

# *The* MESSAGE



## **A Message from Bishop Joseph M. Siegel**

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

As you know, earlier this week I joined the other Bishops in Indiana in suspending the public celebration of Mass on Sundays and weekdays until further notice. We took this extreme action in light of new information and recommendations from health officials regarding the profound health risks posed by the COVID-19 pandemic, especially to our seniors and those with underlying health issues, and the urgency to stem the spread of the virus. I also instituted precautionary changes regarding the celebration of the other sacraments.

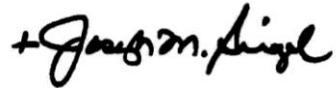
As Catholics, our spiritual lives are centered on the Eucharist, and so, I fully realize the impact the absence of Mass will have on you and your families. It was a matter of balancing these spiritual needs with the severe threat to the health and wellbeing of our people. As I shared with our priests, I firmly believe that this action does not imply a lack of faith in God's providence, but rather a trust in the gifts of wisdom and prudence He provides all of us, as well as the knowledge and expertise He has bestowed on doctors, researchers and public health officials who are advising us in these matters.

There are challenging times, and we are in uncharted territory as a Church and a nation. The one certainty we have is God's love for us, His sons and daughters. We entrust ourselves and all people to His loving care.

The remainder of this Lenten season will provide us with many opportunities to grow in our faith through our increased prayer, self-denial and works of charity. I have asked our priests to continue to celebrate Mass each day, even without a congregation. Be assured that they will be lifting-up your needs and intentions in the Eucharistic sacrifice, even if you cannot attend in person. I invite you to watch the celebration of Mass on television or online, and participate in it by making a Spiritual Communion. Our churches will remain open throughout the day for prayer before the Blessed Sacrament, and your priests will continue to be available to provide pastoral and spiritual care. It is important to pray at home as a family, the domestic Church, whether it be the rosary, the Divine Mercy chaplet or other devotions. Consider reading together from the Bible, especially the Gospels. As well, we are called as a Church to support and encourage one another the best we are able, by our prayers and by gestures of care and concern, especially for those in need. Please be sure to take every precaution to care for your own health and wellbeing, following the directives provided by doctors and health officials.

We place our local Church under the loving protection and intercession of Mary, the Mother of God and Health of the Sick. Let us continue to pray for the ill and their families, healthcare providers, public health officials and all civic leaders during the weeks to come. Know that you will be in my prayers, especially at Mass, and I ask for remembrance in yours.

Sincerely yours in Christ,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "+ Joseph M. Siegel". The signature is written in a cursive style with a small cross at the beginning.

Most Reverend Joseph M. Siegel, DD, STL  
Bishop of Evansville