



## *Diocese of Rockford*

555 Colman Center Drive  
P.O. Box 7044  
Rockford, Illinois 61125

(815) 399-4300  
Fax (815) 399-4769

Office of the Bishop

April 8, 2020

Dear Monsignor/Father,

As we approach the Sacred Triduum, we find ourselves in a situation with beauty and sorrow. The beauty is the sacred joining of ourselves during those three days to Christ in the institution of the priesthood and the Eucharist, to His suffering and death and to the certainty of His resurrection.

At the same time, health authorities have counseled us that we are now entering the peak moment of the coronavirus outbreak in Illinois. That means of course that the danger presented by the virus, especially to groups of people who gather and therefore could acquire or spread the virus, is extremely high.

In view of this situation, I write now to respond to a question that has been raised and to offer reminders.

The specific question that has been raised is about **the tradition of Easter food basket blessings**. Given the current circumstances and the specific requests of health authorities, in order to avoid encouraging any gathering of people, no liturgy of blessings including those of Easter food baskets should be conducted this year, either inside the parish church or on parish grounds. That includes not holding any sort of parking lot or drive up blessing. Of course if a pastor wishes to pray over such baskets by social media and live-streaming, he may do so.

As reminders, I ask that you review my letters to you of March 20 and March 25, 2020. In particular, please be reminded that priests are to offer Mass daily but without the presence of the faithful. This is to be interpreted strictly.

Also, as of March 25, 2020, all adoration chapels were to be closed. At the discretion of the pastor, the parish church may be open for hours during the day but with the strict observance of the limit of no more than 10 persons and social distancing. As noted in that letter, the Blessed Sacrament is not to be exposed when the Church is open. The pastor is responsible to ensure the fulfillment of these conditions.

Finally, please review my other letter to you dated March 25, 2020, regarding Anointing of the Sick. Please be reminded that if you receive a call for anointing of someone confirmed to have the coronavirus, that anointing should be referred to one of our brother priests who has agreed to be designated for that service. However, if any other requests for anointing of those in danger of death are received, please respond to those as usual. The chancery has received several concerns that phone calls to the parish about normal anointings were not responded to, so I want to be sure that there is no confusion.

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Brothers, there has been a very high level of cooperation with these painful but necessary steps. I am very grateful for that. At the same time, please review the letters you have received as what they convey are directives that are to be strictly observed in this difficult moment.

As always, I am profoundly grateful for your priestly service, especially at this time. Please be assured of my prayers for you during the Sacred Triduum.

Sincerely yours in Christ,

+ *David J. Malloy*

Most Reverend David J. Malloy  
Bishop of Rockford