



STEVEN JOHN

By the grace of God and the Apostolic See

## DECREE

**Summary:** Suspension of public Masses in parishes through April 30, 2020; Sacraments of Initiation transferred to the Vigil of Pentecost – May 30, 2020; Celebrating priests delegated to confer Sacrament of Confirmation to catechumens, candidates and adult parishioners; Chrism Mass transferred to May 21, 2020; CSA kick-off moved to weekend of Pentecost – May 30-31, 2020; Exhortation for faithful to pursue faith formation and maintain Christian discipleship and stewardship.

Mindful of the coronavirus health emergency here in the United States and in the State of Michigan which has not abated since the issuance of the decree of March 13, 2020, but has increasingly affected areas of the Diocese of Gaylord; and mindful that the obligation of Catholics to participate in the celebration of Mass on Sundays and Holydays of obligation as a precept is a key responsibility of Catholics. The coronavirus seriously threatens the general population and especially seniors and those with underlying health conditions. The President of the United States is also urging citizens to heed the behavioral recommendation of the Center for Disease Control for the month of April to mitigate the spread of the virus. Further actions of the Governor of Michigan emphasized the need to stay at home in order to arrest the spread of the virus among the general population of the state.

Motivated by the continuing urgency of health officials and the need to keep the faithful of our parishes, schools and institutions safe, **I hereby extend the dispensation for not attending Mass previously granted** through April 6, 2020 **to midnight, Thursday, April 30, 2020.** The events of Holy Week – Holy Thursday, Good Friday, Easter Vigil, and Easter Sunday, the Octave of Easter and Divine Mercy Sunday – and all Sunday and weekday Masses for the duration of this decree are to be celebrated privately. Pastors and parish leaders have been provided with guides to the celebration of Holy Week in the absence of a public congregation, i.e., all Masses and events are celebrated privately with limited assistance. Wherever possible, Mass should be available to the public on social media platforms, announced in advance so that the faithful can participate from their homes.

At the same time, catechumens normally enter the Church through the celebration of the Sacraments of Initiation at the Easter Vigil. Now, the Sacraments of Initiation are to be celebrated at the Vigil of Pentecost, May 30, 2020. Candidates may complete their initiation at the same Mass or at another opportune moment. For these times, the celebrating priest is simultaneously delegated to administer the Sacrament of Confirmation to the catechumens and candidates as well as to any other adult Catholic in the parish who has not yet received the Sacrament of Confirmation, presuming an appropriate catechesis.

In addition, the celebration of the Chrism Mass, normally celebrated on Tuesday of Holy Week, is transferred for this year only to Thursday, May 21, 2020 at 11:00 a.m. at St Mary Cathedral. Further indications will be provided as the date nears. Priests are to utilize the oils they currently have until the Chrism Mass is celebrated. The Catholic Services Appeal kick-off weekend, normally set for the second Sunday after Easter, is now set for the Solemnity of Pentecost, May 30-31, 2020.

The faithful are also urged to find an alternative means to fulfill their spiritual obligations and to pursue their faith formation by 1) watching or listening to the broadcast of the Mass on television, radio, or social media streaming; 2) pray the Rosary and/or Divine Chaplet together as a family or individually; 3) read / reflect for 15 minutes on the Sunday readings; 4) make a visit to the parish church and pray before the Blessed Sacrament or during this Lent pray the Stations of the Cross; or 5) engage in some spiritual reading during this Lent; or 6) perform an act of charity for someone in need. The faithful are also reminded that parishes, schools and institutions rely on their financial support to sustain operations at this time of emergency. Those who are able are kindly urged to support generously their local parishes, schools and institutions with their financial stewardship contributions.

The celebration of Mass, and especially the Paschal Triduum, are dear to the hearts of Catholics. As we live this moment gathered at the foot of the cross on Good Friday, we also know that it was not the end of the story. Our hearts still burn as we hear the Word of God. Our Lord still accompanies us as we go about our daily lives. Our discipleship is not suspended but called into a more intentional action through new and dynamic ways. During this time of difficulty and uncertainty, our faithful discipleship will long for the day we can return together to live out our Christian life with greater fervor and devotion in love of God and our neighbor. During the Easter Season, we will see once again that our Lord appears in the most unlikely of places to remind us the next chapter of this story will be a victorious one!

The provisions of this decree supersede the previous decree of March 13, 2020. Because the current situation we are experiencing remains dynamic, the provisions in this decree may be modified, rescinded or expanded by subsequent decrees as needed to address any new circumstances that arise.

Given in the Pastoral Center in the Diocese of Gaylord on this the 3<sup>rd</sup> day of April, 2020.

*+ Steven J Raica*

Most Reverend Steven J Raica  
Bishop of Gaylord

*Kevin L Endres*

Deacon Kevin Endres  
Chancellor

