

**From:** Fr. Michael J. Lumpe  
**Sent:** Tuesday, April 7, 2020 4:31 PM  
**Subject:** Update Letter from Bishop Brennan  
**Attachments:** 2020 April 6 - CONFIDENTIAL DRAFT Future guidelines for Confessions (1).pdf

Brothers,

Prayers and gratitude these days of Holy Week. I want to thank Father Mike Kelly for leading us in our Diocesan-wide Lenten Retreat, "The Gift of Holy Week". I enjoyed the first "evening" yesterday and look forward to tuning in tonight.

While we will not be together on Thursday for the Chrism Mass, I do hope that you will be able to tune in through St. Gabriel Radio or the Live-stream on Thursday morning at 9:00 AM. Father Lumpe sent out information about locations for receiving the Sacred Oils. Please take care to observe the guidelines for social distancing, safety and hygiene. You may continue, if you prefer, to use the current oils that you have and come to the Cathedral at some time in the future if that is better for you. Please do let Mike know either way if you intend to pick them up on Thursday, or at some later scheduled date and time at the Cathedral.

A number of priests have raised with me the possibility of Confessions and I appreciate your continued patience and understanding. I indicated on Sunday that I would be sending some guidelines for your consideration for when we are ready and able to do so safely for priests and all concerned; **this is not something that will take place in the next weeks, but something to plan for at some point in the future.** Attached are those draft guidelines. I ask you please to hold this draft as CONFIDENTIAL for the time being. We have been working with both medical professionals and government authorities in the development of these having considered a number of potential models. As you know we are in the next week or two in what is considered to be the most dangerous time for the spread of the virus. I will continue to monitor the progression of the contagion and will continue also to consult with the experts and authorities and as always communicate with you. In the meantime, this proposal will require a great deal of planning for its proper implementation, with safety of all being of paramount concern. When the time is right, I will invite those who are interested -- and who do not fall into one of the risk categories (e.g. age, previous health issues) -- to indicate that interest so that we may prepare, just as we did for the pastoral care of the sick.

Regarding the pastoral care of the sick, Father Lumpe mentioned that we were given a limited supply of masks. These are specifically for the end of life pastoral care of the sick and should not be considered for ordinary use. Many of you received the training and were told that hospitals will provide, which is true, but these mask/glove kits might be needed and quite useful in protecting you in non-hospital settings or private homes. I remind you if you did not receive the PPE training or if you are within the risk categories please call Father Lumpe when needed so that we might back you up.

One other note I want to share with you. We continue to pray for our brother Msgr. Carl Claggett who died over the weekend. As you may know, at 90 years of age, Carl struggled with several long-term health issues and was admitted to the hospital with pneumonia and COPD issues. He was tested for the coronavirus in the hospital and that test indicated a positive result. We do not know (nor may we ever know) what role the virus had in his death. What we do know is that for years he asked everyone to pray for him, and so we shall.

As always, we entrust ourselves and the people we care for to the loving hands of the Lord.

Fraternally,  
Bishop Brennan

While the current conditions of the Coronavirus emergency continue and the Governor's "Stay at Home" order remains in effect, the statewide cessation of all public Masses and other services in our churches continues at least through May 1, and in the Diocese of Columbus, our churches remain locked to discourage anyone from leaving home. Unfortunately, this has left the faithful without opportunities for sacramental absolution. The Holy See has assured Catholics worldwide that in circumstances such as we are now experiencing, the forgiveness of sins--even mortal sins--is obtained by perfect contrition together with the intention of confessing any mortal sins as soon as possible. Because a number of the faithful will be eager to fulfill this duty and to find the serenity of conscience that only sacramental absolution can give, these guidelines are given in order to promote the greatest possible availability of the sacrament of Reconciliation within the confines of the restrictions now in place, or which may be in place in the future. As long as the "stay at home" order is in effect, no one is to leave their home unless it is for an essential function. therefore, no priest or parish should hold a penance service or announce regular hours for confessions. We look forward to the time when it will be permitted, however, for priests to see people by appointment for the purposes of the Sacrament of Reconciliation, provided that all safeguards are followed.

- Priests who are in good health and are not in a high-risk category by reason of age or medical condition, may inform their parishioners of their availability to meet by appointment for confession.
- When meeting for confession by appointment, be sure to select a place that is private but spacious enough to allow for adequate social distancing. The priest and penitent must remain more than six feet apart at all times. This space will most likely not be the confessional or confession room in the church, but perhaps a multi-purpose room, meeting room or classroom. Any surfaces which may be touched should be wiped with disinfectant both before and after the appointment. Sanitizer should be available and used. It is recommended that the area be cleared of items that are easily touched, such as tables, chairs, and kneelers. Doors should remain open so touching of doorknobs or openers is not necessary. The priest and penitent should wear a surgical mask if available. If not available, other face covering should be worn.
- The penitent should be asked to check their temperature before coming to the appointment and informed that they may not come if their temperature is 100.4 degrees or higher, or if they have a cough or feel short of breath.
- The penitent should be informed at the time the appointment is made, that the meeting for confession must be brief and limited to confession of sins, imposition of penance, and sacramental absolution.
- Pastoral counseling or spiritual direction should be avoided or done via telephone or electronic communication at another time.
- If care is taken to allow adequate time between appointments, it is acceptable to schedule a series of appointments for confession. At the present time, there may be no more than ten people "gathered" in one place, so care must be taken to insure that this limit is not exceeded. It is best if the appointments are spaced so that the previous penitent has departed before the subsequent penitent arrives. If several happen to

arrive for their appointment and are waiting, the place where they are to wait must be clearly designated, and marked, so those waiting are at least six feet apart and should wear a surgical mask or other face covering. They must wait far enough away from the place where confession takes place so there is no danger of overhearing. If it is possible or likely that several people will be waiting for their appointment, it is recommended that a person be appointed to oversee those waiting to insure that they abide by all social distancing requirements and that no more than the allowable number are present at any time (including the priest and the overseer).

- After the "Stay at Home" order is relaxed or lifted, it remains likely that social distancing and sanitizing requirements will still apply. The limit on "gatherings" may change, but the details and timing of this is unknown at this time. You will be informed when it is permissible to once again hold regular announced penance services and hours for confessions, and the precautions that may need to be taken in doing so. In the meantime, please offer your people the opportunity for confession by appointment to the extent that you are able to do so.

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