

# Cardinal Tobin Suspends all Public Celebrations of Mass Indefinitely due to Coronavirus Pandemic: Churches Remain Open for Private Prayer, Funerals, Baptisms, and Weddings Limited to 10 Family Members

UPDATED MARCH 18, 2020

Cardinal Joseph W. Tobin, C.Ss.R, Archbishop of Newark, announced that all public celebrations of daily and Sunday Mass will be suspended until further notice, effective today, Wednesday, March 18, 2020. This difficult decision is an extension of the Archdiocese's recent announcement, in which Cardinal Tobin dispensed the faithful of the Archdiocese from the obligation to attend Sunday Mass until further notice.

"This decision comes after exhaustive discussion and with an especially heavy heart," said Cardinal Tobin. "It is critical that all comply with this directive to protect the health of all throughout the archdiocese and beyond. Please be assured of my continued prayers for you and for the communities we serve. During this challenging time in the life and mission of the Archdiocese of Newark, I ask for your cooperation and leadership as we mobilize the resources and support needed to care for all in our communities. Our Eucharistic fast continues, as we pray for its quick end."

This decision was made out of deep concern for the well-being of the faithful and wider community, especially those most at risk of serious illness or death, and in cooperation with statewide mandates. The Archdiocesan Coronavirus Task Force carefully assesses the situation each day and is comprised of clergy, religious, lay leaders, and medical professionals. The Task Force evaluates statements and direction from state and local official to determine the most appropriate course of action in maintaining safe and healthy environments.

Under Cardinal Tobin's directive, all public celebrations of the Sacraments and other public forms of worship are also 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.

The following exceptions are permitted:

- Baptisms, funerals, burial services, and previously scheduled weddings are permitted; however, attendance must be limited to a maximum of 10 participants, including the celebrant. The celebrant should consider carefully with the next of kin or wedding couple who will attend. Celebrants also should remind families that the same limitations are being applied across all relevant Archdiocesan institutions, including Catholic cemeteries.
- The Anointing of the Sick and Reconciliation will remain available, as needed. The celebrant should take every prudent precaution where indicated, such as use of gowns, masks and gloves.

- A priest may use a cotton-tipped swab or cotton ball as an instrument to anoint the sick person.

Parishes are encouraged to expose the Blessed Sacrament and remain open for private prayer for the faithful. Clergy should continue to remind the faithful to maintain a prudent distance from one another. Other safety precautions include the removal of Holy Water from fonts.

While public Masses are suspended, celebrations of Mass will continue online. During this challenging time of suspended Masses and limited social interactions, parishes also are encouraged to livestream private Masses and provide resources via social media channels to help parishioners continue to experience spiritual union and to observe the Lord's Day.

Parishes also are advised to suspend all office activity for a period of at least two weeks. Pastors may consult local officials to determine the most appropriate course of action, and employees who provide essential services are permitted to carry out their duties according to the determination of the Pastor.

In addition, all Archdiocese of Newark Catechetical education and events sponsored by the Catholic Youth Organization (CYO) are suspended, and all Catholic Schools remain closed as directed by the State of New Jersey.

The Chancery also is closed to all employees beginning on Wednesday, March 18, 2020, for a two-week period. Essential staff will work remotely to provide seamless support to the communities we serve.

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.

For the most up-to-date information and latest Archdiocesan news, please continue to visit the Archdiocese of Newark's website and COVID-19 resource page at [RCAN.org/covid19](https://rcan.org/covid19) and our social media: @NwkArchdiocese.

**Please Note:**

Relevant Radio is offering daily Mass on the radio and streamed video live via the app and online at [www.relevantradio.com](http://www.relevantradio.com). The Rosary is 8 PM nightly and our Divine Mercy Chapel daily at 4 PM. Both the chapel and Rosary offer the chance for listeners to call and offer prayer intentions. Here is a direct link to the Mass feed/video: <https://relevantradio.com/faith/daily-mass-video/>