



ROMAN CATHOLIC CHURCH IN THE STATE OF HAWAII
DIOCESE OF HONOLULU
WITNESS TO JESUS

URGENT MEMORANDUM

To: Clergy, Religious and Laity of the Diocese of Honolulu and all Visitors to the Hawaiian Islands

From: Most Reverend Larry Silva, Bishop of Honolulu

Date: March 16, 2020

Subject: Response to the Covid-19 Pandemic in the Diocese of Honolulu

As we are all aware, we are in a unique time in which a pandemic that has had deadly effects needs to be halted. The Diocese of Honolulu has already sent out directives about how to keep as safe as possible during our liturgies and our spiritual, educational and social gatherings. The situation has rapidly changed, however, and in light of the Center for Disease Control's most recent strong recommendations for containment of this contagious virus, I am now offering these directives to be followed in all parishes, ethnic communities, and oratories in the Diocese of Honolulu.

1. **The public celebration of Mass will be canceled in all locations, effective at noon on March 17 through Tuesday, March 31, inclusive. I am dispensing all the faithful from the obligation to attend Mass on Sundays during this period.** (Please see below for more information.)
2. Funeral Masses/Services and Weddings that are already scheduled to take place during this period may proceed as scheduled, but families are encouraged to limit the number of guests so that the necessary social distancing can be accomplished. Baptisms and other services scheduled during this time are to be postponed, and no other such services are to be scheduled during this period.
3. Communal Penance Services are canceled. Priests will avail themselves for individual confessions by appointment or according to the schedule published by each parish.
4. Pastors are to do all they can to have their churches open throughout the day for private prayer.
5. All other gatherings of people in our parishes and schools are to be canceled so that social distancing can be practiced. Consideration should be given to meetings via social media platforms, if needed.
6. The Chrism Masses scheduled on Hawaii Island (March 24), Kauai (March 26), and Maui (March 31) are canceled. The Chrism and holy oils will be consecrated and blessed on Oahu on April 2, but at this point only the clergy and the liturgical ministers of that Mass will be invited to attend. The holy oils will later be sent to the Neighbor Islands.
7. The Mass for the Launch of 500 Years of Christianity in the Philippines Hawaii Celebration scheduled for April 4 is canceled and will be celebrated at a later date after the current crisis subsides.

The decision to cancel Masses is a very serious decision that was not taken lightly and that was made after consultation with the members of the Priests Council. Priests are to offer private Masses for the spiritual welfare of the people they serve, and pastors especially are still obliged to offer the Mass *pro populo* (for the people of the parish) every Sunday.

On Friday, March 27, we will reassess the situation and decide about the best course of action after March 31.

While nothing can fully replace the celebration of the Eucharist, in which we physically encounter the risen Lord Jesus as he offers us his Body and Blood for nourishment, all are encouraged to keep the Lord's day holy by spending time in prayer and reflection. Mass will be celebrated without the congregation and live-streamed from the Cathedral Basilica of Our Lady of Peace in Honolulu each Sunday at 9:00 a.m. and can be accessed at <https://www.facebook.com/HonoluluCathedralBasilica> or www.hictv.com. In addition, other parishes may livestream the private Mass of the priest, so check your parish's website to see if this service is offered. EWTN (Eternal Word Television Network – Channel 30 for cable customers; Channel 261 for Dish customers) broadcasts Mass daily.

The Scripture readings for Sunday, Solemnity, and Weekday Masses are available at uscgb.org/bible/readings. All are encouraged to spend time reflecting on these Scriptures, especially on Sundays.

During this time of crisis, let us pray for one another and for the health and safety of all in our community. For many, “fasting” from the Mass will be the most difficult fast they have undertaken, but we pray that it will help us be even more appreciative of this great gift of Christ's ongoing presence with us.

Finally, I present this prayer to you for your daily reflection and for sharing with your friends:

DIOCESE OF HONOLULU
PRAYER FOR THE COVID-19 CORONA VIRUS PANDEMIC
[by Bishop Larry Silva; March 12, 2020]

Dear God of all the living, you sent your Son Jesus to heal us from illness and sin. We turn to his healing power in this time of anxiety over the pandemic of this potentially deadly virus.

St. Damien and St. Marianne Cope dedicated their lives to service of those who had an infectious disease. St. Marianne Cope said, “I am not afraid of any disease,” because she was confident of your power to save. At the same time, she took prudent precautions of hygiene to assure that she and her Sisters would not be infected.

Let us learn from this example to put our trust in you to save us from the ravages of disease and to take prudent measures to prevent its spread. Guide us to know when to isolate ourselves from the possibility of infection, but never let anyone be left without the care and concern of others in the community.

As our Diocese of Honolulu has been dedicated to the Divine Mercy, we pray with confidence, “Jesus, I trust in you.”