

COVID-19 Pandemic | Pastoral Guidelines for End of Life Ministry

Jesus wept with the family of Lazarus (John 11:33-36)

When Jesus saw her weeping, and the Jews who had come with her also weeping, He was deeply moved in spirit and troubled. "Where have you laid him?" He asked. "Come and see, Lord," they answered. Jesus wept. Then the Jews said, "See how He loved him!"

Core value: To proclaim love, compassion, dignity, and safety to those dying and their loved ones during this time of crisis.

1. Pastoral Care:

- i. Clergy should seek to provide meaningful pastoral care online and via the telephone to patients whenever possible.
- ii. Clergy should seek to pastor family members online and via the telephone, to pray with them and to support and encourage them as they care for their loved ones.
- iii. No hospital visits.
- iv. No home visits.
- v. Clergy members should seek to set good behavioral examples for family members which are consistent with physical distancing and good personal hygiene.

2. Clergy Support:

Recognizing the complexities of pastoral care, the diocese has identified individuals who are available and who may be contacted to talk through pastoral care issues on a case-by-case basis with clergy members as needed. Please be in touch with Canon Dena or Bishop Nicholas for their contact information.

3. Deceased Remains:

- i. Help to console family members and to assure them that whatever decision they choose to make or may be required to make (whether consistent or inconsistent with their loved ones wishes) regarding their loved ones remains (casket, cremation) their decision is holy and acceptable before God.

4. Funerals:

- i. Until further notice from the Bishop's Office, clergy may preside only at graveside services at which no more than four (4) family members are present.
- ii. Social media may be utilized at graveside services as a way to allow more family members to participate; however, it is not required.
- iii. Clergy members should assure those grieving that liturgies, gatherings, celebrations may/will be held once the necessary restrictions caused by COVID-19 have been lifted and that those events will be sacred, dignified and meaningful.
- iv. Whenever necessary, clergy members should cite both the governor's and the bishop's directives.