



## DIOCESE OF ST. PETERSBURG

Office of the Bishop

Dear Faithful of the Diocese of St. Petersburg

As your Bishop, in collaboration with our Pastors and the Staff of our Pastoral Center, I have closely monitored the circumstances as our nation responds to the Coronavirus outbreak. Out of pastoral concern for the health and wellbeing of all of our Catholic people, the Diocese issued guidelines with precautions that should be practiced in all of our churches to prevent the spread of disease and promote common sense practices with regard to our gatherings for the Holy Eucharist and other religious services.

In recent days, Civil Authorities have sought to increase our awareness of those at greater risk and encourage all to carefully consider the need to take steps to ensure that public health is not further threatened by large public gatherings of people.

In solidarity with our civil authorities and out of pastoral concern for the health and wellbeing of all of our people, I have decided to offer the following dispensations. By my authority as Diocesan Bishop to dispense from Universal Ecclesiastical Laws,

I dispense from the obligation to attend Sunday Mass:

- All who are sick and those who are caring for them
- Those who because of age or infirmity are at greater risk for contracting diseases
- Those have been exposed to the coronavirus because of travel or other circumstances.

This dispensation is valid for as long as any of the above-referenced conditions continue.

Further, to protect public health and calm fears, I also dispense all the Catholic Faithful from the obligation to attend Sunday Mass during the month of March. This dispensation will allow any who are concerned to stay home and avoid public gatherings in cooperation with civil officials.

As your Bishop, I encourage all of the faithful to unite in spiritual communion each Sunday whether you choose to attend Mass or not. Please pray for courage and strength during this time. Particularly pray for all of those affected by the Coronavirus and its effects. Our faith is our refuge and strength during these times. Therefore, let us courageously proclaim that faith so that our communities may weather this time safely. Assuring you of my prayers and invoking the intercession of our Blessed Mother, I remain,

Sincerely yours in Christ,

Most Reverend Gregory Parkes

Bishop of St. Petersburg

March 13, 2020