



17 March 2020

My Dear People of God,

We continue to receive new and updated guidance from civil authorities and experts regarding the spread of the COVID-19 virus. Throughout this time, we have taken appropriate and prudent steps to ensure the wellbeing of you and your loved ones. Following the latest advice of the CDC, in conjunction with the bishops of Tennessee and Kentucky who are making similar provisions, I am announcing the following:

Effective immediately, I have dispensed all the faithful of the Diocese of Nashville from the obligation to attend Sunday Mass, up to and including April 3, 2020. All public celebrations of Mass and all other gatherings are cancelled through the same date, April 3. We will continue to monitor the situation and may extend this timeframe if necessary. Weddings, funerals, and baptisms may proceed in consultation with your pastors, but you will be asked to limit attendance to immediate family only.

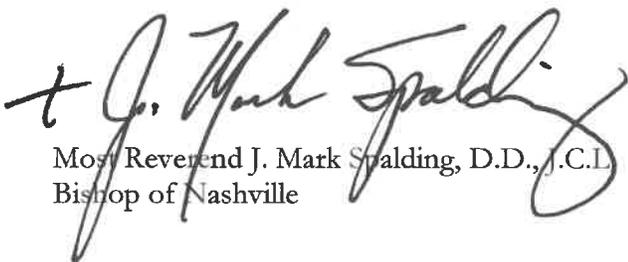
Since we have an ongoing obligation to honor the sabbath day, I ask all to refrain from unnecessary work on Sundays and to offer prayers such as reciting the Holy Rosary, reading the readings from Sunday Mass, and/or praying the Stations of the Cross at home. In addition, I encourage you to take advantage of opportunities to watch celebrations of Holy Mass online.

In spiritual union with other dioceses throughout the world, I would like to encourage you to join me in a day of fasting, abstinence, and prayer, to take place this Wednesday, March 18, 2020.

Our Catholic schools will also be closed through the same date and will be in direct contact with parents concerning provisions for the ongoing instruction of our students during this time.

Please know of my sincere love and concern for all of you and your families in this uncertain time. My thoughts and prayers are with you, as well as with the sick, the elderly, and those who are especially vulnerable. Your priests will continue to offer Mass in private for you and your intentions and are available for your pastoral needs. Let us continue to entrust ourselves to the Blessed Mother who enfolds us in her protecting veil.

Sincerely yours in Christ,



Most Reverend J. Mark Spalding, D.D., J.C.L.
Bishop of Nashville