



March 19, 2020

My dear Sisters and Brothers in the Joliet Diocese,

Because of the rapid spread of the virus and in accord with the actions taken by the neighboring dioceses, all Church services, beginning with weekend Masses, daily Mass, Stations of the Cross, etc., in the parishes and institutions in the Diocese of Joliet will discontinue immediately. This will remain in effect until it is prudently advisable to resume them. The diocese will make the decision as to when to resume them. The Sacrament of Penance may be administered when approached, in accordance with health guidelines.

After consultation, the Chrism Mass of April 6th will be celebrated at 7:00pm in the St. Francis Xavier Chapel of the Blanchette Catholic Center. Arrangements are being made to involve limited numbers of priests as well as to live stream the ceremony. Unfortunately, the afternoon of reflection with Archbishop Sartain as well as the clergy meal are canceled. Hopefully, we can arrange a special clergy gathering once the “all clear” signal is sounded by health authorities.

The Ordination to the Transitional Diaconate of Sam Conforti is being transferred to the St. Francis Xavier Chapel of the Blanchette Catholic Center to be celebrated on Saturday, April 4th at 11:00am. The individuals attending the ceremony personally will be contacted by the Vocation Office. Plans are in place to live-stream the event.

The ceremonies of Holy Week beginning with Palm Sunday Celebration on April 4th through Easter are canceled in the parishes and institutions of the Diocese of Joliet. This radical step is most painful but is undertaken in the interests of the health of our parishioners and the broader community. I know it was ever so difficult for the Holy Father, Pope Francis, to take this same step at the Vatican. If this should be changed, I will notify you immediately.

The diocesan, parish and institutional offices are to be closed except for priests and deacons to attend the pastoral needs of our parishioners. Exception can be made for essential personnel at the diocesan and parish level on a very limited basis.

We are experiencing events unknown to us before. If we take sacrificial short-term measures, long-term beneficial outcome will come that much sooner.

My prayers, support and solidarity are with all in the Diocese. I am confident that if we are calm and trusting in the assured Providence of a very loving God, we will survive this severe crisis in good mind and spirit.

With my support and heartfelt prayer, I remain, sincerely yours in Christ,

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Most Reverend Richard E. Pates  
Apostolic Administrator  
Diocese of Joliet