



DIOCESE OF SACRAMENTO

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OFFICE OF THE BISHOP

November 12, 2020

Dear Brothers:

I direct the pastors in parishes that are located in “purple tier” counties to offer Mass and provide to the Faithful the opportunity to attend virtually, either by live-streaming or other visual technology starting this Sunday, November 15, 2020, the Thirty-Third Sunday of Ordinary Time.

This is a heartbreaking decision. My brother priests and many parishioners have worked very hard to provide safe, responsible, outdoor and indoor environments for the Faithful to praise God and receive the sacraments. I am confident that the protocols in place have significantly reduced the risk of infection from the coronavirus and influenza in Catholic churches throughout the Diocese. Unfortunately, due to lack of diligence in other social sectors, the rates of infection are surging to dangerous levels. Even our own efforts will not be enough to safeguard the most vulnerable members of our community. For this reason, Mass is to be offered with no more than 10 people physically present and then be provided to the Faithful through the virtual mediums available.

Pastors should provide sufficient opportunity to receive the Eucharist in outdoor spaces following transmissions of the Mass offered. These times should be advertised so that the Faithful can conveniently approach the reception of the Eucharist daily. These opportunities should be proximate to the times when Mass is offered and then extended as needed (minimum one hour). The priest, deacon, or extraordinary minister of the Eucharist should follow the usual public health protocols for the distribution of communion.

Under these extraordinary circumstances, all efforts should be made to provide due reverence for the Most Holy Sacrament of the Eucharist and a respectful disposition for those who approach the Sacrament.

Some pastors, due to their particular pastoral circumstances, have proposed the so-called “drive-in” protocol for those wishing to attend the Sacrifice of the Mass. This protocol allows the Faithful to attend while in their cars as Mass is offered outdoors in public view. Communion is then distributed at the proper time by the minister going to each car individually. I will permit pastors to offer this option, on an experimental basis, until Sunday, January 3, 2021.

Catholics in the Diocese of Sacramento are still dispensed from attending Sunday Mass. They may keep holy the Lord’s Day by attending Mass through the internet or other media as well as practicing other religious devotions.

Priests are urged to offer a sufficient number of Masses on Sundays and during the week for the faithful to participate safely and with peace of mind. Offer regularly scheduled occasions for confession (at least weekly). Be keenly attentive to pastoral needs of the sick and the homebound.

By all these means, as well as your abiding pastoral zeal, we will continue to reverently accompany our people. The abiding diligence to our pastoral duties will provide comfort and instill hope in the persevering presence of Jesus, the Good Shepherd.

Join me in asking the intercession of our Blessed Mother Mary for God's mercy to end the Pandemic and heal all those afflicted.

Respectfully,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Jaime Soto", with a large, stylized flourish extending to the right.

+Jaime Soto
Bishop of Sacramento