



**The Catholic Diocese of Buffalo
Office of the Apostolic Administrator**

“Be strong and bold; have no fear or dread...because it is the Lord your God who goes with you; he will not fail you or forsake you.”

Deuteronomy 31:6

March 31, 2020

My Dear Brother Priests, Deacons, Pastoral Administrators and Associates,

These unprecedented days that require us to remain apart are, I realize, a difficult burden for our Faithful and for each of us as sacred ministers, particularly during this holy season of Lent. We are understandably “out of sorts” - deprived of the personal connections and the spiritual nourishment that the shared celebration of our sacramental life provides. Still, we have an obligation as ministers of souls - and with the care and concern of those we serve first and foremost - to observe the social distancing requirements that our public health officials have mandated during the ongoing coronavirus threat.

Recognizing that many of our parish communities are especially vulnerable given advanced age and underlying health issues, we must do everything that we can to prevent their exposure to the virus - even though it deprives them and us of the spiritual communion we crave.

Particularly at this time, we would do well to reference and assert the passage from the Book of Lamentations: *“The Lord is my portion,’ says my soul, ‘therefore I will hope in him.’ The Lord is good to those who wait for him, to the soul that seeks him.”*

It is a source of great personal sadness for me that we will not be able to celebrate our Chrism Mass next week given the restrictions on public gatherings. I realize that this is a much anticipated opportunity for all priests to gather together in fraternal love and support for the blessing of holy oils and the enjoyment of the camaraderie that is so vital to our priestly ministry. We will most definitely identify an opportunity at the earliest possible moment to celebrate the Chrism Mass, when it is deemed safe for all and when the threat of the virus has subsided.

This also means, of course, that we will not gather together or celebrate publicly the liturgies of Holy Week and Easter. Similar to dioceses all over the country and world, we will implore the Faithful to unite together in prayer and in a spirit of true Christian solidarity during these most sacred days and to celebrate the Triduum and Easter Mass with us through the benefit of live-streaming technology. I will be presiding at Palm Sunday, Holy Thursday, Good Friday, and Holy Saturday (Easter Vigil) from the Immaculate Conception Cathedral in Albany. I realize that many of our parishes also offer live-streaming capability and I ask you to promote this regularly among your parish families. We have posted a resource page on the Diocesan website at: <https://www.buffalodiocese.org/livestreams>

The live-streamed liturgies of Holy Week and Easter that I will celebrate will be available on the Diocese of Albany website: www.rdda.org/livestream and on the [Diocese of Albany Facebook Page](#) during the following times, with the exception of Easter Sunday:

- [Sunday, April 5, 11 a.m.](#) - **Palm Sunday Mass**
- [Holy Thursday, April 9, 5:30 p.m.](#) - **Mass of the Lord's Supper**
- [Good Friday, April 10, 5:30 p.m.](#) - **Solemn Liturgy of the Lord's Passion and Death**
- [Holy Saturday, April 11, 8 p.m.](#) - **Solemn Vigil of Easter**
- [Easter Sunday, April 12, 11 a.m.](#) - **Easter Mass**, Father David R. LeFort, rector of the cathedral, presiding.

A number of you have asked about the distribution of blessed palms, beginning this coming Palm Sunday. Again, we must make every effort to discourage people from congregating - even in small numbers at parishes. There are also risks in making palms available on tables in church vestibules, given the likelihood that they would be handled by many individuals coming and going. As such, I ask your cooperation to prevent any risk of this kind and to refrain from distributing palms at this time. Leaving the distribution of palms to varying discretion is simply not prudent in light of the difficulty of knowing how great the demand will be and how to effectively control the handling and distribution safely.

As we continue our Lenten journey toward the joy of His resurrection, let us unite constantly in prayerful support for one another with the sure knowledge that the Lord in His faithfulness will lead us through these days of uncertainty, calm our every fear and gather us together once again in His abiding love.

Yours sincerely in Christ,

The Most Reverend Edward B. Scharfenberger
Apostolic Administrator