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ROMAN CATHOLIC DIOCESE OF WHITEHORSE
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Prot.#: 240320b

March 24, 2020

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

RE: Coronavirus (COVID-19) Update

During this time of global uncertainty regarding the seriousness, duration and long-term effects of the Coronavirus health crisis, I would like to assure that I, along with all our priests and lay pastoral associates, are here to serve you and assist you with any spiritual needs you may have, while working within the parameters of local and federal government health guidelines.

In light of new and stricter restrictions being implemented by health authorities in both Yukon and British Columbia due to confirmed COVID-19 cases, I would like to communicate to you the Diocese of Whitehorse's response which will remain in effect until further notice:

- **All churches and rectories in the Diocese are now closed to the public.**
There will be no personal or organized prayer, meetings, Exposition of the Blessed Sacrament or other public events in our buildings.
- **All Sunday and weekday Masses, as well as Lay Communion Services, are cancelled.**
The obligation to attend Sunday Mass is lifted for all Faithful. Instead, I encourage you to participate in other ways including: Watching a televised/recorded Sunday Mass, saying the Prayer of Spiritual Communion, and reciting the Holy Rosary and other prayers.
- **The Sunday Mass from Sacred Heart Cathedral will be available for you to participate in every weekend.** You have the option of joining in the livestream of the Saturday evening Anticipatory Sunday Mass at 5:00pm PST from the *Roman Catholic Diocese of Whitehorse Facebook page*. Alternatively, you may follow the recorded version of that weekend's Mass.
- **No matter which Mass you watch, we encourage you to participate as fully as you can.** This can be done by reciting the prayers and responses, and kneeling, standing and sitting at the appropriate times.
- **All Parish Penitential celebrations are cancelled.**

- **All preparation classes are postponed.**
This includes classes for Baptism, First Holy Communion, First Reconciliation, Confirmation and Marriage. Couples may consult with their priest regarding individual marriage preparation classes.
- **Baptisms (infants) and Marriages are allowed.**
Only the immediate family will be allowed and provincial/territorial social-distancing requirements and maximum gathering limits must be followed. Communal celebrations are to be postponed until further notice and no receptions may follow.
- **All celebrations of First Eucharist, First Reconciliation, and Confirmation are postponed.**
They will be rescheduled in consultation with parents and guardians once the crisis has ended.
- **RCIA classes are suspended.**
Information will be sent out to catechumens by their pastor regarding reception into the Church.
- **Priests will continue to administer the Sacrament of Anointing of the Sick for those who are gravely ill.**
This will be done in accordance with precaution protocols of hospitals, care homes, and private homes.
- **Funerals are allowed to be celebrated in our churches.**
This includes a Funeral Mass and the Rite of Committal. It will be done in consultation with the immediate family and in accordance with health and social distancing requirements. The family may also want to consider holding a communal Funeral mass at a later date. There will be no vigils or wakes.
- **Plenary indulgences have been granted by the Holy Father through a Decree.**
Visit the Diocesan website for more information or call your pastor/lay pastoral minister.
- **The Chrism Mass, and all Holy Week and Easter Liturgies, will not be publicly celebrated.**
We will provide you with more information closer to the date about alternative celebrations and livestreaming of Holy Week Masses from the Cathedral.

Although we are all deeply saddened by this crisis and its impact on individuals, families and systems around the world, let us take this opportunity to unite in prayer with our global Christian community and deepen our relationship with Jesus our Savior who suffers along with us. Christ will never abandon us but is ever near to each one of us, especially in this difficult moment. Let's overcome fear by loving God in return for His Love for us, and share His Love with one another. I remain,

Yours in Christ,



Bishop Héctor Vila