



**ARCHDIOCESE OF PHILADELPHIA
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**ARCHBISHOP NELSON J. PÉREZ ANNOUNCES THE SUSPENSION OF
ALL PUBLIC MASSES IN THE ARCHDIOCESE OF PHILADELPHIA
EFFECTIVE AT NOON TOMORROW**

Today, the Archdiocese of Philadelphia announced that Archbishop Nelson J. Pérez has suspended all public Masses in the Archdiocese of Philadelphia effective at 12:00 p.m. on Wednesday, March 18th and until further notice.

Last week, the Archbishop dispensed the faithful from the obligation to attend Sunday Mass. Both decisions were made in response to the growing concern over the spread of the Coronavirus (COVID-19) and the directives provided by government and health department officials at the local, state, and national levels. These measures will be re-evaluated pending future developments.

Archbishop Pérez said, “As the Archbishop of Philadelphia, my first priority is to ensure the health and welfare of those entrusted to the pastoral and temporal care of our Church. So, in light of the developing Coronavirus pandemic, a decision has been made to suspend the public celebration of all Masses in the Archdiocese of Philadelphia for the time being.

All of us need to do our part to slow the spread of this illness. Like you, we are monitoring coronavirus developments and look forward to continuing our lives on a more normal basis. While things may look and feel different during these uncertain times, I want to be very clear that the Catholic Church in Philadelphia is not closing down. It is not disappearing and it will not abandon you. Time and again as our history has proven the Church has risen to meet great challenges and provide a beacon of hope and light.

As your Shepherd, I promise that the Church remains steadfast and is prepared to walk with you and serve you. Neither the Church nor its charitable works will stop. God is always by our side. He never abandons us. I invite you to join me in prayerful solidarity for the intentions of the sick, suffering, and their caregivers as well as government and health officials. With God’s grace and blessing, we will navigate the difficult waters of this challenge as a united human family, for after all is said and done, we are people of Hope!”

Though public Masses are suspended in all churches in the Archdiocese, the right and need of the faithful to hear the Word of God and celebrate the Sacraments is not put aside. Pastors, along with all those who work with them, will be as attentive as possible to all the spiritual, pastoral, and charitable needs of the people they serve.

Priests will continue to offer the sacrifice of the Holy Mass during this period and to honor all requested Mass intentions.

Churches can remain open as a location for private prayer at the discretion of the pastor. Baptisms, Confessions, Marriages, and Funerals will take place as usual but with due regard for the limitation of participants and reasonable social distancing.

In conjunction with directives already in force in hospitals and institutions, all visits to the sick with Holy Communion, including in private homes, by priests, deacons, and extraordinary ministers of Holy Communion are suspended. In such instances, only priests will be available to celebrate the Sacraments for those in immediate danger of death. In all circumstances, government and health agency directives for group size and social distancing are to be observed as the Archdiocese of Philadelphia strives to meet the pastoral and temporal needs of all those in need.

On Sunday, March 15th, the Archdiocese featured a live streaming broadcast of the 11:00 a.m. Mass on its website and Archbishop Pérez's Facebook page for the benefit of those wishing to participate in the liturgy remotely. This broadcast will continue each Sunday on an ongoing basis.

Additional information regarding opportunities for prayer and devotions are available on the Archdiocesan website.

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Editor's Note: For comprehensive information about the pastoral and temporal response of the Archdiocese of Philadelphia to the Coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic, please visit <http://archphila.org/covid19/>.