

Rejoice in the Lord

**By Cardinal Joseph W. Tobin, C.Ss.R.
Archbishop of Newark**

We should not distance ourselves from solidarity with each other



Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

For me, the decision to suspend all public celebrations of the Mass, schools and other gatherings in the Archdiocese of Newark due to the coronavirus was a painful one. As you're aware, Catholics have been dispensed from their Sunday obligation, and all public forms of worship are suspended, including previously scheduled confirmations, first communions and penitential services. Baptisms, funerals, burials and previously scheduled weddings must be postponed until further notice. All churches and adoration chapels must be closed and locked until further notice. Private prayer in any parish building must be

discontinued until further notice.

We suspended on-site operations in our Catholic elementary and high schools, shifting to online teaching. So far, the reports from parents and staff have been positive. We are committed to paying teacher salaries and not eliminating any jobs during this temporary shutdown.

As I said in a recent news interview, not being able to celebrate Mass with our people is a deeply personal loss. That the suspension comes during Lent, one of the most solemn seasons on the liturgical calendar, which has made it an even harder decision. But I want to assure you that this suspension of essential liturgical and ministry functions will not last one hour longer than necessary.

As pastors, we find the Lord in his people. To be unable to see them, to recognize them, and talk to them after Mass is very painful. We need to be especially concerned about those who, during a period of intense anxiety, feel lonely and abandoned, and who really count on public worship for their own support. We also should be concerned about how the spiritual lives of our people will be impacted by this drastic change. The Eucharist and the celebration of the Mass are so central to our Church that its absence is really felt deeply by us. "Social distancing" is necessary for the common good, but we need to counter this with a dramatic increase in what Pope Francis calls "spiritual closeness."

Many people are using all available forms of social media to reach out and comfort people to assure them that they are not alone. Some clergy already have put their health at risk by caring for people who are sick and now are in quarantine. People facing the uncertainty of a global health crisis should not live in fear, but must recognize our inter-connectedness and the desire to care for the well-being of each other.

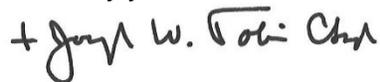
As an Archdiocese, we are committed to helping our people in whatever ways we can including by live-streaming Masses and other prayers and devotions. To the extent that we can, we want to make sure that everyone has the opportunity to grow in faith and receive the consolation of the Word of God and the Church's prayer. Finally, if you follow me on Twitter (@CardinalJWTObin), you know that on a daily basis I have been asking Mary, Mother of the Church, to help us seek the healing power of her Son and help one another—especially those who are most vulnerable—in this time of crisis.

Reflecting on this unprecedented situation, I have a firm conviction that we will come out of this better than we were going into it. This crisis helps focus our minds on what is really important. It helps us distinguish between wants and needs. We may not need as much as we think we do. Above all, we should not distance ourselves from solidarity with each other. We are not here simply to preserve our comfort or even our lives. Speaking from a Christian standpoint, we find the greatest happiness from laying down our lives and our desire for the sake of others, for the sake of our brothers and sisters.

There is amazing solidarity that our people are showing in the face of this crisis. Perhaps some of the former polarization in our country and state communities may give way to a greater sense of connectedness, and a greater desire to help each other walk the journey. I pray it will be so.

You are in my prayers. Please pray for me as well.

Sincerely yours in Christ the Redeemer,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Joseph W. Tobin" with a cross symbol to the left of the name.

Cardinal Joseph W. Tobin, C.Ss.R.

Archbishop of Newark

Coronavirus (COVID-19) Update from the Archdiocese of Newark

The Archdiocese of Newark's Coronavirus Task Force continues to monitor the ongoing pandemic situation and to aggregate guiding information from federal, state and local officials. Based on the latest information shared publicly, the following are the new directives for the Archdiocese of Newark and a reminder of prior directives still in effect.

NEW DIRECTIVES effective March 25, 2020:

- Wakes and funerals must be postponed until further notice. There are no exceptions to this, regardless of the size of the group. Burials may take place with only the priest. *Burials may take place with only one funeral director, one witness and one priest being permitted into the cemetery with the deceased. Essential staff of Catholic Cemeteries will accept the deceased and perform the interments. Other than this, all Catholic Cemeteries and Mausoleums of the Archdiocese of Newark remain closed.*
- All baptisms must be postponed until further notice with the exception of an extreme emergency.
- All weddings are postponed until further notice.
- The Sacrament of Reconciliation is suspended until further notice with the exception of an extreme emergency.
- All churches and adoration chapels must be closed and locked until further notice. Private prayer in any parish building must be discontinued until further notice.
- Parish offices must be closed until further notice. Employees who provide essential services should be limited and on staggered schedules.
- Pastors should see that the Blessed Sacrament is renewed in tabernacles regularly from celebrations of private Masses.

The following directives REMAIN IN FORCE since March 18, 2020:

- All public celebrations of daily and Sunday Mass suspended until further notice.
- All public celebrations of the Sacraments and other public forms of worship suspended until further notice. This includes, but is not limited to, previously scheduled Confirmations, celebrations of First Communion, penitential services, Communion services, and Liturgies of the Word.

- Anointing of the Sick: A priest may use a cotton-tipped swab or cotton ball as an instrument to anoint the sick person.
- Holy Water should be removed from all fonts.
- Celebrations of Mass should continue via live-streaming. If you have not done so already, you are urged to enroll your parish in the archdiocesan Parish Support Initiative that provides one online platform for the faithful to support the critical needs of their parish communities and other parishes in need. Contributions also are gratefully accepted through usual channels including mailed envelopes, other online giving, Annual Appeal, etc.
- The Archdiocesan Center remains closed with limited and staggering of hours.
- Catholic Schools remain closed as directed by the State of New Jersey.
- All Archdiocese of Newark Catechetical education and events sponsored by the Catholic Youth Organization (CYO) are suspended.

Anyone who has had direct exposure or potential exposure to COVID-19 is advised to carefully follow the guidance from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) regarding isolation and quarantine protocols.

Archdiocesan employees will continue to work remotely, and should consult their supervisors for further guidance and to determine work assignments.

We encourage you to continue to visit www.covid19.nj.gov for accurate and updated information available to the residents of New Jersey. Also, please monitor our website at www.rcan.org/covid-19 and follow the Archdiocese of Newark's social media channels [@NwkArchdiocese](https://twitter.com/NwkArchdiocese) for archdiocesan related announcements.

We continue to keep all affected individuals, families, first responders, and especially those on the front lines in our prayers throughout the coming days.

Staying connected in a time of 'social distancing'

By Sister Constance Veit, LSP

Several years ago, a summer heat wave of historic proportions settled over Europe, leading to the death of over 14,000 people in France alone. Many of the victims were elderly citizens who were left behind in major cities as their families and neighbors enjoyed their summer holidays far from the country's urban areas.

The memory of this tragedy has been very present to me as we hunker down, close our doors and try our best to isolate our elderly residents from the coronavirus for as long as it takes to protect them from danger.

I am confident that our residents will receive the best care possible no matter how long this emergency lasts, but I worry about the thousands of seniors who live alone out in the community. Knowing what happened in France, I realize the elderly in our country could be inadvertently abandoned as quarantines are extended and our attention doubles down on self-preservation. Let us not allow what happened in France to happen to our seniors!

Even as we practice prudent social distancing, we need to find ways to stay connected to the seniors in our families, parishes and neighborhoods. There are many ways we can reach out to them, even without having direct, face-to-face contact. Here are a few suggestions.

- Many seniors are not skilled at social media, but they do use the telephone! Call at least once a day to make sure the elders in your life are well and have what they need. Just knowing someone cares about them will help sustain their spirits.
- Make sure the seniors in your life have the food and medications they need. This may mean going grocery shopping for them, or helping them to order necessary items for home delivery. If you need to avoid direct contact, you could drop purchases off on their doorstep. You might even drop off some home-cooked meals, or invite your senior friends to make you something if cooking is not your forte!
- If the seniors you know are interested in using social media to stay in contact with family and friends, offer to help them set it up.
- For seniors who own a pet, offer your services as a dog walker.
- Finally, don't forget the spiritual needs of your senior friends and loved ones!

As I write this, many churches have locked their doors and many bishops are exempting parishioners from Sunday Mass attendance. But for many seniors, spirituality is a prime source of strength and solace, especially during trying times.

Let the parish staff know about seniors who are homebound or hospitalized and who may need pastoral care. For those who are Catholic, ask if it is possible to bring them Holy Communion, or if a priest could visit them to give them the sacrament of the Anointing of the Sick.

Many people still think of this sacrament as “extreme unction,” assuming that it is reserved for those on the threshold of death. But there is no need to wait this long. The Catechism of the Catholic Church notes that the Anointing of the Sick “is not a sacrament for those only who are at the point of death. Hence, as soon as anyone of the faithful begins to be in danger of death from sickness or old age, the fitting time for him to receive this sacrament has certainly already arrived.”

We began Lent with the imposition of ashes and the reminder, “Dust thou art and unto dust thou shalt return,” a phrase borrowed from the Catholic funeral liturgy. None of us could have predicted

how quickly we would become so focused on the finiteness and fragility of human life – this is one of the spiritual lessons of the coronavirus.

During this difficult period, we are also learning lessons of patience, interdependence and human solidarity.

The elderly have learned these lessons through a lifetime of experience. Many of them lived through the Great Depression, World War II and the Korean conflict; the youngest retirees came of age during the war in Vietnam. Personal sacrifice and mutual assistance were lessons they learned growing up in tough times.

Our elderly residents are witnessing to these values in the midst of our current trials as we do everything we can to protect them from the coronavirus. Together with them, we are praying for a quick end to the pandemic and for all those who are laboring to fight it.

Sister Constance Veit is the director of communications for the Little Sisters of the Poor.

A Message from Pope Francis: Words of Challenge and Hope



The Father's tenderness

This is how God's shows His tenderness: God speaks to us especially during Lent.

Lent is the time to enter into ourselves and to remember the Father and return to our Daddy. 'But, Father, I'm ashamed to go back because, you know,

Father I've ... done so many things wrong'. What will the Lord say? 'Return. I will heal their defection. I will love them freely; for my wrath is turned away from them (Hosea 14:4). Return to your Father. The God of tenderness will heal us.

This Father will heal us of so many of life's wounds. Going back to God is going back to an embrace, the Father's embrace, It's not going to God. No, it's going back home.

My Prayer for You

I wish to make my own the prayer to Our Lady of Guadalupe offered by Archbishop José H. Gomez of Los Angeles, president of the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops, during this time of crisis:



*Holy Virgin of Guadalupe,
Queen of the Angels and Mother of the Americas.
We fly to you today as your beloved children.
We ask you to intercede for us with your Son,
as you did at the wedding in Cana.*

*Pray for us, loving Mother,
and gain for our nation and world,
and for all our families and loved ones,
the protection of your holy angels,
that we may be spared the worst of this illness.*

*For those already afflicted,
we ask you to obtain the grace of healing and deliverance.
Hear the cries of those who are vulnerable and fearful,
wipe away their tears and help them to trust.*

*In this time of trial and testing,
teach all of us in the Church to love one another and to be patient and kind.
Help us to bring the peace of Jesus to our land and to our hearts.*

*We come to you with confidence,
knowing that you truly are our compassionate mother,
health of the sick and cause of our joy.*

*Shelter us under the mantle of your protection,
keep us in the embrace of your arms,
help us always to know the love of your Son, Jesus. Amen. †*

Cardinal Joseph W. Tobin, C.Ss.R.

