



March 21, 2020

Dear Priests, Deacons, Religious and all members of the Joliet Diocesan Community,

Governor Pritzker has issued an order mandating a “stay in place” for all citizens of the State of Illinois.

The order is effective at 5:00 PM on Saturday, March 21st and has the following implications for the parishes/schools and institutions in the Diocese of Joliet. These restrictions remain in place until April 7th or otherwise notified by the Governor.

- All churches and adoration chapels must be closed and locked until the order is lifted by the governor. Private prayer in any parish building must be discontinued until the order is lifted.
- There can be no live Stations of the Cross or any other gatherings anywhere on parish/school property, nor can any parish personnel be involved in organizing them on any other site.
- All weddings and baptisms must be postponed and can be re-scheduled only once the order is lifted. There are no exceptions to this, regardless of the size of the group. However, in case of an extreme emergency for baptism, please seek the permission of your bishop.
- Funerals and wakes must be postponed until the order is lifted.
(Note: Priests can – and are encouraged – to continue celebrating Mass privately and to livestream their Masses for their parishioners, if possible. Moreover, anointing of the sick and confession/absolution guidelines will be forthcoming.)
- Parish offices must be closed until the governor’s order is lifted.

It is clear that the response to COVID-19 is fluid and we will keep you apprised of developments and provide additional information as it becomes available.

I am fully aware that these and previous measures are disconcerting and disrupting that which is central in our lives. It is painful for all of us. At the same time, we recognize them as essential in order to eliminate the scourge of the virus.

Let us join in prayer to the loving and caring God that He be with us in these trying moments and lead to the elimination of this virus. We pray also for those suffering from the virus and for those that lost loved ones to the illness and all those serving at this time, especially the health care workers.

Sincerely yours in Christ,

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Most Reverend Richard E. Pates
Apostolic Administrator
Diocese of Joliet