



*Ven, Holy Spirit, Ven!*

## ***Archbishop Gustavo extends to the beginning of May decree regarding changes impacting parishes in the archdiocese in response to COVID-19***

ISSUED: MARCH 31, 2020

My dear people, I had stated that my previous decree would be reviewed on March 31, and that it remains in effect until revoked. I am hereby informing all concerned that the decree now remains in effect until at least April 30, 2020.

Please be assured that I am following the advice of the federal, state and local civic authorities -- as well as health officials -- in making this decree and guidelines. This decree is to be implemented throughout the 19 county area of the archdiocese. If in any county there are stricter regulations regarding the limit of the number of people gathered, then the stricter rules will apply there.

The precautions regarding social distancing (at least six feet between persons) and limits on crowd size (no more than 10 persons) remain in effect for all liturgies. Public celebration of Masses is suspended, and priests are strongly encouraged to livestream, or use other media, to reach out to the faithful. The limit of 10 persons is to be taken extremely seriously, and the number includes clergy and persons needed to livestream the liturgy.

Pastors are encouraged to remain in contact with parishioners, by phone or livestream messages. Members of parish organizations can be invited to call the elderly and those who live alone to check on their well-being, and to ask if they need assistance with shopping, etc.

- **Reconciliation/Confessions** – In the Archdiocese of San Antonio, General Absolution is not approved at this time. Priests can hear confessions in the church or by appointment, respecting confidentiality and the social distancing guidelines. For the sacrament of Reconciliation to be valid, the physical presence of the penitent before the confessor is essential, that is, without using any remote means of transmission.

- **Funerals** – Funerals may take place respecting the 10 persons limit gathered at one time. Funeral Masses are not permitted during the Triduum.

- **Infant Baptism** – These may take place in parishes at the discretion of the pastor so long as the 10 person limit is respected.

- **First Communion** -- It is to be postponed for children until they can be celebrated with proper solemnity when large gatherings are again permitted.

- **Confirmation** – The Confirmation schedule remains on hold until large gatherings are again permitted and the schedule revised.

During this time, churches may remain open for private prayer of the faithful. However, if it cannot be guaranteed that no more than 10 people will be present in the church at one time, the church should be closed.

Many parishes are streaming their Sunday and even daily liturgies for the benefit of the faithful, and this is to be commended. If at all possible, this practice should be continued. The Holy Week and Triduum liturgies celebrated at the Cathedral of San Fernando will be broadcast live on Catholic Television of San Antonio (CTSA) and all the archdiocesan social media channels. Below is the full schedule:

Sunday, April 5 -- Palm Sunday -- 8 a.m. (Spanish) 10 a.m. (English)

Tuesday, April 7 -- Chrism Mass -- 6:30 p.m.

Thursday April 9 -- Mass of the Lord's Supper -- 6:30 p.m.

Friday, April 10 -- Stations of the Cross -- Noon

Friday, April 10 -- *Las Siete Palabras* -- 1 p.m.

Friday, April 10 -- Liturgy of Good Friday -- 2 p.m.

Saturday, April 11 -- Easter Vigil -- 6:30 p.m. (Bilingual)

Sunday, April 12 -- Easter Sunday – 8 a.m. (Spanish) 10 a.m. (English)

All CTSA programming is available through the following options:

Spectrum: Channel 15

Roku: Catholic TV SA

Amazon Fire TV: Catholic TV SA

FaceBook: Catholic TV SA

YouTube: Catholic TV SA

YouTube: San Fernando Cathedral

Vimeo: ArchSA Communications

*Today's Catholic* is also livestreaming on their Facebook page: Today's Catholic Newspaper

We look forward to a time of renewed connections and concrete closeness, to a time of healing from the wounds of this COVID-19. May the grace of God be with all of you as He guides us in his ways of mercy and love. May our Lady of Guadalupe accompany us with her maternal love.