

Dear Bellarmine Community,

Our local and national community are confronting a serious public health emergency due to the coronavirus. The Governor of Ohio has banned mass gatherings over 100 people. This order does not apply to religious gatherings, but the Archbishop of Cincinnati, along with the Catholic bishops of Ohio have asked all pastors to encourage appropriate and prudent social distancing to help slow the spread of the virus and mitigate a potential health care crisis. To aid this essential precaution the Archbishop has released all Catholics in the Archdiocese of Cincinnati from the [obligation to attend Sunday Mass through the month of March](#).

Bellarmino Chapel will not close. In fact, our mission and outreach become even more pressing in times of crisis. Yet, we must also be prudent and wise about caring for the physical health of our parishioners and our community. Bellarmine Chapel is in the center of Xavier University. We are part of the campus and the campus is part of our community. XU has announced that all classes will be remote for the rest of the semester and that the University is closing the dorms. We expect a large number of the students to move out this Sunday. As a result, the parking and crowding on campus this weekend is a great concern for everyone involved.

In consultation with the university and our own parish staff, we have opted to cancel the 11 AM and the 7 PM Masses this weekend. The 9 AM Mass will be celebrated in the chapel and it will also be live streamed [via our website](#). A recording of the live stream will remain available throughout the rest of the day. I encourage everyone to make careful and informed decisions about attending Mass this weekend, keeping in mind that the campus will be in the midst of an unprecedented move out that will begin at 10 AM and that the Sunday obligation has been dispensed for the remainder of March.

Daily Masses will continue, but they will be celebrated in the main chapel in order to provide space for social distancing. We will make decisions about the Sunday schedule for March 22 and March 29 in the coming days. Where possible, parish group meetings will use video and teleconferencing options and large non-sacramental parish events will be suspended until further notice.

The GIFT program for our children, byg and BYG will be suspended until further notice, and we will be reaching out to parents with resources and options to continue family faith formation programming in their homes.

This is a time for us all to [increase our own prayers](#) and for us to provide time and space to discern appropriate responses motivated by love and hope, and not by fear. The Meal Train team is in need of new volunteers to help us increase our outreach to parishioners and families with people at risk, who might need someone to buy groceries or other necessities. We are also looking for volunteers and ideas to help our community in this difficult time. If you can help with any of these, or know someone who is in need, [please fill out this form on our website](#) or reach out to any of the parish staff so that we can continue to help those most in need.

This is a rapidly evolving situation and we will continue to monitor it. We understand that these changes can be confusing, and we encourage all parishioners to check our website or call 513-745-3398 for the latest updates on masses, gatherings, and opportunities to serve our community in this critical time. If you have any questions or concerns, please reach out to the parish staff. We will be working diligently to communicate with the parish and continue to serve the parish and the community.

Bellarmino and Xavier are blessed with so many caring and compassionate people. Please know of our prayers and please continue to take care of yourselves, your family, and your loved ones.

In Christ,

Fr. Eric Sundrup, S.J.