March 17, 2020

Dear friends and patrons of the Shrine,

In light of increasing updates on and concerns about the coronavirus (COVID-19), the Archdiocese of Philadelphia has made the difficult, but prudent decision to cancel all weekday and Sunday Masses in the Archdiocese effective at 12:00 p.m. on Wednesday, March 18, 2020, and until further notice.

As a ministry of the Augustinian Province of Saint Thomas of Villanova, located in and serving the Archdiocese of Philadelphia, the National Shrine of Saint Rita of Cascia will comply with these updated directives. This means, effective immediately, we will enforce the following precautionary measures:

1. After our 8:00 a.m. Mass on Wednesday, March 18, 2020, and until further notice, we will no longer be offering public liturgies at the Shrine. This difficult decision has been made with an abundance of care for our older patrons, some of our most consistent visitors. Please note: all of our currently announced Masses with intentions will still be offered by our friars in private.

2. At this time, weddings, funerals, and baptisms that are already scheduled may take place, but they should include only immediate family members. Our friars will contact you to coordinate details and to answer any additional questions.

3. At the direction of the Archdiocese, we will discontinue visits to the homebound, hospitalized, and elderly with Holy Communion until further notice. Our friars will be available to celebrate the Sacraments for those in immediate danger of death.

4. At this time, the lower Shrine will remain open to the faithful on a reduced schedule:
   Monday through Saturday: 8:00 a.m. - 4:00 p.m.
   Sunday: Closed
   The Sacrament of Reconciliation will only be offered at 11:00 a.m. in the lower Shrine Monday through Saturday.

5. The Shrine offices will be closed beginning Wednesday, March 18, 2020, until further notice.

6. The Gift Shop in the lower Shrine will also be closed until further notice.

7. All of our scheduled programs – Lenten Concert, Stations of the Cross, Lenten Scripture Study, Bible Study, Adeodatus Prison Ministry, etc. – have been cancelled at this time. We will continue to explore the possibility of livestreaming different programs and events on our website and Facebook page. Please check www.SaintRitaShrine.org for more information.

8. Individual counseling sessions, spiritual direction, and pastoral accompaniment offered by Fr. Jim Paradis, O.S.A. and Br. Bob Thornton, O.S.A. will be coordinated on a case-by-case basis, over the phone.

Please know that our staff and Augustinian friars have made these decisions out of an abundance of caution and care for you, our patrons and visitors. Heeding the advice of different health agencies and the
Archdiocese, as well as the words of the Prior General of the Augustinians, Fr. Alejandro Moral Antón, “our answer must be based, as has been correctly indicated, on four pillars: prayer, serenity, prevention, and responsibility.” Please know that this is exactly how we have discerned our path forward.

In the days and weeks ahead, we will continue to communicate with you through our website and social media. Please be assured of our prayers for you and your loved ones during this difficult and uncertain time. As always, if there is anything we can do to assist you during this time, please let us know and we will do our best.

Saint Rita, patient in suffering, pray for us.

Jonathan Jerome
Shrine Director