



LA CATHOLICS

Citing coronavirus ‘emergency,’ Archbishop Gomez dispenses LA Catholics from Mass obligations

Angelus Staff

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(Victor Alemán)

In the face of a growing worldwide health emergency, Archbishop José H. Gomez today called for “prayers and vigilance,” announcing new measures aimed at protecting the faithful and limiting the spread of the coronavirus in the Archdiocese of Los Angeles.

Calling it a “grave and extraordinary moment,” Archbishop Gomez said (<https://lacatholics.org/2020/03/13/letter-from-archbishop/>), that all Catholics in the Archdiocese will be dispensed from their obligation to at-

tend Sunday Mass for the next three weeks.

In addition, he asked parishes to make preparations to limit the numbers of people attending Masses to 250, citing recommendations from California public health officials.

“We need to approach this emergency with faith and confidence in God and also with prudence,” Archbishop Gomez said in a March 13 message to the faithful issued on AngelusNews.com.

Archbishop Gomez had previously authorized (<https://lacatholics.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/03/English-Spanish-Updated-Liturgical-Accommodations-13March2020.pdf>), precautions and accommodations regarding the celebration of the Mass, including limiting Communion to only distribution in the hand and restricting distribution of the Precious Blood.

He also recommended that there be no shaking of hands at the Sign of Peace and no holding of hands during the praying of the Our Father.

The Church’s canon law (http://www.vatican.va/archive/ENG1104/_P4N.HTM), permits the dispensation of Catholics from their Sunday Mass obligations for “grave cause.”

In dispensing LA Catholics on account of the “dangers and uncertainties” of the “worldwide outbreak of the coronavirus,” Archbishop Gomez said the Eucharist remains the “source and summit of our Catholic faith.”

“I encourage those of you who cannot come to Mass, to stay home and read the Gospels, pray with your families, and to join yourself to the sacrifice of the Mass by making an act of spiritual communion,” he said.

He also encouraged participation in the Mass via the Internet (<https://lacatholics.org/mass-for-the-home-bound/>), noting that the Archdiocese provides livestreams of the Sunday Mass, and is arranging to provide livestreams of daily Mass, as well.

Late on March 11, California Gov. Gavin Newsom issued guidelines (<https://www.gov.ca.gov/2020/03/11/california-public-health-experts-mass-gatherings-should-be-postponed-or-canceled-statewide-to-slow-the-spread-of-covid-19/>), calling for postponing or canceling ([https://www.cdph.ca.gov/Programs/CID/DCDC/CDPH Document Library/Gathering_Guidance_03.11.20.pdf](https://www.cdph.ca.gov/Programs/CID/DCDC/CDPH%20Document%20Library/Gathering_Guidance_03.11.20.pdf)), “non-essential” gatherings in the state of more than 250 people “for at least the remainder of the month of March.”

In his message, Archbishop Gomez indicated that the Archdiocese would work to accommodate these guidelines, which have been recommended by the California Department of Public Health.

“I am asking parishes to begin making preparations to accommodate these state recommendations, including informing the Catholic faithful and, if necessary, adding more Mass times on Sundays,” Archbishop Gomez said.

In his message, Archbishop Gomez said that the coronavirus outbreak represents “a global health emergency that is like nothing we have seen in our lifetimes.”

Calling these “days of anxiety and uncertainty,” he cited the spread of the virus worldwide, the deadly danger posed to many in the community, and the struggles of public health officials to contain and treat the virus.

Archbishop Gomez asked the faithful to join him in a prayer (<https://lacatholics.org/2020/03/13/guadalupe-prayer/>), to Our Lady of Guadalupe that he composed especially for this “time of the coronavirus.”

The full message of Archbishop Gomez and his “Prayer in the Time of the Coronavirus” follow:

Message to the Faithful of the Archdiocese of Los Angeles Regarding the Corona Virus

Most Reverend José H. Gomez
Archbishop of Los Angeles

March 13, 2020

My dear brothers and sisters in Christ,

Please know of my prayers for you in these days of anxiety and uncertainty.

It is true that with the worldwide outbreak of the coronavirus, we are facing a global health emergency that is like nothing we have seen in our lifetimes. But our hope is in the Lord and we know that he will give us his grace and mercy in our time of need.

We need to approach this emergency with faith and confidence in God and also with prudence.

As we know, the virus is spreading here in Los Angeles, throughout the United States, and in many other countries. Doctors, public health officials, and civil authorities are still trying to determine the scope of the emergency and come up with appropriate measures for treating the illness and containing the outbreak.

We also know that this virus is contagious and is spread person-to-person. It can be gravely dangerous for certain vulnerable members of our community, including the elderly and those with existing health issues. Already this illness has killed several thousand people worldwide.

Given the dangers and uncertainties, after prayer and reflection, and in consultation with my brothers bishops and priests and lay advisors, I have authorized certain precautions and accommodations related to the celebration of the Eucharist in our parishes. These measures are intended to lessen the risk that we will endanger our people or spread this illness during our worship.

I urge you to review these measures here. We have also established a page on our website, lacatholics.org/emergency (<http://lacatholics.org/emergency>), to provide resources and updates on the coronavirus as it relates to our parishes, schools, and ministries. To receive updates, you can register online at <https://archla.flocknote.com/ADLAUpdates> (<https://archla.flocknote.com/ADLAUpdates>), or you can text “ADLA” to “84576.”

The celebration of the Eucharist is the source and summit of our Catholic faith. But it is important to remember that our obligation to participate in the Mass is dispensed for grave causes.

Therefore, in this grave and extraordinary moment, I am dispensing all the Catholic faithful of the Archdiocese of Los Angeles and all Catholics currently in the Archdiocese from the obligation of attending Sunday Mass for the weekends of March 14-15, March 21-22, and March 28-29.

I encourage those of you who cannot come to Mass, to stay home and read the Gospels, pray with your families, and to join yourself to the sacrifice of the Mass by making an act of spiritual communion. There are a number of prayers of spiritual communion that you can use, the one I like is simple: “I wish, my

Lord, to receive you with the purity, humility, and devotion with which your most holy mother received you, with the spirit and fervor of the saints.”

I also encourage you to participate in the Holy Mass via the Internet. A livestream of the Mass is broadcast from the Cathedral of Our Lady of Angels each Sunday. You can watch live on the LA Catholics Facebook Page (facebook.com/lacatholics (<https://facebook.com/lacatholics>)) or visit lacatholics.org/emergency (<http://lacatholics.org/emergency>). The English Mass is celebrated at 10 am and the Spanish Mass is celebrated at 12:30 pm.

There are also several other parishes in the Archdiocese that provide livestreams of their Masses over the Internet or social media. You can find a listing of those and links to their livestreams at lacatholics.org/emergency (<http://lacatholics.org/emergency>). We are also arranging to have daily Mass livestreamed, as well; please check our website for updates.

In addition, we have been advised by California public health authorities to limit our gatherings for the Sunday celebration of the Eucharist to not more than 250 people. I am asking parishes to begin making preparations to accommodate these state recommendations, including informing the Catholic faithful and, if necessary, adding more Mass times on Sundays.

This health emergency is developing rapidly and it may be necessary to take more restrictive measures in the near future. Archdiocesan officials will continue to monitor and study the latest guidance that is being provided by the Centers for Disease Control, local public health officials, and our civic leaders.

For now, I urge your prayers and vigilance in doing whatever you can to protect the public health and to keep our families and neighbors safe from harm.

Let us pray for those who are sick and those who have lost loved ones already to this virus. May God console them and grant them peace. Let us also pray for doctors, nurses, and caregivers, for public health officials and all civic leaders. May God grant them courage and prudence as they seek to respond to this emergency with compassion and in service to the common good.

In this time of trial, I entrust us all to the maternal care and intercession of Our Lady of Guadalupe. I invite you to join me in praying the prayer below, which is composed especially for this moment.

May God be gracious to us, and make his face shine upon us. And may he grant us peace,

Most Reverend José H. Gomez

Archbishop of Los Angeles

Prayer in the Time of the Coronavirus

Most Reverend José H. Gomez
Archbishop of Los Angeles

March 13, 2020

Holy Virgin of Guadalupe,
Queen of the Angels and Mother of the Americas.
We fly to you today as your beloved children.
We ask you to intercede for us with your Son,
as you did at the wedding in Cana.

Pray for us, loving Mother,
and gain for our nation and world,
and for all our families and loved ones,
the protection of your holy angels,
that we may be spared the worst of this illness.
For those already afflicted,
we ask you to obtain the grace of healing and deliverance.
Hear the cries of those who are vulnerable and fearful,
wipe away their tears and help them to trust.

In this time of trial and testing,
teach all of us in the Church to love one another and to be patient and kind.
Help us to bring the peace of Jesus to our land and to our hearts.

We come to you with confidence,
knowing that you truly are our compassionate mother,
health of the sick and cause of our joy.
Shelter us under the mantle of your protection,
keep us in the embrace of your arms,
help us always to know the love of your Son, Jesus. Amen.

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