests will offer Mass without the assistance of the faithful. It is the faith of the Church that under any circumstances, the Mass is the perfect act of worship and petition offered to God the Father through Christ his Son. While we have access to the sacraments and to prayer in our Churches, I encourage those who can attend Mass to pray especially in communion with many Catholics around the world who cannot attend Mass at this time though they long to do so.

I encourage the faithful, especially those who cannot attend Mass, to pray at home, including the Rosary, the Liturgy of the Hours, and meditation on the daily readings of the Eucharistic Liturgy. Further, Masses streamed through social media can be accessed through links provided on the diocesan webpage.

It may become necessary to cancel public events other than Mass. Holy Week is approaching as is the Confirmation season and the season of parish festivals. Please look for future advisories involving these kinds of upcoming activities. We will follow closely the advice and directives of state and local health officials.

Churches should offer scheduled periods of adoration of the Blessed Sacrament, and encourage small groups to take turns praying for the health and safety of those who are sick, those who are vulnerable to illness, and for health care workers. Small groups are best in this circumstance so as to diminish the risks of infection.

Let us pray for one another, for the sick and vulnerable, and for those who care for them; let us be generous and kind in our responses to one another; let us take to heart the advisories of health officials, and let us use our common sense.

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Daniel E. Flores". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Most Rev.

Daniel E. Flores

Bishop of Brownsville