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Cardinal Joseph W. Tobin, C.Ss.R., Suspends Weekend Masses and Week of Catholic Schools in Proactive Response to Coronavirus (COVID-19)

March 12, 2020

Cardinal Joseph W. Tobin, C.Ss.R., Archbishop of Newark, announced today that he has dispensed the faithful of the Archdiocese from the obligation to attend Sunday Mass until further notice. Additionally, he has suspended the public celebration of Mass for Saturday evening, March 14, and Sunday, March 15, 2020, after evaluating recommendations of state and health officials. This decision will be reviewed daily, and any new determination will be announced next week.

The celebration of daily Mass will continue. Churches of the Archdiocese will remain open and the faithful are encouraged to pray while maintaining a prudent distance from each other.

This decision comes after careful consideration by the Archdiocesan Coronavirus Response Task Force, comprised of clergy, religious, lay leaders, and medical professionals, which meets daily. The Task Force will continue to meet daily and monitor the situation, provide Cardinal Tobin with counsel, and partner with state and local officials to maintain safe and healthy environments. Cardinal Tobin and the Task Force will provide updates in the coming days.

Cardinal Tobin also has advised that scheduled sacramental celebrations such as weddings, baptisms, or funerals will be permitted, but attendance should be limited to immediate family members only. Further, the sacraments of the Anointing of the Sick and Reconciliation will remain available, as needed, by the faithful.

As part of the Archdiocese of Newark's proactive efforts, Catholic schools in the Archdiocese will be closed next week, Monday, March 16, 2020, through Friday, March 20, 2020. This decision was made out of an abundance

of caution with the health and safety of students, staff, and families at the center of the decision. The situation will be re-assessed by the Task Force to determine if an extension is needed.

Religious education activities also are suspended throughout the Archdiocese for this weekend, March 14-15, 2020, and for the week of March 16-20, 2020.

“Our dedicated teams continue to actively monitor the unfolding pandemic and will continue to meet daily to assess changing circumstances in order to protect the faithful and support its parishes and schools,” said Cardinal Tobin. “We encourage pastors to think about necessary activities and to postpone non-essential gatherings, keeping in mind the common good.”

Further operational guidance will be made available to all clergy and lay faithful shortly.

MEDIA CONTACTS:

Maria Margiotta | 973-497-4186 | 973-202-2317 | Maria.Margiotta@rcan.org

Esmeralda Cameron | 973-497-4248 | 973-202-1565 | Esmeralda.Cameron@rcan.org

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