



DIOCESE OF SACRAMENTO

2110 Broadway • Sacramento, California 95818 • 916/733-0200 • Fax 916/733-0215

OFFICE OF THE BISHOP

April 25, 2020

Dear Friends in Christ:

“For if we have grown into union with him through a death like his, we shall also be united with him in the resurrection.” (Rom. 6.5) These words from St. Paul’s letter to the Romans are a challenge and a consolation. In small ways as well as more significant ways, the COVID-19 Pandemic has brought the death of Christ closer to all of us. The sufferings and sacrifices of many during this Lenten and Easter Season have opened an avenue of grace by which we may grow in union with Christ “through a death like his.” The personal and painful journey across the dark, uncertain valley of the coronavirus has offered us many sacramental occasions to share in the death of Christ so that we might “also be united with him in the resurrection.”

While we hunger to be in communion with the Lord Jesus and one another through the Most Holy Sacrament of the Eucharist, St. Paul reminds us, “Are you unaware that we who were baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death?” (Rom. 6.3) Our desire for the Bread of Life awakens in all the Faithful a longing to be more a part of the mystery of the Lord’s death and resurrection, the essence of Our Lord’s gift to us on the night before he died for us. The multiple sorrowful moments of these many weeks probe us and prepare us to take up the cross while we wait for the moment when together we may hear again those dear words, “Take this, all of you, and eat of it, for this is my body.” We are unworthy to hear and receive what our Lord offers to us. The paschal passion during this pandemic will purify those humbly disposed to say even more sincerely, “Lord, I am not worthy that you should enter under my roof.”

State and local public health officials are preparing to give directives for public gatherings. The plan is to gradually allow such gatherings dependent upon measures for limiting further spread of the epidemic, providing protection for the vulnerable, and the capacity to care for the afflicted. In cooperation with the guidance of public health officials, my brother bishops in California and I are preparing to lift the suspension for public celebrations of the Sacrifice of the Mass.. When that time will come is still uncertain. This decision will depend on being certain our celebrations of the Sacraments are safe and respectful of human dignity, especially for the most vulnerable. Our reverence for the Eucharist must also reverence and care for the dignity of human life.

At the present time, public celebrations of the Sacrifice of the Mass are still suspended. There is still no date for when the suspension will be lifted. Pastors will begin to make plans to resume public celebrations following the gradual approach proposed by State and local public health officials. Churches must be cleaned, and a determination made regarding the revised capacity of the parish churches with the implementation of prudent physical-distancing.

Those who are 65 years of age and older as well as those with vulnerable health conditions will remain sheltering-in-place even as public movement is gradually permitted.

The dispensation from the obligation to attending the Sunday celebration of the Sacrifice of the Mass for the Diocese of Sacramento will continue until further notice.

I rely on your patience and prayers as we prepare for the day when we can gather around the sacrificial table of the Lord.

I am postponing all confirmations to the Fall, 2020. Pastors will be delegated to confirm the children and adults who are ready for Confirmation. I recommend to all Pastors that First Communions be postponed until the Fall, 2020.

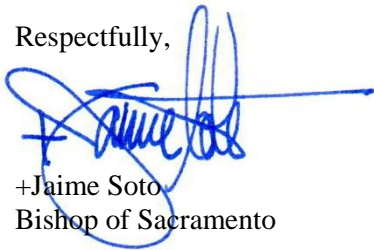
The Elect and Candidates who have prepared for the Rites of Initiation, traditionally conferred at the Easter Vigil, will be received into the Catholic Church and celebrate the Sacraments of Initiation at smaller, private ceremonies, abiding by public health precautions in the weeks to come. Pastors will determine the dates for these ceremonies.

I am grateful to my brother priests who have labored to provide the Sacrament of Penance to the Faithful during this Pandemic. Their daily offering of the Sacrifice of the Mass is a powerful source of strength and consolation for the Faithful. I have admired the growing number of Masses that have been live-streamed online providing a comforting connection for the People of God. My brother priests and I extend our heartfelt thanks to all who have continued to make their weekly offerings to the Church online and by mail. The women and men who have strived to sustain the works of mercy for the many poor and hungry have served as a vital extension of the Eucharist, the Sacrament of Charity, throughout the Diocese of Sacramento.

Many of our fellow Catholics as well as other Californians are working diligently, at great risk to themselves and their families, to care for the sick, harvest our fields, tend our grocery stores, and protect our neighborhoods. Let us honor them with our own personal efforts to eradicate the COVID-19 Pandemic and be in solidarity with them by our prayers.

Join Bishop Weigand, my brother priests, and me in prayerfully pleading for God's mercy to end this plague. We pray especially for all those afflicted: the many ill; the unemployed; the children, youth, and their parents struggling to continue their education; all those who have died and those who mourn the death of loved ones. With the accompanying intercession of our Blessed Mother Mary, may her Son, Jesus, the good and merciful Shepherd lead us from death to life, from despair to hope, from sorrow to joy.

Respectfully,



+Jaime Soto
Bishop of Sacramento