



**OFFICE OF THE VICAR GENERAL
DIOCESE OF BROOKLYN**

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**CORONAVIRUS UPDATE FOR PASTORS
March 19, 2020**

The situation is changing rapidly and daily, if not more quickly, please continue to be attentive to all the memos that are sent. Each memo contains information which may be new. Please share this information with all the priests in your rectory, as well.

Bishop DiMarzio has requested that the following be provided to all Pastors and Administrators for your information and for the benefit and safety of your parishioners. Please read it carefully and know that we are monitoring the situation closely and will present updates and clarifications as needed.

Today, Bishop DiMarzio had conference calls with all the deans in the Diocese. The following information is a result of discussion with the deans.

CHURCHES: NEW MANDATES!

- Because of the ongoing danger of groups gathering and the possibility of the virus spreading in this way, we are **MANDATING** churches to **remain closed**. Some parishes have already found it necessary to do this and, in light of the proximity of our parishes to each other, it is thought best to have a **consistent policy in the entire diocese. THIS IS EFFECTIVE AS OF MARCH 20, 2020 at NOON.**
- At this time, too, we are **MANDATING** parish offices to close for business in an attempt to keep people in their homes as much as possible for their own health and wellbeing. Most parish office business can be conducted by telephone. Those who can work from home should do so. **THIS IS EFFECTIVE AS OF MARCH 20, 2020 at NOON.**

PASTORAL CONCERNS

- Bishop DiMarzio has granted all the faithful of the Diocese of Brooklyn a **dispensation from the law of abstinence for the Fridays of Lent for this year**. This is being done to assist people who may have difficulties in shopping for food or other reasons which would make this practice difficult at this time. Please remind parishioners that the Fridays of Lent (and indeed all year) remain days of penance and prayer and that this is needed now more than ever.
- Out of an abundance of caution especially the most vulnerable, Funerals and weddings **will not** be permitted in church. This is because limiting the funerals and weddings to 10 people is proving not to be feasible. If absolutely necessary, a **graveside service**, maintaining the recommendations of the CDC regarding social distancing, could be done, at the discretion of the cemetery administration. A memorial Mass for the deceased should be celebrated later. Weddings should be postponed.
- We are attaching a flyer which you can adapt for your needs with the suggestion that they can be attached to your church doors. The first page is for your own personalization and there are choices for a second page. Both pages could be posted side by side.

- We must also remind pastors and administrators of the precautions that should be taken when hearing confessions. These should be limited to emergencies only and while it is necessary for the confession to be one-on-one and in person, social distancing measures should be observed. A suggestion might be to hear a confession outdoors where the priest and penitent can be at some distance from each other. We also remind priests that spiritual counseling should be given over the phone only. In general we encourage priests to be in contact with their parishioners over the phone or by social media while respecting safe-environment protocols.

CATHOLIC CHARITIES

- **Catholic Charities is available for assistance**, if needed. **The Call Center number is 718-722-6001, Monday through Friday from 9 am to 6 pm.** Information is available about food pantries and about mental health services. The mental health centers have the capacity to offer counseling over the phone.

COMMUNICATIONS

- Every pastor, priest, and pastoral staff member in the diocese will be migrating from First Class to Microsoft Outlook 365 for our email needs. You will receive information on how to make the change **tomorrow**. Everyone must make this change. It is essential now in order for us to update our email and cell phone number list. Please follow the instructions you will receive from the Office of Information Systems.
- Attached you will also receive a memo of all the extension numbers for all diocesan offices so that you may remain in communication with diocesan personnel as needed.
- **Please read your emails daily for updates.**

FINANCES

- It is suggested that pastors and administrators arrange a conference call with the members of their Finance Councils in order to explain the steps that are being taken to assure the financial health of the parish as well as to obtain their advice.
- There is also the possibility of setting up “Robo-calls” to provide parishioners with information. For assistance please contact the Catholic Foundation of Brooklyn and Queens at 718-965-7375.

We are all committed to serving the Faithful of the Diocese of Brooklyn during this difficult time.

Saint Joseph, Patron of the Universal Church, pray for us!