



# DIOCESE OF DALLAS

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## Statement of Bishop Edward Burns

March 13, 2020

These are without a doubt extraordinary days and they necessitate extraordinary measures. We have learned that we are in a state of emergency.

The leaders of our communities have sounded the alarm and now this shepherd is going to protect his flock. Effective immediately, the Catholic Diocese of Dallas will suspend all public masses until March 30, 2020. Our churches will remain open during the day for private prayer and Eucharistic adoration, but all Sunday masses and week day masses are canceled.

I recognize that I had the option of simply dispensing of the obligation to attend mass and continue to have the masses celebrated, but knowing my flock, and knowing their steadfastness in faith, many of them would continue to come to mass and it would result in significant numbers even in light of the guidelines set forth by government officials. In order for all the Catholic faithful to be at peace and to live without any anxiety as well as to remove any conflicted conscience of whether or not they should attend mass these days, as the shepherd of the diocese and out of affection for the faithful, I make this decision so that they may remain healthy and strong. This decision of mine came after an emergency meeting of the Priest council of the Diocese of Dallas, and they unanimously support this decision.

My goal as the Bishop is to be sure that the faithful are safe from disease and that this decision gives them a sense of peace so that they may be safe from all distress or anxiety regarding these days of emergency.

In the Catholic tradition we always identify the family as the domestic church. It is in the family that parents hand on the faith to the next generation. I want families to use these days to come together in prayer. We recognize that good can come out of adversity, hopefully our families will grow stronger and be intentional in charting a course of action to assure that they grow stronger in faith and in their relationship to Jesus Christ.

It is important that we prepare for the worst and hope for the best.

There are so many unknown variables about this virus and disease, and it is important that we be cautious and prudent, for the love of God and the love of our neighbor. We want to be good Samaritans and be concerned about the health of those around us. This Catholic diocese will always work for the common good. It is our goal to level out the curve, and taking these measures will help flatten the curve so that our healthcare providers will not be overwhelmed.

While there are many unknowns about this disease and this pandemic, it is important for me as the shepherd to do what is sure and certain. And taking into account that large gatherings are a factor in the spread of this disease, to eliminate the spread we need eliminate large gatherings.

I can also tell you that all of our Catholic schools in the Diocese of the Dallas will be closed and move to e-learning or remote learning until at least March 27, 2020. Local schools will have specific information for parents regarding remote and e-learning. Our CCD classes or Sunday Catechetical classes are also suspended. Priests will continue to celebrate their own private Masses in order to pray for the faithful of the Diocese.

I spoke personally to Judge Clay Jenkins yesterday and this morning I had a conversation with City Councilwoman Jennifer Staubach Gates, it is important that we partner together in order to make Dallas and the diocese a safer place.

Let me also be clear, this is not an act of God, this is an act of nature. God does not desire that people get sick, suffer and die. And the proof of this is made abundantly clear in our upcoming celebration of Easter.

Fraternally yours in Christ,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Edward J. Burns", with a small cross symbol to the left.

Most Reverend Edward J. Burns  
Bishop of Dallas