



DIOCESE OF COVINGTON

Office of the Bishop

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27 March 2020

My dear Friends,

Praised be Jesus Christ! During this time filled with such stress and anxiety I want you to know that I hold each of you in my heart and especially in my prayers. We are experiencing things most of us have never experienced before and it is a time of confusion, testing, and pain. Yet through it all, we have the Lord's promise that He will never leave us, never abandon us. (Jn 14:18) What peace and joy that gives us!

I take this opportunity to thank you for being so understanding and patient with the many difficult decisions I have had to make especially regarding the celebration of the Sacraments, and especially regarding the suspension of the public celebration of the Holy Mass. I know for so many of you this is such a sacrifice, such a cross to bear. In my own meditation these days I have reflected on how I have taken the celebration of the Sacraments for granted, never imagining that there would be a day when there would be such restrictions placed on us.

I also want to thank my brother priests and deacons who have continued to minister to you even amid these difficult times and restrictions. Their love for you is evident in the sacrifices they are also making at this time and I am proud of them and proud to be their Bishop. Please pray for them as they continue to serve you.

Perhaps you have heard the church bells in your area ringing at 3:00pm. On the Solemnity of the Annunciation, 25 March, I asked our priests to ring the church bells every day at 3:00pm, the Hour of Divine Mercy, for 5 minutes. I asked that this be done to demonstrate our solidarity during this time and to call us to prayer, wherever we may be, when we hear the bells ringing. When you hear the bells, I encourage you to stop for a moment and offer a prayer for an end to this scourge that has overtaken us.

As regards the annual **Chrism Mass**, I am pleased to tell you that I will celebrate the Chrism Mass with our Vicars and Deans on **Holy Thursday, 9 April at 10:00am** in our Cathedral Basilica. While we cannot celebrate this year with all our priests, I have asked each priest to watch the Chrism Mass, which will be live-streamed. I encourage each of you, to the extent possible, to join us in the same way. The Holy Oils will be distributed by the Deans in each of their Deaneries at a later time.

The **Mass of the Lord's Supper** will be celebrated in our Cathedral Basilica on the same day, **Holy Thursday, at 6:00pm**. It will be live-streamed. I have asked the priests to join with their brother priests in the various parishes in each Deanery to celebrate the Mass with them. All Holy Thursday services will be celebrated at the same time throughout the Diocese at **6:00pm**. Our Deans will coordinate this effort.

Good Friday services will be celebrated at our Cathedral Basilica at **3:00pm**. This will be live-streamed. At the same time, in various parishes, I have asked our priests to gather to celebrate the Good Friday Service.

The **Easter Vigil** will be celebrated and live-streamed at our Cathedral Basilica at **8:30pm**. At the same time, I again ask our priests to gather at designated Churches in their Deanery to observe the Easter Vigil.

While the Triduum services can be live-streamed the Holy See has directed that they cannot be recorded for later viewing.

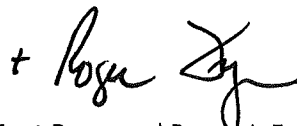
Easter Sunday Mass will be celebrated and live-streamed at our Cathedral Basilica at **10:00am**. Our priests will celebrate Easter Sunday Mass at their parishes according to the schedule they will determine.

Needless to say, this Holy Week and Easter will be unlike any most of us have celebrated in the past. Yet, we do what needs to be done to keep everyone safe and at the same time to provide some way for all our faithful to participate, albeit it virtually, in the Holy Week and Easter Sunday Services. I have no doubt that all of us would much rather be together celebrating this most holiest of weeks in our Churches. One day we will, but for now we avail ourselves of those means provided in these very difficult and stressful days.

Yet, we are hopeful and our faith makes us strong. The Lord is in our midst and He will not abandon us. We must keep this truth before our eyes and it will carry us through the dark into the Easter light!

Be assured, my beloved friends, of my daily prayers. Please, pray for me and for our Diocese.

Yours devotedly in the Lord,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Roger J. Foys", with a small cross symbol to the left of the first name.

Most Reverend Roger J. Foys, D.D.
Bishop of Covington