




Office of the Bishop

DIOCESE OF LAKE CHARLES

P.O. Box 3223
Lake Charles, Louisiana 70602
(337) 439-7400

DATE: April 20, 2020

To: All Locations of the Diocese of Lake Charles

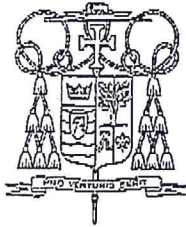
From: Bishop Provost & 

Re: Pastoral Letter

In view of the restrictions imposed on gatherings in the Diocese of Lake Charles, I am requesting that the enclosed Pastoral Letter be disseminated to our parishioners and the public via church parish bulletins, websites, magazines, newsletters, and social media, including Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, YouTube, Flocknote, and whatever other communication outlets the diocese and parishes utilize.

It is important that we inform the faithful of the Diocese of Lake Charles of the current status of public worship and our concern for their health and safety.

I appreciate very much your cooperation. Thank you.

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Office of the Bishop

April 20, 2020
Monday

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

Greetings in our risen Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ!

It has been four weeks since we suspended public religious services in the Diocese of Lake Charles, granting a dispensation from the obligation of attending Mass on the days required. We desperately miss the sacraments being celebrated openly and with our brothers and sisters in Christ. At the same time, the COVID-19 virus continues to menace our population. As of April 13, Louisiana was ranked third in the nation in the highest number of COVID-19 cases per capita. The ranking has improved since then but is still significant. While there has been great progress, we must remain vigilant. In reviewing the events of this last month, I wish to express my appreciation to two particular groups.

First, our priests have demonstrated great creativity in bringing the sacraments to the faithful, either remotely through live-streaming of Masses or in person by administering the Sacraments of Penance and the Anointing of the Sick, while at the same time respecting social distancing and limiting any group to ten or fewer persons. Many pastors have also promoted Eucharistic devotion, such as neighborhood Eucharistic processions and small group adoration.

Second, our medical professionals are doing a heroic work in caring for the sick and dying. I am so impressed with the diligence, devotion, and love demonstrated by doctors, nurses, and other health care professionals. They are truly an example to us all.

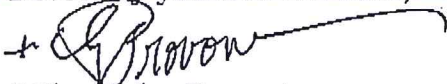
This pandemic has had detrimental effects on all of us. We think of the deceased. Father James Winiarski, a LaSalette priest and former Pastor of Our Lady of LaSalette in Sulphur, succumbed to the virus last week. Father Rommel Tolentino of the Cathedral lost his father, who lived in the Philippines, to the virus. Someone I know personally also passed away from the illness last week. May all whose deaths have been brought about by this virus, rest in peace! We also keep in mind those recovering. The Archbishop of New Orleans contracted the illness and is now convalescing. Our seminarians were quarantined along with three of our priests as a result of one positive test. Mercifully, they have shown no symptoms and are out of quarantine. There are parishioners, friends and personnel of our parishes who are now in the hospital, fighting for their lives or at home struggling to recover fully with God's help. May God with His loving care assist those afflicted with this dreadful disease.

This Tuesday I will meet with the Presbyteral Council, which advises me on all pertinent diocesan affairs. I have convened the Council to make recommendations on a preliminary plan to re-establish public worship. I have also solicited the assistance of a panel of physicians that will review any proposed plan. Our concern remains the health and safety of our congregants and the public.

We miss our parish celebrations of the Eucharist. We miss the Sacraments. They are living signs to us of our Lord's presence. They are the holiest gifts we possess. The clergy and I will do all in our power to return them publicly to you.

May our Lady Star of the Sea, our faithful intercessor, pray for us now in these difficult times. Asking God's blessings on you and your families for safety and health, I remain

Devotedly yours in our Lord,



*Glen John Provost
Bishop of Lake Charles