



March 17, 2020

**Statement of Bishop Gerald L. Vincke
Regarding Cancellation of Public Masses in the Diocese of Salina due to COVID-19**

Dear Priests, Deacons, Religious and Lay Faithful of the Diocese of Salina,

With deep sadness and in conjunction with the bishops of Kansas, effective 1 pm on March 17, 2020, and until further notice, all public celebrations of the Holy Mass in the Diocese of Salina are cancelled except for funeral Masses. Some of you will be understanding, others will be saddened, others angry, and others will feel like this decision is over-the-top and media driven. Please know that this decision was a very difficult one. In making this decision, we have the very young, the aged, and those most immune compromised in mind as we respect the dignity of every human person.

Confirmation Masses are postponed to a later date. Funeral Masses are limited to immediate family members. No funeral luncheons may be held. A funeral liturgy outside of Mass must be limited to immediate family members also. In addition to celebrating the funeral Mass or funeral liturgy outside of Mass, families and pastors are encouraged to schedule Memorial Masses for their loved ones in the future, when public health restrictions are relaxed, so that larger numbers may gather if desired. Priests are invited to continue to offer Mass privately for the Mass intentions scheduled.

All communal penance services are cancelled. Priests should continue as much as possible to offer individual confessions at regularly scheduled times. Confessions are to be heard only behind a screen or other barrier and not face to face. At no time should there be more than 10 people gathered in the church waiting for confession. Baptisms may continue but only parents, godparents and immediate family members who are asymptomatic may attend.

Please do not come to any of the above if you are sick, if you have been exposed to the coronavirus, if you suspect you have been exposed or if you have been advised by a doctor not to go out in public or attend public gatherings.

I know that many of you will feel that we are taking away Jesus when we need Him the most. Others will say that if we had more faith, all will be well. But the Lord also invites us to be prudent and charitable, too. I am encouraging all priests to keep the Church doors open as much as possible so that the faithful can pray. In many ways, we can unite ourselves with Jesus, who even more deeply felt abandoned even by his Heavenly Father during his agony.

I encourage all the faithful to continue to join in prayer for the health and protection of our entire community and nation, and for an end to this crisis. I encourage all families and individuals to

pray the rosary, invoking the intercession and protection of our Blessed Mother, Health of the Sick, for these intentions and for the health and well-being of our brothers and sisters who are ill, for their caretakers, and for all doctors, nurses, medical and emergency preparedness personnel and elected officials. I also ask you to join in praying a novena to the Blessed Mother which began March 16 until the Annunciation on March 25. The prayer asking for her intercession is available on our website. Thank you. Please know that Masses will be available to watch on our website too.

May God bless you and your families with much peace and healing.

In Christ's service,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Gerald L. Vincke". The signature is written in a cursive style with a small cross at the beginning.

Most Rev. Gerald L. Vincke
Bishop of Salina