

March 18, 2020

Dear Father, Deacon, Parish Director and Director of Administrative Services,

Peace be with you!

We continue to monitor things surrounding the CoVID-19/Coronavirus health crisis and want to continue to share thoughts and counsel with you as questions arise.

Today, we want to clarify some liturgical items and recommend some planning for parish/school operations.  Liturgical guidelines are available [here](http://archmil.org/ArchMil/attachments/LiturgicalDirectivesConcerningCoVID-19March192020.pdf).

It is important that parish leadership meet to discuss the financial state of the parish, today and moving forward.  We recommend a meeting of the pastor, two trustees, the finance council chair and the pastoral council chair to happen as soon as possible.

At this meeting, parish finances should be examined and cash-flow reviewed.  Parishes should be planning cash flow for the next 3-4 months (12-16 weeks).  These discussions should also take into consideration what, if any, parish reserves are available to assist with cash-flow deficits.  To assist, here is a [link to a cash flow worksheet](http://archmil.org/cashflowtemplate).

This examination will impact your decisions regarding parish staffing.  Although parishes would like to continue paying wages at their regular rate, that may not be financially possible going forward.  Parishes must begin consideration of the use of vacation time and sick time for staff, and also the possibility of reducing wages by some percentage going forward.  We know of some secular organizations that are using a sliding scale, reducing wages each week for the next several weeks, after vacation time has been used.  We do recommend that benefits, especially healthcare, be continued for all employees, even if wages have to be reduced.  These decisions will rest, somewhat, on what the parish can afford, as well as what is the right thing to do.

The Church Unemployment Pay Program (CUPP) is self-funded by each of the individual parish/school participants and is based upon actual claims payment.  As such, this is not a vehicle that would provide true relief for the parish.

If you expect to encounter negative cash flow during the next 3-4 months and do not have parish reserves to cover such a shortfall, please contact Chris Brown in the Finance Office, 414-769-3325, who can provide advice on potential cost-saving measures.

If adjustments are being made to parish office hours, please make sure those adjustments are clear on the parish voicemail message.  All parishes should have some available office hours each day to respond to the needs of parishioners, and parish voicemail and email should be monitored.

Archbishop Listecki has asked that churches remain open for private prayer, even if it just a few hours a day to allow people to pray before the Blessed Sacrament present in the tabernacle.  Please communicate these times to your people.

Without the celebration of Sunday Mass, the offertory is severely impacted.  The archdiocesan development office is preparing options for parishioner support, including online giving and text-to-donate options.  Those details will be sent to you soon.  Meanwhile, you may find that an old-fashioned mail solicitation would work best for your people.  A draft template solicitation letter asking for parish support during this emergency crisis is available at this [link](http://archmil.org/ParishDonorLetter).

Archbishop Listecki will make a decision about the resumption of daily and Sunday Masses, and the celebration of the liturgy during Holy Week and the Triduum, early next week and the decision will be communicated to you at that time.  These are not easy decisions.

Archbishop Listecki is also listening to concerns about the 12 hours of Confession scheduled for April 1 and will make a decision soon about whether that should proceed or be canceled.

Other parish community events such as fish fries, parish missions, youth ministries, devotional prayers (Rosary, Stations of the Cross), small group gatherings, support groups, etc., should be canceled.

On this eve of the Solemnity of St. Joseph, we entrust ourselves to his protection and patronage:

O God, who in your unspeakable providence chose blessed Joseph to be the spouse of your most holy Mother, grant, we beseech you, that we may deserve to have him as our intercessor in Heaven, whom we venerate on earth as our protector.  Who lives and reigns world without end.  Amen.

Sincerely yours,

Jerry Topczewski

Office of the Archbishop