



Office of the Bishop

New Update 2 – COVID19

17 March 2020

Dear Pastors, Parish Staff and Parishioners,

Greetings in the Lord! Out of an abundance of caution and concern for our clergy and all of our parishioners, and given the continued spread of the coronavirus and the uncertainty around it, I am issuing the following directives to be implemented immediately:

1. The closure of our parishes and parish offices for 2 weeks, to be reevaluated by March 31st. This means all weekend and weekday Masses are cancelled. As in my previous memo, I grant all the Catholic faithful a dispensation from their Sunday obligation to attend Mass until further notice. As the Eucharist is central to our lives as Catholics, this will come as a hardship, but let us offer this suffering up for those enduring the effects of the virus and the stop of its spread. Further directions with regard to Holy Week liturgies will be forthcoming.
2. All penitential celebrations are cancelled. Priests will remain available to hear confessions if absolutely necessary, but social distancing is to be observed and the use of the confessional is prohibited. Just as a reminder: the obligation to confess annually can be done at any time, not just at Easter.
3. All Lenten parish missions and retreats in the diocese are cancelled. Parishes may consider livestreaming or recording the presentation of the speaker for posting on the parish website, but no public gathering is to be held.
4. All celebrations of Baptism, First Eucharist, First Reconciliation and Confirmation are postponed until we are advised by the health authorities that the pandemic is over.
5. As per the recent email from the Director of Faith Formation, catechetical and sacramental classes for both children and adults are cancelled. Catechists will provide the necessary resources so that instruction can continue in the home.
6. Funerals may be celebrated in our churches, but participation needs to be limited to family members in compliance with current directives from the health authorities. No public receptions following the funeral liturgy are to take place.
7. The need to rely on our good God is more urgent than ever. For the next 9 days starting Sunday, March 22nd, please join me in praying the following novena to bring an end to the pandemic and healing for all those affected:

Novena During Sickness

Our Lady of Monte Berico, Novena – Intercessor and protector in moments of plague

O Most Holy Virgin, Mother of God and my Mother Mary, I thank you that you have deigned to appear on Monte Berico and I thank you for all the graces you grant here to those who turn to you. Nobody ever prayed to you in vain. I, too, resort to you and beg you by the Passion and Death of Jesus and by your pains: welcome me, o' merciful Mother, under your mantle, which is a maternal mantle; grant me the particular grace that I ask of You [protection and healing from the Coronavirus for all members of our Catholic schools and parishes in the Diocese of Nelson, and for all citizens of our province, country, and world] and protect me from all evil and especially from sin which is the greatest evil.

Oh make, oh Mary, my Mother, that I always enjoy your loving protection in life and even more in death and then come to see you in heaven and to thank and bless you forever. Amen.

Madonna of Monte Berico, pray for us.

*O sweet Virgin, pious mother of love,
Like this Ave rising from the heart.
Ave, ave, ave, Maria
Ave, ave, ave, Maria*

*O Virgin, shine as a star in the sky,
Motherly defend your faithful children.
Ave, ave, ave Maria
Ave, ave, ave, Maria*

Daily updates from our health authorities continue to be available at <http://www.bccdc.ca/>. Please check our website <https://www.nelsondiocese.org/> for ongoing information.

Thank you for your understanding and especially for your support as we weather this storm together.

Sincerely yours in Christ,



✘ Gregory J Bittman
Bishop of Nelson