

## ***Rejoice in the Lord***

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



Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

We are now experiencing a global crisis, a “pandemic” that has potentially serious public health consequences here in New Jersey, in the United States of America, and in every nation throughout the world.

To date, Coronavirus, officially known as Covid-19, has killed more than 4,300 people worldwide and reportedly infected over 119,600. China, where the outbreak was first reported in December, has been the hardest hit with over 80,700 confirmed cases and 3,158 deaths.

In Italy, which comes next with over 10,000 cases and 631 deaths, the government has ordered nationwide emergency measures, such as travel restrictions and a ban on public gatherings. Cases of the virus have been confirmed in all 20 Italian regions. In compliance with government orders to contain the spread of the virus, the Italian bishops have suspended all public celebration of Masses and liturgies until April 3.

Here in New Jersey, we have confirmed coronavirus cases for residents in eight of our state’s 21 counties. According to Department of Health Commissioner Judith Persichilli, as of Wednesday afternoon, March 11, an additional 37 cases are under investigation with 20 tests underway and 17 potential cases awaiting specimens for testing. Two new cases are considered “community-spread” which means the contact has not been traced to a known case of COVID-19. Unless it is contained, the virus will spread to a much larger group.

We all need to take this public health crisis seriously. After much prayer and reflection, in consultation with the Archdiocesan Coronavirus Response Task Force, comprised of clergy, religious, lay leaders, and medical professionals, which meets daily, I have announced the following:

- The faithful of the Archdiocese are dispensed from the obligation to attend Sunday Mass until further notice.

- After evaluating recommendations of state and health officials, public celebrations of Mass for Saturday evening, March 14, and Sunday, March 15, 2020, are being suspended.
- The celebration of daily Mass will continue. Churches will remain open and the faithful are encouraged to pray while maintaining a prudent distance from each other.

Our dedicated teams continue to actively monitor the unfolding pandemic and will continue to meet daily to assess changing circumstances in order to protect the faithful and support its parishes and schools. I am encouraging pastors to think about necessary activities and to postpone non-essential gatherings, keeping in mind the common good.

Here in the Archdiocese of Newark, we are committed to working in cooperation with civil authorities to protect all those entrusted to our care, most especially those who are most vulnerable, by creating safe environments for worship, for education and faith formation and for all the pastoral ministries and charitable services provided by the Catholic Church in Bergen, Hudson, Essex and Union counties.


Guidelines for dealing with this crisis (see below) have now been sent to parishes, schools and Catholic organizations. These are also available on our website.

According to Cardinal Peter Turkson, the Prefect of the Vatican Dicastery for Promoting Human Integral Development, “This is the time to promote international solidarity in sharing tools and resources.” The Cardinal is assuring the world community of the Holy See’s continuing support for healthcare professionals and facilities in various parts of the world, especially in very remote areas in great difficulty, trusting in the active solidarity of all.

The Church in northern New Jersey also stands with our brothers and sisters everywhere in fervent prayer, fraternal support and active assistance to those who need our help. We join with Pope Francis in promising to walk closely with all who are suffering—here at home and beyond—and with all who are providing them with much-needed care and assistance.

During this holy season of Lent, we’re called to sacrifice our own desires for the needs of others. The traditional Lenten practices—prayer, self-denial, sharing our gifts with others—could not be more timely during this crisis. I strongly support all those in our Church and our community who are working so hard to contain the spread of this virus and keep us healthy. Please join me in asking the Blessed Virgin Mary, Our Lady of Perpetual Help, to guide us by her prayers as we respond with courage and self-sacrifice to this challenging moment in the lives of our sisters and brothers here in New Jersey and throughout the world community.

Sincerely yours in Christ the Redeemer,



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

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## **Cardinal Joseph W. Tobin, C.Ss.R., Suspends Weekend Masses and Week of Catholic Schools in Proactive Response to Coronavirus (COVID-19)**

**March 12, 2020**

Cardinal Joseph W. Tobin, C.Ss.R., Archbishop of Newark, announced today that he has dispensed the faithful of the Archdiocese from the obligation to attend Sunday Mass until further notice. Additionally, he has suspended the public celebration of Mass for Saturday evening, March 14, and Sunday, March 15, 2020, after evaluating recommendations of state and health officials. This decision will be reviewed daily, and any new determination will be announced next week.

The celebration of daily Mass will continue. Churches of the Archdiocese will remain open and the faithful are encouraged to pray while maintaining a prudent distance from each other.

This decision comes after careful consideration by the Archdiocesan Coronavirus Response Task Force, comprised of clergy, religious, lay leaders, and medical professionals, which meets daily. The Task Force will continue to meet daily and monitor the situation, provide Cardinal Tobin with counsel, and partner with state and local officials to maintain safe and healthy environments. Cardinal Tobin and the Task Force will provide updates in the coming days.

Cardinal Tobin also has advised that scheduled sacramental celebrations such as weddings, baptisms, or funerals will be permitted, but attendance should be limited to immediate family members only. Further, the sacraments of the Anointing of the Sick and Reconciliation will remain available, as needed, by the faithful.

As part of the Archdiocese of Newark's proactive efforts, Catholic schools in the Archdiocese will be closed next week, Monday, March 16, 2020, through Friday, March 20, 2020. This decision was made out of an abundance of caution with the health and safety of students, staff, and families at the center of the decision. The situation will be re-assessed by the Task Force to determine if an extension is needed.

Religious education activities also are suspended throughout the Archdiocese for this weekend, March 14-15, 2020, and for the week of March 16-20, 2020.

“Our dedicated teams continue to actively monitor the unfolding pandemic and will continue to meet daily to assess changing circumstances in order to protect the faithful and support its parishes and schools,” said Cardinal Tobin. “We encourage pastors to think about necessary activities and to postpone non-essential gatherings, keeping in mind the common good.”

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## **Talking to Children About COVID-19 (Coronavirus): A Parent Resource**

**March 12, 2020**

A new type of coronavirus, abbreviated COVID-19, is causing an outbreak of respiratory (lung) disease. It was first detected in China and has now been detected internationally. While the immediate health risk in the United States is low, it is important to plan for any possible outbreaks if the risk level increases in the future.

Concern over this new virus can make children and families anxious. While we don't know where and to what extent the disease may spread here in the United States, we do know that it is contagious, that the severity of illness can vary from individual to individual, and that there are steps we can take to prevent the spread of infection. Acknowledging some level of concern, without panicking, is appropriate and can result in taking actions that reduce the risk of illness. Helping children cope with anxiety requires providing accurate prevention information and facts without causing undue alarm.

It is very important to remember that children look to adults for guidance on how to react to stressful events. If parents seem overly worried, children's anxiety may rise. Parents should reassure children that health and school officials are working hard to ensure that people throughout the country stay healthy. However, children also need factual, age appropriate information about the potential seriousness of disease risk and concrete instruction about how to avoid infections and spread of disease. Teaching children positive preventive measures, talking with them about their fears, and giving them a sense of some control over their risk of infection can help reduce anxiety.

To view the English version of the Parent Resource PDF, click [here](#).

To view the Spanish version, click [here](#).

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## **Archdiocese of Newark Issues Guidance to Priests, Religious, and Parishioners regarding the Coronavirus (COVID-19)**

The Archdiocese of Newark continues to monitor the questions that are arising about the potential spread of the coronavirus (COVID-19) in the United States. The General Instruction of the Roman Missal (GIRM) states that the Diocesan Bishop "must promote, regulate, and be vigilant over the liturgical life of his diocese." In light of the coronavirus, the uncertainty of how widespread and impactful it is and/or could be and as a precaution, Cardinal Tobin has directed the following:

- Priests, deacons, and extraordinary ministers of Holy Communion are urged to practice good hygiene, washing their hands before Mass begins and/or using an alcohol-based hand sanitizer solution before and after distributing Holy Communion—as is practiced in so many of our parishes and institutions already.

- The Archdiocese has always advised the faithful that sickness is a valid reason not to attend Mass or other Church gatherings. As such, any individual who is sick or has flu-like symptoms is urged to stay home. The Holy Sacrifice of the Mass is broadcast on several television channels and the sick can make a “spiritual communion” until they return to good health.
- The sign of peace should be exchanged without physical contact.
- Distribution of the Precious Blood of Christ from the chalice to parishioners is to be suspended. Furthermore, no member of the faithful is obliged to receive the Body of Christ on the tongue.

The general message from the Centers for Disease Control (CDC) and the National Institutes of Health (NIH) is that all should be prepared, but not panicked. The Archdiocese will continue to monitor advisories from Catholic and other organizations regarding precautions on the coronavirus and share any appropriate information with the faithful and the parishes. The information below is available at [www.rcan.org/covid19](http://www.rcan.org/covid19):

#### **Federal Government Resources**

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC)  
National Institutes of Health (NIH)

#### **State Government Resources**

New Jersey Department of Health  
Bergen County Health Services  
Essex County Department of Health and Rehabilitation  
Hudson County Department of Health & Human Services  
Union County COVID-19 Web Page

#### **Archdiocesan Resources**

Cardinal Joseph W. Tobin, C.Ss.R., Suspends Weekend Masses and Week of Catholic Schools in Proactive Response to Coronavirus (COVID-19) (March 12)  
Message from the USCCB  
Letter to Parents and Guardians from Barbara Dolan, Acting Superintendent of Schools  
Interim Guidance for Businesses and Employers to Plan and Respond to Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19)  
Practical Information on Crisis Planning: A Guide for Schools and Communities  
Parish Catechetical Program Crisis Management Plan  
Talking to Children About COVID-19 (Coronavirus) A Parent Resource (English) | (Spanish)  
Safety and Crisis Management Planning (PCLs)  
Letter to PCLs (English) | (Spanish)

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## A Message from Pope Francis: Words of Challenge and Hope



We ask the Lord today for the grace of not falling into indifference, the grace that all the information we have about human suffering might penetrate our hearts and move us to do something for others.

I am close in prayer to people who are suffering because of the current coronavirus epidemic as well as to all those who are taking care of them.

Right now, I would like to speak directly to all those ill with the coronavirus, who are suffering from this sickness, and to the many people suffering uncertainty related to their own illnesses. I offer my heartfelt thanks to hospital personnel, doctors, nurses, and volunteers who in this difficult moment are close to people who are suffering.

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### My Prayer for You

I would like to make my own Pope Francis's prayer to Our Lady, Health of the Sick, which uses the words of an ancient prayer, *Sub tuum praesidium*, actually the oldest hymn to Mary, the Mother of God, to implore her protection during the Covid-19 coronavirus epidemic:

*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 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. Amen”*

Holy Mary, we entrust to your maternal care the health and safety of all our brothers and sisters here in the Archdiocese of Newark and throughout the world. Help us to trust in the healing power of your Son and to stay close to one another spiritually even as we are required to maintain a safe distance physically. †

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

