



## *Diocese of Rockford*

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Office of the Bishop

March 26, 2020

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

As we continue to respond to the spread and the danger of the coronavirus, I write once more to offer a word of encouragement. Many exceptional steps have been taken both in the Church and in the wider society, in an effort to protect individuals from exposure to the virus or from becoming a carrier that might expose others.

As Catholics, we recognize a particular obligation to see Christ in every moment of our lives, both the good and the challenging. Every sacrifice that we make is another step on our way to choosing for Christ, and therefore for eternal life in heaven itself.

We are a people of hope and trust in the Lord. Jesus has told us that His true followers are the salt of the earth and the light of the world. That means that we have received not only the gift of faith, but also the responsibility that comes with that gift. The current moment challenges us to live as those who truly believe that Jesus has not left us alone, but is with us even more closely when difficulties arise. Others, especially those who are fearful, ill, lonely or without faith, need to have our witness, especially now.

As the coronavirus problem is projected to intensify in the coming days, I write to convey to you some further dispositions to address the projected spike in cases and the longer timeframe that appears to be anticipated for protective measures. To that end:

- 1) Through Easter Sunday (up until and including Easter Sunday), all Masses are to continue to be celebrated privately without the presence of the faithful.
- 2) I also take this opportunity to extend the dispensation given to all the faithful from the obligation of attending Sunday Mass through Easter Sunday.
- 3) All adoration chapels are now to be closed in order to increase our response to protect the faithful from the spread of the coronavirus.

Given the continuing unavailability of the sacraments to the faithful except in grave circumstances, there is a widespread feeling of longing to be with Christ and with the Church. It is important that we continue to recognize the ability of Jesus to be close to us even in such an exceptional time.

I have asked Father Jonathan Bakkelund, Director of the Office of Divine Worship of the Diocese of Rockford, to prepare some thoughts on the Plenary Indulgences that the Vatican has made available at

this time, as well as means for a spiritual communion when Eucharistic communion is not available, and likewise the richness of making a perfect act of contrition when sacramental reconciliation cannot be accessed. His very helpful comments are attached.

Please know of my prayers for all of you during this unprecedented time. I ask for your prayers as well.

Sincerely yours in Christ,

+ *David J. Malloy*

Most Reverend David J. Malloy  
Bishop of Rockford

Attachment

## **Plenary Indulgences**

The Holy See recently granted a plenary indulgence 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.

As well as to 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.

And to those faithful who offer a visit to the Blessed Sacrament, 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 Holy Father, Pope Francis, also announced after the Angelus prayer on Sunday, March 22, that this coming Friday, March 27, at 6:00 pm, he will preside over a moment of prayer on the sagratta of Saint Peter's Basilica, before the empty square. He invites everyone to participate spiritually through the means of communication. We will listen to the Word of God, we will lift up our supplication, we will adore the Blessed Sacrament, with which at the end, he will give the Urbi et Orbi blessing, to which will be connected the possibility of receiving the plenary indulgence.

A plenary indulgence validly obtained, grants the remission of all temporal punishment due to sin.

A plenary indulgence is obtained by:

- carrying out one of the external acts listed above
- sacramental confession (as soon as possible)
- receiving Holy Communion (as soon as possible)
- praying for the Holy Father's intentions

## **Perfect Contrition**

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).

Perfect contrition means a sorrow for sin out of love for God. It does not mean being “perfectly sorry.”

Perfect contrition is sorrow for sin out of love for God and His goodness, whereas imperfect contrition (while still a gift of God) is sorrow for sin due to a fear of hell, judgment and punishment (CCC 1452-1453).

## **Act of Spiritual Communion**

It is a beautiful and praiseworthy tradition to recite an act of spiritual communion when one is unable, for whatever reason, to receive Holy Communion. Below is an act of spiritual communion composed by Saint Alphonsus Ligouri.

My Jesus,  
I believe that You  
are present in the Most Holy Sacrament.  
I love You above all things,  
and I desire to receive You into my soul.  
Since I cannot at this moment  
receive You sacramentally,  
come at least spiritually into my heart. I embrace You as if You were already there and  
unite myself wholly to You. Never permit me to be separated from You.  
Amen.