

Archdiocese of Santa Fe
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OFFICE OF THE ARCHBISHOP
October 22, 2020

Dear Friends in Christ,

New Mexico is currently experiencing a rapid increase in the number of COVID-19 positive cases as well as increasing numbers of deaths. Combined with the perennial influenza season which is fast approaching and persons being in closer quarters during the winter, this portends a "perfect storm" to form an extremely hazardous situation. Already the demographics of COVID-positive cases is migrating toward the younger ages, and there is even a case of a death of a 15-year-old who had no pre-existing conditions. In addition, hospitals are also reaching maximum capacity for treating patients.

The Governor's office, advised by scientists and medical experts, is strongly advising persons to stay home and out of public areas as much as possible. Therefore, in accordance with our faith's concern for the protection of human life, we are issuing the following directives for Catholic churches and schools in the Archdiocese of Santa Fe:

1. Churches will cease regular Mass schedules after Sunday, October 25, until further notice. Churches may remain open for individual devotion as long as persons remain masked and socially-distanced, with other now-familiar protective measures in place (sanitizer, cleansing, etc.). Normally-scheduled Masses should be streamed via the internet and/or recorded as best possible so that they may be accessed by people at home.
2. The dispensation to NOT attend Sunday Mass continues until further notice. Please ensure the elderly are especially aware of this.
3. Anointing of the sick may continue with due care. Priests celebrating anointings take extra care to ensure their safety and their attendant ability to continue to minister.
4. Funerals should be delayed if possible; otherwise, funeral rites without Mass with at maximum of 10 persons attending in the church or at the graveside.
5. Weddings with Mass are to be delayed until further notice. If for a good reason they cannot be delayed, there should be a rite without Mass and a maximum of 10 persons attending.
6. **Confession/General Absolution/Plenary Indulgences/Anointing:** The Apostolic Penitentiary, promulgated instruction which will provide much succor to the faithful as well as easing the burden for the clergy. They may be found at the following locations:
 - a. Concerning Sacrament of Reconciliation:
<https://press.vatican.va/content/salastampa/en/bollettino/pubblico/2020/03/20/200320d.html>
 - b. Decree Concerning Special/Plenary Indulgences:
<https://press.vatican.va/content/salastampa/en/bollettino/pubblico/2020/03/20/200320c.html>

Because there has been no significant increase in the number of cases in our Catholic schools, they may remain open in accordance with the judgment of the pastor, superintendent and principals. However, should cases begin to rise, schools should begin arranging to provide online classes exclusively should the need to cease in-person instruction arise.

Sincerely yours in the Lord

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "John C. Wester".

Most Reverend John C. Wester
Archbishop of Santa Fe