



ST. RITA IN THE DESERT ROMAN CATHOLIC CHURCH

OFFICE OF THE PASTOR

...With God, all things are possible! Matt 19:26

March 17, 2020

My dear brothers and sisters of St. Rita in the Desert:

The following was released by the Bishop of Tucson, Edward J. Weisenburger in conjunction with Bishop Thomas J. Olmsted of the Diocese of Phoenix and Bishop James S. Wall, Diocese of Gallup, NM.

*"Having taken into account recently issued directives from the **CDC** (Center for Disease Control), as well as recommendations from our Governor and others, and in accord with the role afforded me by Roman Catholic canon law, I hereby issue the following directives. These directives are motivated by an abundance of care and concern for our people as well as the greater community and are substantially consistent with the directives of the Diocese of Phoenix and the Diocese of Gallup—all of which have Catholic parishes in the State of Arizona.*

*As of Monday, 3/16/2020, all parish-based public gatherings are either cancelled or suspended. These directives are in place for the next three weeks, until April 6, 2020, at which time they will be reviewed and either brought to a close or extended. This effectively puts us a "**Level 3**" in our response to the Coronavirus challenge and includes, but is not limited to:*

No public Masses after today (3/16/2020)

- *The Sunday Mass obligation is dispensed for all Catholic people residing in or visiting the territory of the Diocese of Tucson. Catholics are urged to observe Sunday in accord with our teachings, which may include spending additional time on Sunday in prayer, observing a Catholic Mass via television or internet, or other pious practices.*
- *Confirmations scheduled during this time period are suspended and will be rescheduled*
- *There are to be no public Church events or gatherings, such as parish religious education programs, Stations of the Cross, Communion services, Quinceaneras, parish missions, dinners, etc.*
- *Mass of the Holy Oils, "Chrism Mass," will be celebrated privately with Holy Oils to be distributed privately to priests*
- *Wedding should be restricted to 10 persons, and if Mass is celebrated only the bride and groom, if Catholic, are to receive Holy Communion*
- *Funeral Masses should be restricted to 10 persons, and the congregation should not receive Holy Communion*

I believe these directives, while a hardship and deeply regrettable for us all, are sensible, substantially consistent with directives for the other Catholic diocese in Arizona, and in line with the spirit of public health directives.

On a separate topic, local parish leadership is to make final decisions on parish offices remaining open or closing, in accord with local government directives and diocesan guidelines. It is my hope that the work of parish employees and ministers may continue in some format and parish offices not close entirely. Parish offices follow the same employment guidelines as other businesses and our Director of the Office of Human Resources at the Tucson Diocesan Chancery can be of assistance to pastors with questions about parish employment issues."

As your Pastor, I have decided that our Parish Office will remain open for appointments, limited to two people at one time, and for normal parish business. Please be assured that we are here for you to do everything we can to



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continue to serve and minister to you and the families of St. Rita in the Desert. More information will be coming and as you can expect we will be receiving many phone calls into the office as we continue to pass on information. Please be patient and understanding as we all struggle to deal with this unprecedented turn of affairs.

We will make every attempt to notify our parish family regarding these changes and I would encourage you all to assist us in doing so, but please use this document, or the document on the Diocese of Tucson website, so that we don't spread any misinformation and cause undue concern or confusion.

In addition, as you all know, the expenses that we incur as a parish will continue to be there, so we ask that you continue your financial support of our parish and encourage others to continue to do so during this trying time. We ask that you visit our parish website <http://stritainthedesert.org> and look on the GIVE ONLINE tab to assist us to continue to serve you, our parish family. Online donations are secure through WeShare and can be set up as a one-time offering or recurring offering. Please contact the parish office if you need assistance with setting up your online donation. You may also send your contributions through the mail or drop them off at the parish office for your convenience. We thank you for your generosity in advance.

Finally, I was told once that the words ***Do Not Be Afraid*** appeared 365 times in the scriptures. Please remember that God is always with us, and that through our faith in Him and His Son all things are possible. We pray that you and your families are well prepared, and safe, and please remember those who need our assistance and are the most at risk at this time: our elderly.

God bless you all abundantly,

Reverend Alonzo M. García, Pastor
St. Rita in the Desert, Vail, AZ