



Diocese of Trenton
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Office of
THE BISHOP

March 20, 2020

To All the Faithful of the Diocese of Trenton,

The Holy See has issued a decree regarding the celebrations of the upcoming Palm Sunday and Holy Week/Easter for implementation by diocesan bishops throughout the world. I have issued [a decree for the Diocese of Trenton](#) (see decree below), implementing the directives of the Holy See.

These unprecedented measures have been deemed necessary, given the best information we have received from federal, state and local public health authorities.

Although COVID-19 has dramatically affected all of us in so many ways, I want to reach out to you with pastoral care and affection. Our public Holy Week and Easter celebrations will be quite different this year but the underlying mysteries of our faith in the Lord's Passion, Death and Resurrection have not changed. They continue to be the source and support of our faith and we should celebrate them this year, even though in a different way.

Permit me please, as your Bishop, to encourage you to use all the means available to sustain and nurture your faith. Follow Masses and other liturgical celebrations reverently on-line or via televised broadcast. Read the liturgical readings in your missals, other publications or on the internet. Pray your devotions privately or as families, especially the Rosary, Stations of the Cross, and other beloved traditional devotions. Where it is possible and permitted, stop in church to visit and adore the Blessed Sacrament. If this is not possible, make a spiritual communion at home or wherever you may be. The great saints in our Church's history followed that practice. Keep your faith and prayer life alive until things in our public practice of the faith is restored.

Hold fast to your connection with your faith family. Check in regularly with your parish's website and social media. Know that our Chancery team will continue to keep you informed and share spiritual resources through our diocesan websites –

DioceseofTrenton.org and TrentonMonitor.com – as well as on our social media sites.

Please stay as calm as possible. Faith and patience are good companions in the spiritual life. They become the source of charity in our genuine witness to the Lord Jesus and his Good News. Be kind and attentive to others — your own families, neighbors, friends and those who are elderly and alone. Reach out in the best ways possible. Be grateful to/for those who are working to address COVID-19 in so many different venues. Be generous. The pandemic is and will continue take its toll on families and on our parishes. Keep the needs of others in mind. Above all, please remember that the Lord Jesus is in our midst, now and always. As he touched lives, healed the sick and ministered with love and merciful compassion throughout the Gospels, know that he will continue to do so for us. Have no doubt about that. "Be joyful in hope, persevere in hardship, keep praying regularly (Romans 12:12)."

God bless us all and protect us. O Mary, Mother of Divine Love, protect and lead us to the heart of your Son.

Sincerely yours in the Lord,

Bishop O'Connell

**THE FOLLOWING IS THE MARCH 20, 2020 DECREE FROM BISHOP O'CONNELL
FOR THE VIDEO VISIT DIOCESEOFTRENTON.ORG/CORONAVIRUS**

March 20, 2020

Bishop David M. O'Connell, C.M., issued the following decree March 20, 2020, in regard to Holy Week liturgies and other spiritual activities amid coronavirus restrictions currently in place.

DECREE in time of COVID-19

As Bishop of the Diocese of Trenton, I promulgate the following decree regarding the liturgies of Palm Sunday and Holy Week throughout the territorial Diocese of Trenton to assist the clergy and the faithful in the spiritual celebration of the Paschal Mysteries.

PALM SUNDAY

No public gatherings (inside or outside Churches, in cars, etc.).

The Mass for Palm Sunday will be celebrated by the Bishop without a congregation, with palms blessed, and broadcast via the live-stream internet on the Diocesan websites at 11 am on Sunday, April 5, 2020.

The Mass for Palm Sunday may be celebrated without a congregation by the pastor/parish priest in parish churches with live-stream capability; pastors should notify the parishioners of the time for the live-stream; pastors should also notify the Diocesan Office of Communications so that a Diocesan calendar/schedule of events might be posted for access by the faithful of the Diocese.

Blessed palms can be made available for distribution at a later date.

CHRISM MASS

The Chrism Mass will be postponed and re-scheduled for another date/time with the renewal of priestly commitment and the blessing/consecration of oils occurring at that time.

Oils/chrism from the current supplies (currently in use) may continue to be used until a new supply is blessed/consecrated and made available.

If the parish is running low on oils/chrism, contact Fr. Michael Hall, Director of Worship, mhall@dioceseoftrenton.org.

PASCHAL TRIDUUM: the following liturgical directives are to be observed in accordance with the "Decree in Time of COVID-19" issued on March 19, 2020 by the Congregation for Divine Worship and Discipline of the Sacraments by mandate of the Supreme Pontiff for the year 2020 only.

The Paschal Triduum cannot be transferred to another time.

HOLY THURSDAY

No public gatherings (inside or outside Churches, in cars, etc.).

Televised or live-stream broadcasts should be live (not recorded).

The Evening Mass of the Lord's Supper will be celebrated by the Bishop without a congregation and broadcast via the live-stream internet on the Diocesan websites at 7 pm on Thursday, April 9, 2020.

The Evening Mass of the Lord's Supper may be celebrated without a congregation by the pastor/parish priest in parish churches with live-stream capability; pastors should notify the parishioners of the time for the live-stream; pastors should also notify the Diocesan Office of Communications so that a Diocesan calendar/schedule of events might be posted for access by the faithful of the Diocese.

During the Evening Mass for the Lord's Supper:

The Washing of the Feet, which is already optional, is to be omitted;

The usual procession with the Blessed Sacrament to a place of repose is to be omitted and the Blessed Sacrament should be kept in the tabernacle, as usual.

Priests who are unable to celebrate Mass should instead pray Vespers of the day from the Liturgy of Hours instead.

GOOD FRIDAY

No public gatherings (inside or outside Churches, in cars, etc.).

The Commemoration/Celebration of the Lord's Passion will be celebrated by the Bishop without a congregation and broadcast via the live-stream internet on the Diocesan websites at 3 pm on Friday, April 10, 2020.

The Commemoration/Celebration of the Lord's Passion may be celebrated without a congregation by the pastor/parish priest in parish churches with live-stream capability; pastors should notify the parishioners of the time for the live-stream; pastors should also notify the Diocesan Office of Communications so that a Diocesan calendar/schedule of events might be posted for access by the faithful of the Diocese.

A special commemoration in the General Intercessions for the sick, the dead and for those who feel lost or dismayed will be developed by the Office of Worship and sent to the parishes for mandated use.

Priests who are unable to celebrate this liturgy should instead pray Vespers of the day from the Liturgy of Hours instead.

HOLY SATURDAY

No public gatherings (inside or outside Churches, in cars, etc.).

The Easter Vigil will be celebrated by the Bishop without a congregation and broadcast via the live-stream internet on the Diocesan websites at 7 pm on Saturday, April 11, 2020.

The Easter Vigil may be celebrated without a congregation by the pastor/parish priest in parish churches with live-stream capability; pastors should notify the parishioners of the time for the live-stream; pastors should also notify the Diocesan Office of Communications so that a Diocesan calendar/schedule of events might be posted for access by the faithful of the Diocese.

During the Easter Vigil:

The preparation and lighting of the fire is omitted

The paschal candle is lit without procession followed by the recited Easter Proclamation

The Liturgy of the Word takes place

The Baptismal Liturgy is only the renewal of Baptismal Promises; a symbolic (small) of Holy Water may be blessed but holy water fonts should remain empty

The Rite of Christian Initiation and/or Reception into Full Communion will be postponed and re-scheduled once restrictions are lifted

Priests who are unable to celebrate the Easter Vigil should instead pray Vespers/Matins/Lauds of the day from the Liturgy of Hours instead.

EASTER SUNDAY

No public gatherings (inside or outside Churches, in cars, etc.).

Mass for Easter Sunday will be celebrated by the Bishop without a congregation and broadcast via the live-stream internet on the Diocesan websites at 10 am on Sunday, April 12, 2020.

Mass for Easter Sunday may be celebrated without a congregation by the pastor/parish priest in parish churches with live-stream capability; pastors should notify the parishioners of the time for the live-stream; pastors should also notify the Diocesan Office of Communications so that a Diocesan calendar/schedule of events might be posted for access by the faithful of the Diocese.

Priests are otherwise asked to celebrate Easter Sunday without a congregation.

Given by mandate of the Bishop, Most Reverend David M. O'Connell, C.M., J.C.D., March 20, 2020, for the Diocese of Trenton.

POST-SCRIPT:

No general absolution is to be given at this time; if that changes, it will be communicated / announced.
Regarding Plenary Indulgence:

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 fulfill 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).

(*fulfillment of the usual conditions may not be immediately possible; therefore, the will to fulfill them suffices with the intention to fulfill the usual conditions “as soon as possible.”)