



DIOCESE OF
METUCHEN

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Masses still to be celebrated, obligation suspended in Diocese of Metuchen

PISCATAWAY – Facing the rapidly evolving coronavirus pandemic, the Most Rev. James F. Checchio, Bishop of Metuchen, announced today that while Masses in the Diocese of Metuchen will continue to be celebrated, the faithful are not obligated to attend until the weekend of April 4 – 5, when the situation will be re-evaluated as circumstances unfold.

Catholic schools in the Diocese of Metuchen are regularly monitoring the progression of the spread of the coronavirus and the circumstances for each school will continue to be re-evaluated on a case-by-case basis, following the practice of their local school districts. All individuals are encouraged to follow the guidance of their local public health officials and civil authorities.

“Regardless if the Catholic faithful of our diocese choose to attend Mass, this is an unprecedented time in our nation and in our world, a time for much needed hope, and above all prayer,” said Bishop Checchio. “If anything, this is a time for more prayer, not less,” he added.

For Catholics, who are called to build up the Kingdom of God through the Church – both physical and universal – the impacts of the coronavirus are pushing many of them into uncharted territory.

“When we attend Mass, we are nourished by the body and blood of Jesus Christ through the Eucharist,” said Bishop Checchio. “So, for those who prayerfully discern not to be present for the liturgy, it is important that they make a spiritual communion in some other way, such as while watching a livestream of the Mass on television, or at least to pray the rosary or the Liturgy of the Hours, one of the ancient traditions of the Church. Likewise, attending a regularly scheduled weekday Mass may provide a good alternative for those seeking to receive our Lord in the Eucharist, as those Masses usually have a lower number of people in attendance.”

For those who choose not to attend Mass in person, a live broadcast of the Mass can be viewed on the Cathedral of St. Francis of Assisi’s website, stfranciscathedral.org, or on several television channels. In addition, resources for prayer can be found on the Diocese of Metuchen’s website, diometuchen.org/coronavirus.

“I ask all of our faithful, but especially those who are elderly, susceptible to illness, or responsible for the care of others, to use prudence when making the decision to attend Mass,” said Bishop Checchio. “While these circumstances may seem disheartening to many, I encourage our people to use this as a time of opportunity and a time of witness, to show their grandchildren and children the

importance of faith and that it is not bound between the walls in our churches, but is to be lived every day and everywhere.”

With Mass attendance expected to be lighter than normal and churches expected to be less populated, those who do choose to attend Mass are encouraged to spread out, following the recommendation of the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) to avoid close contact and remain at least six feet apart. As has been continually mentioned, everyone is urged to practice good hygiene by washing their hands regularly.

“Prayer is so needed in these times, so I ask that you use even the time that you wash your hands to pray, for the health, safety and well-being of your neighbors and people throughout the world,” said Bishop Checchio. “The praying of just one Hail Mary as you wash your hands, especially under her title of Our Lady of Guadalupe through her Son, to whom our diocese was recently consecrated, can be a powerful sign of communion with our brothers and sisters in Christ who are suffering from this terrible virus.”

A prayer has been adapted for the people of the Diocese of Metuchen from a prayer given to the people of Rome by Pope Francis.

“Since we cannot face this alone, we are entrusting this whole situation to our Blessed Mother, and encourage our faithful to join us in praying this prayer,” said Bishop Checchio.

Our Lady of Guadalupe, mother of God
and of the people of Metuchen you always shine on our path
as a sign of salvation and hope.
We rely on you, Health of the Sick,
you who, at the cross, united with Jesus’ pain,
keeping steadfast your faith.
You, Salvation of God’s people,
you know what we need
and we are sure that you will provide for us,
as at Cana of Galilee,
after the adversity of these days,
may joy and celebration return.
Help us, Mother of Divine Love,
to conform to the will of the Father
and to do what we are told by Jesus,
who has taken our suffering upon Himself
and has burdened Himself with our sorrows
to lead us through the cross, to the joy of resurrection. Amen.
Under your protection, Holy Mother of God,
Our Lady of Guadalupe, we seek refuge,
hear our prayer and intercede for us to the Father
so that we may be free from every danger,
Our Lady of Guadalupe, pray for us.

For the latest up-to-date information and resources, please visit diometuchen.org/coronavirus.

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