

Dear Member of the OLR Family,

In the face of the developing COVID-19 flu epidemic the Bishop of Charleston has decided what measures we should take as Catholics. His decision, based on the advice of the Center for Disease Control, is that all sacramental and liturgical celebrations should be cancelled for the next two weeks. His letter to the faithful can be found online [here](#). For those who cannot access the internet, the crucial section from Bishop Guglielmone's letter reads:

*As a result of these recommendations, and in collaboration with other dioceses in our province, there are to be no sacramental or other liturgical celebrations anywhere in the Diocese of Charleston effective at 12:00 p.m. on Tuesday, March 17 through the end of day on Wednesday, April 1, 2020. This directive means there are to be no Masses in the Diocese during this time; therefore, I am granting dispensation for your Sunday Mass obligation for the weekends of March 21-22 and March 27-28. Additionally, all scheduled Confessions are cancelled. Any baptisms planned in the next sixteen days should be rescheduled. All quinceañeras must be canceled or rescheduled. Confirmations will be rescheduled according to each parish's calendar. Funerals and weddings may occur but will be celebrated privately with just the immediate family present. Unfortunately, perpetual adoration will have to be temporarily discontinued. There will be no regularly scheduled parish activities until further notice. All scheduled penance services are cancelled, and there will be no Communion calls at hospitals, nursing homes, or private homes until further notice. The sole exception to this policy is the celebration of the final sacraments for those in danger of death.*

Therefore, Our Lady of the Rosary parish and school are closed. Our Headmaster, Mr. Curtin, has already been working with his faculty, staff and parents to provide home school options for our school children. Now the parish too is closed. However, we will continue to work and pray for you in the following ways: First, I or Father Richard will offer the sacrifice of the Mass at the usual times during the week, but this Mass cannot be open to the public. Instead, we will pray intensely for you and your families, our nation and our world during this severe trial.

We will work with Katie Orbon, our Director of Faith Formation, to provide spiritual nourishment, reading and inspiration through our parish Facebook page and direct emails to you. This will include links to the "Formed" program of online resources and a special way for you to celebrate a liturgy of the Word at home on the weekends and make a spiritual communion. Be assured that I will provide a short homily with three points beginning with the same letter!

Our parish communications officer, Donna Craft will keep the website updated and keep you up to date with the latest news about the crisis here and further afield. Therefore, please pay attention to our communications through email, Facebook page and parish website. If you do not have access to the internet and do not use email, please be in touch with Beth Jones our parish receptionist by telephone if you have questions.

You will notice that the Bishop has also requested that all home visits to bring communion to the housebound are to cease. We will work with the coordinators of the home visits and the leaders of our local small groups to make sure we know how everyone is doing and to work out practical ways we can help. I will also be meeting with the leaders of St Vincent de Paul, Mother Teresa House and our new charity *MercyWorks* to make sure any of our people in need are ministered to effectively.

I would like to remind you that despite the closure of our parish and school, life goes on. It just goes on from the confines of our homes. With this in mind, please remember the continued financial needs of the parish. If you are not enrolled in online giving, now is a great time to start. Just go to the parish website and follow the links to sign up. If this is not for you, please mail your regular donations to the parish office at 3710 Augusta Road, Greenville, 29605.

All of us hope this present health crisis will reach its peak and pass away very soon, and if we have all over reacted, then we will accept the blame, but I'm sure you will agree it is better to have been prepared and taken all preventative measures than to wish we had!

Most of all, remember to pray. Both the Lower and Upper Churches will be available for private prayer. You may gain access by using the keypad at the Lower Church door or the side door of the North Transept of the Upper Church. If you are a bona fide OLR parishioner you may contact Beth Jones and she will give you the access code.

In your prayers please invoke the intercession of St Joseph—who has been especially powerful during times of plague and pestilence. In my own prayers I was given the insight to ask for the prayers of St Therese of Lisieux. At the age of 24 she died after a terrible ordeal of tuberculosis—a disease which infects and destroys the lungs. This present illness also affects the respiratory system, so remember in your prayers, if you will, a special request to St Therese, the Little Flower.

*St Joseph. St Therese. Pray for Us.*

Your Pastor,  
Fr Longenecker