

Your Eminences and Excellencies, Our Bishops,

We are the Catholic faithful. We love you, and we are praying for you during this difficult and momentous time for our nation and the world.

We appreciate your desire to follow all health and safety precautions and cooperate with legitimate government directives during this national emergency.

However, we are dismayed at the announcement in recent days that our ordinary access to the celebration of Mass and the Sacraments has been cut off. This response leaves us feeling abandoned and confused. The Tradition of the Church clearly teaches that the Sacraments and sacramentals of the Church impart not only spiritual protection but also bodily health to the faithful. In this time of pandemic we need the Body and Blood of Christ more than ever as “a lasting remedy for body and soul” (Pastoral Care of the Sick, p. 78).

The suspension of all public Masses is a denial of the canonical right of the faithful to receive the Sacraments. It is also a violation of our civil First Amendment right to exercise our religion and to peaceably assemble. This has happened before in other historical persecutions of the Church. At the time of Emperor Diocletian, like our own time, “it was forbidden to hold the sacred rites and the most holy assemblies.” At that time a family was arrested in the city of Abitina, and when they were interrogated before the proconsul, Saturninus the priest replied, “We cannot live without the Lord’s Supper.”

Dear bishops, we want to work with you and we want to support you. But we also need you to hear us: “We cannot live without the Lord’s supper.” We appreciate your concern for our bodily health, but we need you to provide for the salvation of our souls now more than ever. We beg you to find creative and courageous ways to grant us our rightful access to the Sacrifice of the Mass and Holy Communion. This is an opportunity for you to restore our trust in you and our confidence in your leadership. Please do not fail in your duty to direct our priests to feed us with the Bread of Life, even at the risk of persecution and condemnation.

In the Sacred Heart of Jesus and the Immaculate Heart of Mary,

Signed, The Catholic Faithful:

*Please Sign and Print your Name, Town and Parish/Chapel*