



ROMAN CATHOLIC
DIocese of
SPRINGFIELD-CAPE GIRARDEAU

Office of the Bishop

April 30, 2020
Feast of St. Pius V, Pope

Dear Monsignors, Fathers, Deacons and The Faithful of the Diocese of Springfield-Cape Girardeau,

With Governor Mike Parson lifting some restrictions for public gatherings, including religious assemblies, it was hoped that our parishes could resume some form of regular parish life, especially participation in Holy Mass. However, after consulting with the Bishops of the State of Missouri and after input and thorough discussion with my Diocesan Consultors, I have decided that **the suspension of public Masses will continue and churches of the Diocese of Springfield Cape Girardeau will remain closed.** This decision will be reviewed as we draw close to the weekend of May 16-17. **The dispensation from the Sunday Mass obligation remains in effect for our diocese.**

The spread of the COVID-19 coronavirus remains a real and present danger. Just because it may not be present in one particular county, does not diminish the danger. Without an effective vaccine or widespread testing, we are simply not in a place where we can resume parish life as normal. Places that have lifted restrictions have unfortunately, seen a spike in infections. I hope that all of us would agree that the Catholic Church would want to act out of an abundance of caution and care for the benefit of all.

While disappointing to all of us, please know that I act out of concern for many of the faithful and clergy who are over the age of 65, or, who have pre-existing health conditions. In addition, the requirements for sanitizing public spaces is nearly impossible given the lack of supplies in local stores. Finally, and certainly of major importance, the dignity of the Eucharist can be compromised when we start thinking of creative ways to offer Communion to our people, some bordering on the outlandish or irreverent.

In the meantime, I ask our clergy to continue to seek ways to reach out to their people through technology, telephone calls, and notes. I also ask them to anticipate the opening of our churches and start now to collect supplies such as hand-sanitizer and sanitation wipes. I will continue to consult and monitor the situation in the weeks ahead. As we enter the month of May, dedicated to Our Lady, let us turn to Mary, Help of Christians. May she intercede for us, protect us, and bring us all closer to her Son. With the assurance of my prayers, I am,

Sincerely yours in Christ,

Most Reverend Edward M. Rice
Bishop of Springfield-Cape Girardeau