



ROMAN CATHOLIC DIOCESE OF SYRACUSE

OFFICE OF THE BISHOP

240 E. ONONDAGA STREET, SYRACUSE, NY 13202-2608

April 6, 2020
Monday of Holy Week

Dear Diocesan Family,

As you and I enter more deeply into celebration of the Lord's Paschal Mystery, we enter as well the next stage of our diocesan plan concerning the Covid-19 pandemic.

Both medical experts and some local officials have spoken about the critical importance of social distancing and voluntarily sheltering in place, particularly during the next two weeks to stem the tide of the Coronavirus. In order to abide by these vital recommendations at a time when the faithful desire to observe this sacred time in various ways, the following are to be observed in the Diocese of Syracuse:

Unfortunately, **churches cannot remain open** for private prayer on Holy Thursday, Good Friday, Holy Saturday, or Easter due to the need for people to stay home unless absolutely necessary. The faithful are encouraged to participate virtually in the various solemn liturgical celebrations of the Sacred Triduum as well as by celebrating *Holy Week at Home*, an initiative of the Offices of Catechesis and Liturgy. For more information, visit www.syrdio.org.

If pastors wish to **reopen** their **churches** for private prayer after Easter, they must ensure that definite hours are announced and that their facilities are cleaned and sanitized frequently.

The **Sacrament of Penance** can only be offered upon request until further notice, observing all necessary health precautions and social distancing measures.

The following is to continue to be observed until further notice:

The faithful can continue to have **access to the sacraments** at “appropriate times” (can. 843 of the *Code of Canon Law*). Consequently, the Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults and the Sacrament of Confirmation are postponed until further notice. The baptism of children and the celebration of the Sacrament of Matrimony should be postponed whenever possible. The Eucharist may only be administered as viaticum, observing all necessary health precautions. The Sacrament of the Anointing of the Sick should only be administered in circumstances in which danger of death is imminent. Local spiritual care

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centers at hospitals can be contacted to provide access to this sacrament for patients there. The funeral rites may be celebrated for the dead with immediate family only.

The following are clarifications for your information:

Among the precepts of the Church are the duties to receive Holy Communion at least once a year, during the Easter season (can. 920) and to confess grave sins at least once a year (can. 989). These precepts often go together because in order to receive Holy Communion, one must be in a “state of grace,” that is free from grave sin (can. 916). Thus, they are called the “**Easter duties**.” In the United States, the Easter duties may be fulfilled at anytime between the First Sunday of Lent (1 March 2020) and Trinity Sunday (7 June 2020). When it is impossible for those who have not already done so to fulfill these duties, they are suspended. Therefore, there is no obligation to fulfill them during the Easter season, unless and until public gatherings for Mass and prayer resume.

The allowance of **ten people** at a liturgy is a maximum, not a goal. Only the minimal number of liturgical ministers necessary for the celebration of a particular liturgy should be used.

The ***Diocese of Syracuse Instructions for the Celebration of Holy Week 2020*** have been updated. The updates are based on further consultation regarding the merging of the instructions provided by the Congregation for Divine Worship and the Discipline of the Sacraments with the rubrics in the *Roman Missal*. They are underlined for your convenience. Please visit www.syradio.org and refer to them before celebrating the liturgies of the Sacred Triduum.

Please also continue to consult the **various resources** that have been made available on our diocesan website to assist you, in particular *Holy Week at Home*, *Caring for our Spiritual and Sacramental Lives When Public Gatherings are Suspended*, and *Frequently Asked Questions*.

Thank you for your kind attention to these important matters. The physical and spiritual health and safety of everyone is always a priority, especially at this time.

Be assured of my continued closeness to you in the celebration of the sacred liturgy and in prayer. May Mary, Health of the Sick, intercede for us and may our own participation in the Paschal Mystery, lead us to know God’s healing love and mercy, spiritually and physically.

In the Name of Jesus,



Most Reverend Douglas J. Lucia
Bishop of Syracuse