

Archbishop Gustavo updates decree regarding changes impacting Catholic parishes in the archdiocese in response to COVID-19

ISSUED: MARCH 20, 2020

My dear people, as I have already mentioned, the situation regarding COVID-19 is changing rapidly, in fact, almost by the hour!

Following a decision made March 19 by the governor and confirmed by the City of San Antonio, crowd size now has a limit of 10 people. Therefore, all parishes are asked to follow this guideline for daily Masses. If parishes are unable to limit the size of the congregation to that number, they are asked to cancel the public liturgy and celebrate the Mass without a congregation. I have requested to our pastors that, to the extent possible, they try to make the Mass available to parishioners via social media.

This size limit will greatly affect the celebrations of a Mass of Christian Burial and weddings. Pastors have been asked to meet with families or couples impacted by this new restriction, and help them understand the need to follow these guidelines in the interest of public health. For funerals, an option to consider would be to have a committal service in place of the Mass, and when the crisis situation is over, a Memorial Mass could be celebrated. Wedding couples may already be faced with a cancellation by their reception venue.

Baptisms may still occur, respecting the number of participants allowed by this latest decision.

The Easter Triduum should be celebrated in every parish. The congregation should be limited to the approved amount of 10. Again, as far as possible, the Triduum services should be live streamed on social media for the benefit of the faithful.

I will keep issuing these updates as needed, recognizing that this information can change rapidly. Please know that these difficult decisions are motivated by concern for our parish communities and recognizing the importance of social distancing in containing the spread of COVID-19.

Just today, March 20, we were informed that an employee at St. Luke Church in San Antonio has been diagnosed with COVID-19. Father Eric Ritter and the staff there have been very proactive in addressing this situation, and he is in communication with his parish community regarding this situation.

I, as your shepherd during this most difficult time, again ask you to think of what you can do for others. Pray also for the civic leaders, health professionals, volunteers, and all who are offering their valuable work for others at this time. The Lord is with us during these difficult moments.