



OFFICE OF THE BISHOP

March 13, 2020

To Our Community in the Diocese of San José:

Santa Clara County, together with the greater Seattle area, has been at the epicenter of the spread of Coronavirus (COVID-19) across the United States. Over the past few weeks, our Diocese of San José has followed the guidance of Santa Clara County health officials in responding to the presence of the virus. The Governor of California has weighed in recently requesting that no gatherings assemble with more than 250 persons. In my recent discussions with county health officials, I have been told that we have reached the exponential phase of the epidemic, with the number of those testing positive for the virus expected to rise dramatically.

As a Diocese, our top priority remains the health and safety of our families, children, and the vulnerable of our community. Out of an abundance of caution, we have closed all Diocesan school facilities from today, Friday, March 13, through Friday, March 27. **In addition, I am requesting that all parishes, missions, and chapels in the Diocese of San José suspend all public Masses beginning Saturday, March 14, until further notice.** Baptisms, weddings, and funerals may be celebrated but should be limited to immediate family. Faith Formation classes also should be suspended until further notice. All parish gatherings are being suspended until further notice.

With the preceding in mind, I have issued a dispensation from the obligation to attend Mass during this time for all Catholics in the Diocese of San José.

Though public Masses are being suspended, I encourage parishioners to remain connected to their parish community and to pray for each other. The Diocese and several parishes will continue to livestream Sunday Masses in various languages. Information on these Masses and other spiritual resources are provided on our Diocesan Response to Coronavirus webpage at dsj.org/coronavirus.

During this difficult time, I ask that our priests, deacons, religious, and parish staffs remain attentive to the needs of shut-ins, the elderly, the sick, and the vulnerable through creative outreach. Priests will remain available for individual confessions and urgent pastoral needs, including the anointing of the sick (Last Rites). I also encourage our parishes to reach out to parishioners through phone campaigns, social media, and other methods.

We are profoundly saddened that we are not able to celebrate the Eucharist as a community, but we are reminded that Christ always remains with us, especially in times of uncertainty such as these. Be assured of my continued prayers for you and your families.

Yours in Christ,

Bishop Oscar Cantú
