



Diocese of Birmingham in Alabama

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Office of the Bishop

Bringing the Holy Eucharist Closer to the People

Having consulted with Clergy, Consecrated Religious, and Medical Authorities and aware that all good Catholics look to the sustenance that only the Holy Eucharist can provide them in living faithfully their Christian lives, I now make the following statements regarding celebrations of the Mass and distribution of Holy Communion in the Diocese of Birmingham at this difficult time:

Respecting State and city government directives, the Holy Eucharist may be given to the Faithful outside the church building at specific times a pastor may designate, following safe-distancing guidelines and proper safety precautions, according to local government directives. A short preparation should precede the distribution of Holy Communion similar to the prayers used in bringing the Holy Eucharist to the sick. Those who are sick or experiencing any kind of symptoms of the coronavirus should not present themselves at this time, but may arrange for a private visit by the priest, where possible.

Outdoor Masses may be celebrated in accord with State and city regulations. Such may be more easily accomplished in parishes with large parking lots. At present in Alabama no groups of people may gather in an enclosed assembly in a number greater than ten persons. Opportunities for the sacrament of Reconciliation/Penance should be provided beforehand at designated outdoor locations.

In an area where there are currently higher numbers of persons affected by the coronavirus, these provisions should be disregarded; and people should remain in their homes. Watching televised or live-streamed Masses should be encouraged, as well as celebrating private devotions, especially the Rosary. Pope Francis has encouraged praying the Rosary during the month of May. Rosary meditations in a time of Pandemic are provided on the diocesan website and in the *One Voice* diocesan newspaper, which can assist us in praying daily the Rosary for an end to the coronavirus pandemic and for healing and peace for all affected by it spiritually, emotionally, and physically.

The suspension of the Obligation to attend Sunday and Holy Day Mass is still in effect.

These diocesan protocols go into effect immediately.

Let us pray that we may be able to gather again soon for Holy Mass in our churches.

How grateful the people of the diocese are to our clergy, many of whom have already heroically ministered to their communities and celebrated the sacraments as best they could, given the limitations caused by the rapid spread of the coronavirus in our State!

With a blessing on all Clergy, Consecrated Religious men and women, and Laity of the Diocese of Birmingham in Alabama, I am,

Gratefully yours in Christ,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "+ Robert J. Baker". The signature is written in a cursive style with a small cross at the beginning.

Most Reverend Robert J. Baker, S.T.D
Apostolic Administrator of the Diocese of Birmingham in Alabama
May 5, 2020