



**RICHARD FRANK STIKA
BY THE GRACE OF GOD AND FAVOR OF THE APOSTOLIC SEE
THIRD BISHOP OF KNOXVILLE**

DE C R E E

Whereas, the Diocese of Knoxville has been monitoring the directives, recommendations and guidelines of the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), Tennessee State and Local Health Departments to ensure that all diocesan parishes, schools, ministries, and charities are responding appropriately to the spread of the coronavirus (COVID-19); and

Whereas, the World Health Organization has determined the coronavirus (COVID-19) to be a global health emergency and pandemic, and that the virus spread is a rapidly evolving situation in which the faithful of the Diocese of Knoxville must take reasonable precautions now; and

Whereas, in accordance with the Catechism of the Catholic Church (CCC 2181), although the faithful are obliged to participate in the Eucharist on days of obligation, they may be excused for a serious reason such as having an illness or because they are older adults who have serious chronic medical conditions like heart disease, diabetes and lung disease, individuals with severely compromised immune systems, and caretakers of the at-risk individuals listed above; and

Whereas, in accordance with universal law (Canon 85), a dispensation, or the relaxation of a merely ecclesiastical law in a particular case (i.e. - obligation to attend Sunday Mass), can be granted by those who possess executive power within the limits of their competence (Bishop), as well as by those who have the power to dispense explicitly or implicitly either by the law itself or by legitimate delegation (Pastor); and

Whereas, in accordance with universal law (Canon 223 §1), in exercising their rights, the Christian faithful, both as individuals and gathered together in associations, must take into account the common good of the Church, the rights of others, and their own duties toward others; and

Whereas, in accordance with universal law (Canon 223 §2), in view of the common good, the ecclesiastical authority (Bishop) can direct the exercise of rights which are proper to the Christian faithful; and

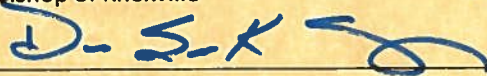
Through this decree, effective immediately, I hereby mandate the following:

1. Pastors must routinely remind the faithful that their obligation to attend Sunday Mass is dispensed if they have an illness or because they are older adults who have serious chronic medical conditions like heart disease, diabetes and lung disease, individuals with severely compromised immune systems, and caretakers of the at-risk individuals listed above.
2. Empty holy water fonts and keep them completely dry.
3. Refrain from passing collection baskets from person-to-person and instead use fixed collection basket location(s) in the appropriate aisles, so that parishioners can place their donation in it as they process to receive Communion or immediately after doing so.
4. Refrain from holding hands during the recitation of the Our Father.
5. Omit the Sign of Peace or exchange it without physical contact (bow of the head).
6. Suspend distribution of the Precious Blood of Christ to the faithful.
7. Suspend distribution of the Sacred Host on the tongue and distribute only in the hand (Canon 223 §2).

Given at the Chancery this 13th day of March in the Year of Our Lord 2020.




Most Reverend Richard F. Stika
Bishop of Knoxville


Deacon Sean K. Smith
Chancellor