



24 April 2020

My Dear People of God,

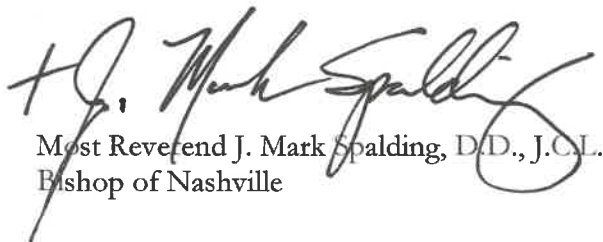
For the last five weeks, we have been experiencing an unprecedented time of modified ministry necessitated by the worldwide health crisis, and I have rejoiced in the faithfulness that you have shown in continuing to foster your relationship with Christ and his Church. As you know, the dispensation from the obligation to attend Sunday Mass and the cancellation of all public celebrations of Mass and other gatherings are currently effective through today, April 24.

In order to permit all of you to exercise prudent care over your health and wellbeing and charity towards others, I am extending the dispensation from the obligation to attend Mass on Sundays and Holydays of Obligation through June 30. Even when public Masses have resumed, I encourage those who are vulnerable, sick, or otherwise at risk or concerned about contracting or spreading disease, to refrain from attending Mass. Those who do choose to return to Mass should observe all guidelines concerning social distancing and diligent hygiene. We will also be continuing to provide resources for growth in your life of Faith, and opportunities to watch celebrations of Mass online.

No doubt you have heard some of our civic leaders discussing the possibility of restarting public activities in Tennessee in the coming weeks and months. In light of those intentions, I would like to announce to you today that we have begun developing plans to phase back in the public celebration of Mass and other church activities here in the Diocese of Nashville. This is a fluid and rapidly changing situation with ongoing developments that are hard to predict. While it will not be possible to resume the public celebration of Mass immediately, we hope to consider beginning modified celebrations of Mass open to the public in mid-May. I will be discussing the specific dates involved, health and safety precautions, and any necessary modifications to the Liturgy, with the Council of Priests in our meeting next week. Once this discussion has taken place, further details of when and how we will resume our public liturgical life will be forthcoming.

As I have assured you throughout this time, please know of my sincere love and concern for all of you and your families. My thoughts and prayers are with you. Let us pray together that this time of renewed optimism for an end to this time of crisis may soon be brought to fulfillment by the power of God's loving care and providence.

Sincerely yours in Christ,



Most Reverend J. Mark Spalding, D.D., J.C.L.
Bishop of Nashville