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DATE: March 25, 2020

STATEMENT REGARDING GOV. WALZ'S STAY-AT-HOME ORDER

From Archbishop Bernard A. Hebda

Governor Tim Walz this afternoon ordered Minnesotans to stay home for two weeks - beginning Friday night - to try and further contain the spread of COVID-19 and buy time for our health care system to prepare. We as a Catholic community in this difficult time must do our part to come together to minimize the virus' impact on those who have the virus and on our courageous health care personnel and the facilities where they serve the growing number of our sisters and brothers who need their help.

While the Archdiocesan staff and I continue to review the governor's executive order, it is clear so far that for at least the next two weeks:

- There will continue to be no public Masses or large gatherings of any kind.
- Parishes are encouraged to continue to livestream or otherwise broadcast the liturgy (necessary support team is permissible in a sanctuary).
- Priests are asked not to promote gatherings of the faithful that conflict with the Governor's order.
- Although gatherings are not to take place, Church buildings may be left open when possible to accommodate essential pastoral care, in that event precautions must be taken for social distancing and maintaining a safe environment.
- Priests are encouraged to administer the sacraments in cases of serious need and on an individual basis.
- The Archdiocesan Catholic Center will be closed but staff are available by phone and email.

It is unclear what is expected for funerals. An update will be provided on that question and others when further information is available from the State of Minnesota. In the interim, contact Father Mike Tix at tixm@archspm.org.

It is critical for the common good that we do everything we possibly can to minimize the risk to others and to ourselves, which means simply staying home as much as possible. I know this is difficult for all of us, but it seems critical in order to buy time for the health care needs of our state to be met. Embracing these restrictions is very difficult Lenten penance for us. We will try as we are able to provide spiritual guidance through our continued online presence. We also ask parishioners to be especially attentive to their neighbors—it is amazing how much a phone call might mean in these days.

We are an archdiocese that is blessed with so many parishes, schools, religious orders, and lay apostolates. Even though we will be physically isolated the next two week, through the Holy Spirit we are still united together as the one, holy, catholic, and apostolic Church. During this intense Lenten desert experience, we have the opportunity to live our faith in new and creative ways. I pray that each of us might be able to turn to the Lord, through the intercession of Our Lady, Comfort of the Afflicted and Help of the Sick, to find ways to enter spiritually into an ever-deeper communion with each other and our entire local Church.