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Diocese of Santa Rosa

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Memo to All Pastors, Parochial Administrators, Parochial Vicars, Deacons and the People of God:

These are very challenging and troubling times which call for prayer, patience and great prudence. While recognizing that the faithful rely greatly upon the spiritual solace which weekly and daily Mass provide, the present threats to the physical health and wellbeing of entire communities require measures in the Church comparable and even greater than those taken by civil authorities. Being deprived, even temporarily, of the spiritual consolations of Mass and Holy Communion is a great cross. Yet, this does not mean being deprived of Christ, His love or His attentiveness to us. Sacrificing even Holy Mass and Communion for the sake of the health and safety of the entire community entails great suffering and distress. Yet, such a sacrifice must be made in the present circumstances.

As a Church we have many concerns. One of our concerns is the health and safety of our priests and our vulnerable brethren. The priests are very willing to put themselves in harm's way but by doing so may become sources of infection for others. Thus, generosity becomes a risk for them and for others. Pastoral workers are urged to be extremely cautious and prudent about going to places where there is an increased risk of being infected or of inadvertently infecting others.

After hearing from pastors as well as medical professionals, I have determined that it is both prudent and necessary to cancel all Church related Masses and services until the threat of further infection with the Corona Virus is ended. This means that all weekend and weekday Masses are to be cancelled with the exception of the one 'Private' Mass offered by the priest each day without a congregation. Many weekday Masses are attended by more than 50 people and many more who could not avail themselves for Mass on Sunday may deem that it is "safe" to attend Mass on another day. Since this would most likely result in larger crowds, the threat of infection would be heightened, not lessened, by continuing daily Masses. Again, the only Mass should be the 'private' Mass of the priests in the parish without a congregation.

Sadly, funerals are also prohibited. Memorial Masses scheduled later are an alternative.

The provisions above apply equally to any Confirmation plans or schedules. Confirmations through May 10 are indefinitely postponed. All other Confirmation dates for this season are now Tentative.

Please pray for an end of this Pandemic and for safety for all Medical Professionals, Pastoral Workers and First Responders. There is need for an abundance of caution. All that we do going forward must be out of concern for the well-being, both spiritual and physical, of our people and of the entire community.

A handwritten signature in blue ink, reading "Robert Vasa", with a cross symbol to the left.

Bishop of the Diocese of Santa Rosa