



THE BASILICA OF THE SACRED HEART OF JESUS
BASILICA SAGRADO CORAZON DE JESUS

353 Peachtree Street, NE Atlanta, Georgia 30308-3217
Phone 404-522-6800 • Fax 404-524-5440
www.sacredheartatlanta.org

Saturday, March 14, 2020

Dear Basilica Friends in Christ,

As your Rector, I am writing to address the ongoing developments in the Covid-19, CoronaVirus pandemic. Bishop Joel Konzen has granted a special dispensation for not attending Mass during the March period of the health crisis. State authorities have been most insistent that ALL public gatherings, including faith-based, should be discontinued during this epidemic.

The dispensation is part of the authority of the local bishop and is consistent with Church teaching that any Catholic with a serious health condition is not obligated to attend Mass (and should not, lest they bring an illness into the congregation or jeopardize their own welfare).

Parishioners have inquired about the application of this dispensation to the general healthy population. Because of the highly contagious nature of the virus and the length of time for incubation before demonstrating serious symptoms and the impact of the virus on elderly church members and those with impaired immune systems, I judge that a complete cancellation of all public services is the most appropriate and pastoral course of action.

Health authorities have stressed that we maintain above average forms of hygiene and avoid all public gatherings. You have probably seen the cancellation of numerous sport and social events. May I also encourage four further courses of action?

1. Be mindful of large gathering places (including supermarkets) where people struggle for supplies often beyond what is truly necessary for ordinary living. Remember to be charitable and reasonable in your behavior and purchases.
2. Although the obligation of Mass attendance for the month of March has been dispensed, Catholics should still maintain their weekly and daily

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prayer. Online web sites like SACREDHEARTATLANTA.ORG (and our cellular apps), the Bishop's Conference USCCB.ORG and our own Archdiocesan site ARCHATL.COM have resources available for reflection and prayer. Numerous churches have live streaming Masses that you can view daily from the safety of your home.

3. Continue to monitor the welfare of extended family and parishioners that you know have greater needs or risks. Phone conversations with at-risk members is highly recommended.
4. Remember that although you may not be attending Mass, the bills still have to be paid and we need your continued financial and prayer support. Electronic scheduled giving is highly encouraged (SACREDHEARTATLANTA.ORG).

Historically, there have been many disruptions (war, weather and safety) with which Catholics have had to contend, causing the disruption of our favored normalcy of practice. With patience and time, this current crisis will pass. We will continue to monitor the events and communication from Church and civil authorities and will keep you informed.

May Mary, our Blessed Mother, and Her beloved Son watch over our Sacred Heart community and protect us all.

Sincerely in Christ,

Monsignor Edward Thein
Rector