

Dear Parishioners -

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.

In making this announcement 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!”

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.

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.

Here at St David's we too will continue to practice private public worship with the church remaining open daily from 9 AM to 4 PM. We will be cancelling the Holy Hour scheduled for this Wednesday night at 7:00 PM and adoration is also cancelled with the chapel closed. The Rectory will be closed starting Wednesday, March 18th, but you can call 215-657-0252 if you have any spiritual needs.

There are alternatives for exercising your faith by joining other Philadelphia Catholics for a nightly online Rosary for an end to the coronavirus at 8 PM. You can participate online, by phone or in spirit. Full details for joining in can be found at <http://www.phillyevang.org/rosary/> .

Every Sunday, the Archdiocese will feature a live streaming broadcast of the 11:00 a.m. Mass from the Cathedral 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.

More information will be published as it becomes available, both via email and at the St David Parish Website at <http://stdavidparish.org/> .

Please keep our nation in your prayers and we will keep you in ours. Pope Francis has asked the Virgin Mary to watch over the world in this current moment of crisis with this prayer:

O Mary, you shine continuously on our journey as a sign of salvation and hope.

We entrust ourselves to you, Health of the Sick.

*At the foot of the Cross you participated in Jesus' pain,
with steadfast faith.*

You, Salvation of the Roman People, know what we need.

*We are certain that you will provide, so that,
as you did at Cana of Galilee,
joy and feasting might return after this moment of trial.*

*Help us, Mother of Divine Love,
to conform ourselves to the Father's will
and to do what Jesus tells us:*

*He who took our sufferings upon Himself, and bore our sorrows to bring us,
through the Cross, to the joy of the Resurrection. Amen.*

We seek refuge under your protection, O Holy Mother of God.

*Do not despise our pleas – we who are put to the test – and deliver us from every danger,
O glorious and blessed Virgin.*

Yours in Christ,

Father Windle