

NEWS

Masses will continue in face of coronavirus, west-coast US bishop declares

'The celebration of the Most Holy Eucharist is the source and summit of the Christian life,' wrote Alexander Sample, archbishop of Portland, Oregon.

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Archbishop Alexander Sample of Portland, Oregon.

Steubenville Conferences / YouTube

By Doug Mainwaring

PORTLAND, Oregon, March 13, 2020 (LifeSiteNews) — Amid news of one diocese after another around the world canceling all public Masses due to the coronavirus pandemic, one west-coast bishop has stood up to his state's governor, who had issued a prohibition against large public gatherings.

“The celebration of the Most Holy Eucharist is the source and summit of the Christian life,” declared Alexander Sample, archbishop of Portland, Oregon, in a letter to the archdiocese. “It is in the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass that we encounter the mystery of our redemption, are nourished by God’s Word, and receive the Body, Blood, Soul and Divinity of Jesus Christ.”

“For these reasons, the Church places a grave obligation for the faithful to participate at Mass on Sundays and Holy Days of Obligation,” he continued. “This fulfills the Lord’s command to ‘keep holy the Sabbath.’”

“The governor of the state of Oregon, Kate Brown, has canceled all public gatherings of more than 250 people,” said Sample, adding, “The fact is that most of the Masses celebrated on the weekends in the Archdiocese of Portland are far below that number.”

The archbishop directed pastors in Portland to “be creative” in keeping Masses below the 250-person limit demanded by Oregon’s governor. Sample suggested encouraging parishioners to attend less popular Masses and increasing the number of Masses available.

Archbishop Sample was careful to issue a dispensation from attending Mass for those particularly at risk of contracting or spreading the virus, including “[a]ll persons 60 years and older; Persons who have underlying medical issues that put them at risk, or persons with compromised immune systems; Person who are not feeling well even with mild symptoms; And others of any age who sincerely and seriously think they might be at risk.”

The archbishop encouraged those who do not attend Mass, as well as those who do but who choose not to receive Communion due to fear of contamination, “to make an act of Spiritual Communion.”

My Jesus,

I believe that You are present in the Most Holy Sacrament.

I love You above all things, and I desire to receive You into my soul.

Since I cannot at this moment receive You sacramentally, come at least spiritually into my heart.

I embrace You as if You were already there and unite myself wholly to You.

Never permit me to be separated from You.

Amen.

The directives and dispensations will remain in effect until April 8, which is a few days after Palm Sunday and just before Holy Thursday. Easter is April 12.