



OFFICE OF THE BISHOP

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*March 20, 2020
Friday of the Third Week of Lent*

Dear Brother Priests and Pastoral Administrators:

Allow me to offer you my prayers and deep gratitude to you and your staffs for your cooperation as we deal with the tragic effects of the Coronavirus Disease and its harsh implications upon our ability to serve the faithful, entailing many sacrifices on the part of all. During this past week you have had to make serious pastoral and administrative changes which in many instances have been painful, yet necessary. None of us could have anticipated the circumstances in which we now find ourselves. With faith and hope in Jesus, we will continue the Church's mission, which is Jesus' mission, which means union with our people in prayer and through the social media instruments available.

Our diocesan offices, while physically closed, will be available to the extent possible. Offices of the Pastoral Center may still be contacted by email and/or telephone using the auto attendant; while most employees are working remotely, emails and calls will be returned as soon as possible but communication should be limited to important or urgent matters due to our present limitations and restrictions. We are regularly monitoring this situation and updates will be provided.

Below please find some recent updates regarding the continuation of pastoral life:

In accord with the Congregation for Divine Worship and the Discipline of the Sacraments Decree, Protocol N. 153/20, dated March 19, 2020, by mandate of Pope Francis, for the year 2020 only, the following are to be observed in the Diocese of Rochester "considering the impediment to the community celebration of the liturgy in church;" **all ceremonies are to occur without the faithful present:**

- 1. Palm Sunday of the Passion of the Lord:** The Third Form – the Simple Entrance is to be used. Mass begins with the Entrance Antiphon, the sign of the cross, penitential rite and Collect. The Mass proceeds in the usual manner. Blessed palms may be made available during the week, in a prudent manner that respects travel and gathering restrictions.
- 2. Easter** is the heart of the entire liturgical year and is not simply one feast among others. The Easter Triduum is celebrated over the arc of three days which is preceded by Lent and crowned by Pentecost and, therefore, cannot be transferred to another time.

3. **The Chrism Mass** will occur on Tuesday, April 7th, at 6:00 p.m., without the faithful present. The *Catholic Courier* will stream this Mass; more information will follow concerning the distribution of the Holy Oils.
4. Indications for the **Paschal Triduum** must be celebrated in the following way:

Without the physical participation of the faithful, the Bishop and parish priest(s) can celebrate the liturgical mysteries of the Paschal Triduum. The faithful should be informed of the times of the celebration so that they can prayerfully unite themselves in their homes. In this occasion, the means of live (not recorded) televisual or internet broadcasts are helpful.

Holy Thursday: The priest(s) of the parish celebrate the evening Mass of the Lord's Supper **in the absence of the faithful. The faculty to celebrate Mass on this day in a suitable place, without the people, is granted in an exceptional manner to all priests.** The washing of feet, which is already optional, is to be omitted. At the end of the Mass of the Lord's Supper the procession with the Blessed Sacrament to the place of repose is to be omitted and the Blessed Sacrament is to be kept in the tabernacle. Priests who are unable to celebrate Mass should instead pray Vespers of the day. (cf. *Liturgia Horarum*).

Good Friday: The priest(s) will celebrate the Passion of the Lord in the absence of the faithful. In the Universal Prayer, there is to be a special intention for the sick, the dead, for those who feel lost or dismayed (cf. *Missale Romanum*). The following sample is provided:

Let us pray also for those who feel lost or dismayed; for the sick and for the dead due to the Coronavirus epidemic, that he may grant them peace, safety, good health and eternal life.

Pray in silence. Then the priest prays:

Almighty ever living God, eternal health of believers, hear our prayers and by your grace turn the evil of this disease into moments of consolation and hope. Through Christ our Lord.

The Easter Vigil: The preparation and lighting of the fire is omitted during the "Solemn Beginning of the Vigil or Lucernarium," the Paschal Candle is lit, the procession is omitted and the Easter Proclamation (Exsultet) follows. The "Liturgy of the Word" then takes place. For the "Baptismal Liturgy," since the faithful are not present, the "Renewal of Baptismal Promises" recited by the priest alone is necessary. The "Liturgy of the Eucharist" then follows.

Those who have absolutely no possibility of uniting themselves to the Paschal Vigil celebrated in a church should pray the Office of Readings for Easter Sunday (cf. *Liturgia Horarum*).

Easter Sunday: The Mass of Sunday of the Resurrection is offered following the rubrics; the Creed is said, since the Mass is celebrated without a congregation.

The Sacrament of Reconciliation/Confession: In accord with the Apostolic Penitentiary's Decree on the Sacrament of Reconciliation in the current pandemic, dated March 19, 2020, the following offers necessary clarification on how to appropriately administer the Sacrament:

“Even in the time of COVID-19, the Sacrament of Reconciliation is administered in accordance with universal canon law and with the provisions of the *Ordo Paenitentiae*.”

“Individual confession is the ordinary way of celebrating this sacrament (cf. can. 960 *CIC*). In the present pandemic emergency, the prudent attentions to be adopted in the individual celebration of sacramental reconciliation include “the celebration in a ventilated place **outside the confessional**, the adoption of a suitable distance, the use of protective masks, without prejudice to absolute attention to the safeguarding of the sacramental seal and the necessary discretion.” A screen is to be used that prevents airflow and assists in maintaining appropriate distances (6 feet).

“It is always up to the diocesan bishop to determine, in the territory of his own ecclesiastical circumscription and with regard to the level of pandemic contagion, the cases of grave necessity in which it is lawful to impart collective absolution: for example, at the entrance to hospital wards, where the infected faithful in danger of death are hospitalized, using as far as possible and with the appropriate precautions the means of amplifying the voice so that absolution may be heard.” Due to limitations imposed upon travel and the prohibition of public gatherings, the situation for collective absolution does not present itself, which entails a group of people. (Cf. **Accessibility of Churches**, p. 4).

Therefore, “Where the individual faithful find themselves in the painful impossibility of receiving sacramental absolution, it should be remembered that perfect contrition, coming from the love of God, beloved above all things, expressed by a sincere request for forgiveness (that which the penitent is at present able to express) and accompanied by *votum confessionis*, that is, by the firm resolution to have recourse, as soon as possible, to sacramental confession, obtains forgiveness of sins, even mortal ones (cf. *CCC*, no. 1452).”

In the administration of this Sacrament of Reconciliation and the counsel offered above, confessors are expected to make prudential judgements, taking into consideration: “*Lex suprema, salus animarum*,” “The supreme law is the salvation of souls.” (*CIC*, c. 1752; motto of the First Bishop of Rochester, Bernard J. McQuaid).

Other Considerations:

Accessibility of Churches: As recent as 6:30 p.m., this evening, March 20, 2020, we received clarification from state officials through the New York State Catholic Conference that that “**churches can remain open for personal prayer but not congregant services.**”

Indulgences: Please see the attached Decree of the Apostolic Penitentiary on the granting of special Indulgences to the faithful in the current pandemic.

Mass Intentions: Additionally, parishes have requested guidance on Mass Intentions. While the norm remains one intention per Mass and every reasonable effort should be made in this regard, the Congregation for the Clergy, issued a Decree, *Mos iugiter obtinuit*, on February 22, 1991, recognizing that offering Mass collectively for a number of intentions (for which separate offerings have been made) can sometimes be acceptable under the following conditions:

- 1) the faithful must knowingly and willingly agree to have their intentions combined into a single Mass;
- 2) the date, time and place of this Mass is to be publicly announced;
- 3) such Masses may not occur more than twice a week in the same church; and
- 4) the celebrant may retain for himself only what amounts to the offering for one Mass, the rest being given to the purposes determined by the Ordinary. (During the Coronavirus crisis, fulfilled Mass obligation offerings should be sent to the parish to ease the financial strain).

N.B. These Masses are offered in the absence of the faithful.

If, after a reasonable, but unsuccessful effort has been made to contact those requesting the Mass intentions, collective Masses may be offered during this pandemic, in accord with #3 above. If concerns are later received, another Mass should be scheduled at a convenient time without any requested offering.

Abstinence from Meat on Fridays during Lent: The faithful of the Diocese of Rochester are granted a dispensation from the law of abstinence from meat on the Fridays of Lent for this year in an effort to assist people who may have difficulties in shopping for food or other reasons which would make this practice difficult at this time. Fridays of Lent remain days of penance and prayer, which unite us ever closer to Jesus Christ.

Funerals: Due to limitations imposed upon travel and the prohibition of public gatherings, funerals must be coordinated with the funeral home and the cemetery administration for the *Rite of Committal* to be offered at the graveside, respecting the safety of those in attendance. Memorial Masses are to be scheduled for a future time. In the Masses offered each day in the parishes without the faithful

present, priests should pray for the repose of the souls of the deceased, together with the consolation of their families.

Live-streamed Masses: I will offer the following Masses and ceremonies from the Cathedral of the Sacred Heart, which will be live-streamed by the *Catholic Courier* (www.catholiccourier.com or linked through the Diocesan website www.dor.org):

- Sunday, April 5, 2020, Palm Sunday of the Passion of the Lord: 11:00 a.m.
- Tuesday, April 7, 2020, Solemn Mass of Chrism: 6:00 p.m.
- Thursday, April 9, 2020 Thursday of the Lord’s Supper (Holy Thursday): 6:00 p.m.
- Friday, April 10, 2020 Friday of the Passion of the Lord (Good Friday): 3:00 p.m.
- Saturday, April 11, 2020 The Easter Vigil in the Holy Night: 7:00 p.m.
- Sunday, April 12, 2020 Sunday of the Resurrection (Easter Sunday): 11:00 a.m.

May Jesus Christ, the Divine Physician, grant us health and bring us to a resolution of this global pandemic. May our patron, Saint John Fisher, and Mary, Our Mother, protect us and intercede for us. “Never before has the Church experienced thus the power of the communion of saints, raising to her Crucified and Risen Lord her vows and prayers, especially the Sacrifice of Holy Mass, celebrated daily, even without the presence of the people, by priests.” (Apostolic Penitentiary, *Decree on the Sacrament of Reconciliation in the current pandemic*, March 19, 2020).

Assuring you of my gratitude and continued prayers, longing with you for the peace of the Risen Christ, I remain

Sincerely yours in Christ,

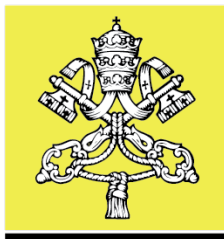
+ Salvatore R. Matano
 The Most Reverend Salvatore R. Matano
 Bishop of Rochester

-with attachment-

The Memorare

Remember, O most gracious Virgin Mary,
 that never was it known that anyone who fled to thy protection,
 implored thy help or sought thy intercession was left unaided.
 Inspired by this confidence, I fly unto thee,
 O Virgin of virgins, my Mother.
 To thee do I come, before thee I stand, sinful and sorrowful.
 O Mother of the Word Incarnate, despise not my petitions,
 but in thy mercy hear and answer me. Amen.

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SALA STAMPA DELLA SANTA SEDE

N. 200320c

Friday 20.03.2020

Decree of the Apostolic Penitentiary on the granting of special Indulgences to the faithful in the current pandemic

The gift of special Indulgences is granted to the faithful suffering from COVID-19 disease, commonly known as Coronavirus, as well as to health care workers, family members and all those who in any capacity, including through prayer, care for them.

“Be joyful in hope, patient in affliction, faithful in prayer” (*Rom* 12: 12). The words written by Saint Paul to the Church of Rome resonate throughout the entire history of the Church and guide the judgment of the faithful in the face of all suffering, sickness and calamity.

The present moment in which the whole of humanity, threatened by an invisible and insidious disease, which for some time now has become part of all our lives, is marked day after day by anguished fears, new uncertainties and above all widespread physical and moral suffering.

The Church, following the example of her Divine Master, has always had the care of the sick at heart. As Saint John Paul II points out, the value of human suffering is twofold: “It is supernatural because it is rooted in the divine mystery of the Redemption of the world, and it is likewise deeply human, because in it the person discovers himself, his own humanity, his own dignity, his own mission” (Apostolic Letter *Salvifici Doloris*, 31).

Pope Francis, too, in these recent days, has shown his paternal closeness and renewed his invitation to pray incessantly for those who are sick with the Coronavirus.

So that all those who suffer because of COVID-19, precisely in the mystery of this suffering, may rediscover “the same redemptive suffering of Christ” (*ibid.*, 30), this Apostolic Penitentiary, *ex auctoritate Summi Pontificis*, trusting in the word of Christ the Lord and considering with a spirit of faith the epidemic currently underway, to be lived in a spirit of personal conversion, grants the gift of Indulgences in accordance with the following disposition.

The *Plenary Indulgence* is granted to the faithful suffering from Coronavirus, who are subject to quarantine by order of the health authority in hospitals or in their own homes if, with a spirit detached from any sin, they unite spiritually through the media to the celebration of Holy Mass, the recitation of the Holy Rosary, to the pious

practice of the Way of the Cross or other forms of devotion, or if at least they will recite the Creed, the Lord's Prayer and a pious invocation to the Blessed Virgin Mary, offering this trial in a spirit of faith in God and charity towards their brothers and sisters, with the will to fulfil the usual conditions (sacramental confession, Eucharistic communion and prayer according to the Holy Father's intentions), as soon as possible.

Health care workers, family members and all those who, following the example of the Good Samaritan, exposing themselves to the risk of contagion, care for the sick of Coronavirus according to the words of the divine Redeemer: "Greater love has no one than this: to lay down one's life for one's friends" (*Jn 15: 13*), will obtain the same gift of the *Plenary Indulgence* under the same conditions.

This Apostolic Penitentiary also willingly grants a *Plenary Indulgence* under the same conditions on the occasion of the current world epidemic, also to those faithful who offer a visit to the Blessed Sacrament, or Eucharistic adoration, or reading the Holy Scriptures for at least half an hour, or the recitation of the Holy Rosary, or the pious exercise of the Way of the Cross, or the recitation of the Chaplet of Divine Mercy, to implore from Almighty God the end of the epidemic, relief for those who are afflicted and eternal salvation for those whom the Lord has called to Himself.

The Church prays for those who find themselves unable to receive the Sacrament of the Anointing of the Sick and of the *Viaticum*, entrusting each and every one to divine Mercy by virtue of the communion of saints and granting the faithful a *Plenary Indulgence* on the point of death, provided that they are duly disposed and have recited a few prayers during their lifetime (in this case the Church makes up for the three usual conditions required). For the attainment of this indulgence the use of the crucifix or the cross is recommended (cf. *Enchiridion indulgentiarum*, no.12).

May the Blessed Virgin Mary, Mother of God and of the Church, Health of the Sick and Help of Christians, our Advocate, help suffering humanity, saving us from the evil of this pandemic and obtaining for us every good necessary for our salvation and sanctification.

The present Decree is valid notwithstanding any provision to the contrary.

Given in Rome, from the seat of the Apostolic Penitentiary, on 19 March 2020.

Mauro Cardinal Piacenza

Major Penitentiary

Krzysztof Nykiel

Regent
