



Office of the Bishop

## DIOCESE OF SAINT JOHN

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March 17, 2020

To the Catholic faithful of the Diocese of Saint John,

Upon the recommendation of New Brunswick's health authorities aimed at limiting the spread of the COVID-19 virus, and in the best interest for the physical well-being of the faithful at this time, all weekend and weekday Masses and all scheduled liturgical and social gatherings throughout the diocese are suspended until further notice. As a diocese we are taking responsibility to do our part to help reduce the spread of illness among us, through social distancing.

I recommend, where possible, that our churches remain open at the usual times for the faithful to come for personal and private prayer. During this time of absence from the celebration and reception of the Eucharist, please consider making a spiritual communion, either at home or when visiting your parish church.

The decision to ask you, the faithful, to make such a difficult sacrifice is a decision that has been made through much prayer and consultation. As an act of charity for the most vulnerable among us, and for the general population, I appeal to you to continue to pray fervently during this time. As Christ's faithful, we are being called to continue to live as people of faith, hope and love. In charity, reach out to your neighbours and relatives in need, especially those who are isolated or afraid, either by phone or by dropping off some necessities.

I am asking the priests of the diocese to continue to celebrate Mass privately for your intentions and well-being. As parishes, we are committed to our continued support of you, the faithful. Please do not hesitate to contact your parish by phone or email. If you require a priest for the Sacrament of the Sick, Sacrament of Reconciliation, or Communion to be brought to the dying, arrangements can still be made, by contacting your parish office. Funerals could be postponed or celebrated with only the immediate family present.

We hope that all will receive these measures as a way to protect the health and well-being of all our people, which is the primary concern of everyone. I commend the people of our diocese, all the sick, and all those who are caring for them to the intercession of our Patroness, Our Lady of the Immaculate Conception.

May God bless us always, and give us the grace to remain calm and serene.

In His Mercy,

✠ Christian Riesbeck, CC  
Bishop of Saint John