

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

North Carolina Governor Roy Cooper, based on guidance from state health officials, has recommended the postponement or cancellation of large gatherings of 100 or more people.

Based on this directive, I am waiving the obligation for the faithful to attend Sunday Mass in the Diocese of Raleigh.

Please follow the guidance of our public health professionals. Please stay home from Mass or work or any public space if you are sick or are experiencing symptoms of sickness. Please exercise great caution in this regard for yourself and also out of charity for the health and wellbeing of others. Working together, we will move forward with care and with great hope, especially in this Lenten season when we are asked to trust more fully in God's care and mercy.

I am not, however, issuing a diocesan-wide cancellation of all Masses for the following reasons: The celebration of the Eucharist is the life and foundation of our Church. As priests, we are obligated to celebrate the Eucharist just as we are obligated to be joyful shepherds and servants of the faithful. My brother priests and I will continue celebrating Mass in union with our Lord. We welcome the faithful with the understanding that in the interest of their own health and that of their brothers and sisters many may not be able to join with us in prayer during this time.

We will continue to monitor this current health crisis and seek direction and guidance from public health professionals in conducting the business of our daily lives. Public health officials are not recommending closures of K-12 schools at this time.

Please pray for each other, especially for those who are ill or afraid.

Please pray for healthcare professionals and for those whose daily lives are impacted by this situation.

Please also pray that our actions reflect to others the goodness of God and that together we can give His strength to all those who are suffering and burdened by this situation.

With my gratitude in Christ,

+ Luis R. Zarama

Bishop of Raleigh