

MEMORANDUM

To: All Priests; All Parishes
From: Father Robert Hughes, V.G.
Date: March 21, 2020
RE: **Covid-19 Update and Governor Murphy's Executive Order 108**

This morning, Governor Philip Murphy signed an executive order which places further restrictions on residents of New Jersey. These restrictions have further impact on the operation of our parishes in the Diocese of Camden.

Reminder about Gatherings – through social media, it is clear that some pastors are not adhering to the ban on gathering the faithful at their churches. Pastors are reminded that it is not within their discretion to invite parishioners to join them for live-streamed prayers, processions, Stations of the Cross, or Masses. Given Governor Murphy's executive order – **only the resident clergy and one technician may be present for any live-streamed event or parish celebration of Mass or other service.**

Diocesan Operations – the Diocesan Offices will be completely shut down as of 12 Noon on Monday, March 23, 2020. They will be open only for a period of three-hours on Monday so that employees may obtain critical materials needed for working at home.

Parish and School Operations – all parish and school offices are to be closed and parishioners/parents are to be informed that the office is closed. Those things that can be handled by phone or email may be handled by the resident clergy or by parish employees working from home. Phone services can be forwarded to a secretary's personal phone number if the pastor deems this necessary or appropriate.

Funerals, Weddings and Baptisms – all funerals, weddings, baptisms and other gatherings are now prohibited by the Governor's executive order.

Funerals - while a public memorial can be scheduled for a later date, the burial of the dead may need to occur before that date – our cemeteries will be open, but pastors and funeral directors **must limit those in attendance at a burial to 10 persons including the priest or deacon.** The pastor/priest should celebrate a private Mass **without a congregation** on the day of burial for the deceased and inform the family that he has or will do so.

Weddings – all weddings are to be postponed. Since reception halls are prevented from serving their clientele, most couples will choose to postpone their wedding. As all municipal buildings are likewise closed, marriage licenses will be difficult to obtain. If you have questions about a specific wedding, please contact me at 609.828.2502.

If a dispensation or permission has been received for a wedding that needs to be postponed, the dispensation or permission will remain in force. If you would like the letter re-issued with the new date, please return it to the Bishop's Office with that request. If you retain the dispensation or permission, please attach a letter on parish stationery explaining that the wedding date was changed due to the Covid-19 pandemic.

Baptisms – all baptisms are to be postponed except in the case of emergency. **A reminder ALL HOLY WATER IS TO BE REMOVED FROM THE CHURCH.**

Adoration of the Blessed Sacrament – the Governor’s executive order extends to 24 hours daily the times when New Jersey residents are to be “off the roads” unless they are conducting essential business (i.e. grocery shopping; banking; or obtaining prescriptions) or traveling to work at essential businesses. Please be mindful of this order. Adoration, the recitation of the Rosary or other devotions may be conducted online if possible or parishioners are encouraged to pray at home. Please **do not encourage your parishioners to visit the church or parish chapel.**

Palm Sunday, Holy Week, Triduum and Easter – instructions for the celebration of Palm Sunday, Holy Week, the Sacred Triduum and Easter Sunday will be issued by Decree of the Bishop on Monday, March 23, 2020.

Parish Operations and Finances – guidelines about parish operations and parish finances will be issued on Monday, March 23, 2020.

Planning – while none of us knows how long these restrictions will be in place, it is very likely that they will be in effect through the month of April. You may want to begin preparations for postponing First Holy Communion and other events that are scheduled for April and at least the first half of May. Hopefully those plans will not be needed – but all indications at this point are that they will be.

If you have any questions or concerns, please do not hesitate to contact me. Your question may well be the question of another pastor as well. I apologize for the plethora of memoranda but this ever-changing situation requires clarification and direction.

Again, Bishop is most grateful for your leadership and for the creativity that many of you are expressing in finding new ways to reach out to you parishioners.

<p>Charities and nonprofits are on the frontline responding to our neighbors and communities in need during the COVID-19 pandemic, but risk catastrophic damage from evaporating revenue, new and rising demands for assistance, and major disruptions in charitable giving. Please provide the link below to you parishioners so that they may tell Congress to act now and provide emergency aid to nonprofit organizations by expanding charitable giving and providing organizations with grants, loans, and tax credits.</p>	
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Click the link below to log in and send your message:
https://www.voterve.net/BroadcastLinks/6Z0LX7RIHyeV1XVb4dS2_g