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Statement from Bishop Salvatore R. Matano to the Faithful Regarding COVID-19, the Coronavirus Disease, and the Suspension of Public Masses in the Diocese of Rochester

*March 16, 2020
Monday of the Third Week of Lent*

Due to growing concerns, ongoing medical advice, as well as continuing local and state government restrictions in social settings to limit the rapid spread of the Coronavirus, COVID-19, all public Masses in the Diocese of Rochester are suspended until further notice, effective immediately, March 16, 2020. Churches however, will remain accessible for private prayer, pending further regulations and as feasible in local situations, at the discretion of the pastor/administrator.

At this time, funerals and weddings may be celebrated; however, no more than 50 people may be in attendance in accord with the State of New York's March 16, 2020 limit on crowd capacity, and strictly following the precautions previously stated by the Diocese of Rochester on March 12, 2020. Further restrictions may change these guidelines as we go forward.

These steps are being taken out of a grave concern for the safety and protection of all concerned. This decision is truly grave and imposes a great sacrifice upon our people who deeply love the Sacrament of the Most Holy Eucharist. I ask our priests to offer Mass each day, without the presence of the faithful, fulfilling their scheduled Mass intentions, as well as praying for all entrusted to their pastoral care. "In the mystery of the Eucharistic Sacrifice, in which priests fulfill their greatest task, the work of our redemption is being constantly carried on; and hence the daily celebration of Mass is strongly urged, since even if there cannot be present a number of the faithful, it is still an act of Christ and of the Church." (*Presbyterorum Ordinis*, no. 13; Cf. *Code of Canon Law*, c. 904).

I encourage all Catholics and all God's people to continue to pray for the community, especially those who are sick and for the most vulnerable, for our medical community and our government and health leaders who are guiding us in this emergency. Please also remember those whose lives have been otherwise disrupted, especially anyone who has lost income from a loss of work during this difficult time. May Jesus Christ, the Divine Physician, grant us health and bring us to a resolution of this universal pandemic. May Mary, Our Mother, protect us.

Further updates will be provided as needed.