March 27, 2020

My Dear Brothers in Christ:

It’s me again! I hope you have not reached the point where you are “tuning out” messages I am sending. The messages are quite important and are intended to help us all as we prepare to navigate our first Triduum (and we can hope ONLY) without Assemblies in our church buildings.

As this week has progressed, Texas Bishops have been reconsidering and discerning anew the best policies and practices to implement in our dioceses in the face of the COVID-19 (Coronavirus) pandemic. A major concern which has arisen and has been voiced by members of our Faithful is the potential for spread of the disease by means of the distribution of Holy Communion. The fears include the possibility of contagion as a minister of Holy Communion moves from one communicant to another, as well as fear for the ministers themselves from being in close contact with many people in a very short period of time. Therefore, effective tomorrow, Saturday March 28, we must resort to the extreme measure of celebrating private Masses, hopefully made accessible to our people via various forms of media, with NO distribution of Holy Communion to the Faithful. The diocesan website contains several prayers for use when making a Spiritual Communion when unable to physically receive Holy Communion.

On Wednesday the Vatican Congregation for Divine Worship and Sacraments issued some clarifying and simplified notes regarding the upcoming celebrations of Holy Week. Further clarifications pertinent to the Diocese of Lubbock can be found in a different font and in red.

1 - Palm Sunday. The Commemoration of the Lord’s Entrance into Jerusalem is to be celebrated within sacred buildings; in Cathedral churches the second form given in the Roman Missal is to be adopted; in parish churches and in other places the third form is to be used. The Presbyteral Council of the Diocese of Lubbock has asked me to decree that palms NOT be distributed as a health measure. I would suggest that you store them in a cool place if you have such available and perhaps they can be distributed as part of what we hope will be an extra celebratory Pentecost Sunday on May 31.

2 – The Chrism Mass. Evaluating the concrete situation in different countries, the Episcopal Conferences will be able to give indications about a possible transfer to another date. The Presbyteral Council has agreed to transfer the Chrism Mass of the Diocese of Lubbock to June 27, 2020 at 10:00 am at Christ the King Cathedral.

Most Reverend Robert M. Coerver, Bishop of Lubbock

P O Box 98700
Lubbock TX 79499-8700

(806) 792-3943 ext. 203
rcover@catholiclubbock.org

Judy Leos Rodriguez, Executive Assistant
jrodriguez@catholiclubbock.org
3 – **Holy Thursday.** 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 is also omitted and the Blessed Sacrament is to be kept in the tabernacle. On this day the faculty to celebrate Mass in a suitable place, without the presence of the people, is exceptionally granted to all priests. **Normally such a private Mass is prohibited on Holy Thursday.**

4 – **Good Friday.** In the Universal Prayer, Bishops will arrange to have a special intention prepared for those who find themselves in distress, the sick, the dead, (cf. *Missale Romanum*). The adoration of the Cross by kissing it shall be limited solely to the celebrant. **Here is the text of that special intercession:**

   Let us pray, dearly beloved, for a swift end to the coronavirus pandemic that afflicts our world, that our God and Father will heal the sick, strengthen those who care for them, and help us all to persevere in faith.
   Prayer in silence. Then the Priest says:
   Almighty and merciful God,
   source of all life, health and healing,
   look with compassion on our world, brought low by disease; protect us in the midst of the grave challenges that assail us and in your fatherly providence grant recovery to the stricken, strength to those who care for them, and success to those working to eradicate this scourge.
   Through Christ our Lord.
   R. Amen.

5 – **The Easter Vigil:** Is to be celebrated only in Cathedral and parish churches. For the “Baptismal Liturgy” only the “Renewal of Baptismal Promises” is maintained (cf. *Missale Romanum*). My understanding of this stipulation is that the Litany of Saints and the Blessing of Baptismal Water is eliminated. Previous stipulations from the Congregation indicated that the Blessing of the Fire is eliminated. The Paschal Candle is lit in its stand, the Exsultet is proclaimed and the usual Liturgy of the Word follows.

I have been very impressed with the creativity that has been shown by the parishes of the Diocese in providing celebrations of Eucharist, Penance, and Popular Devotions (e.g. Stations of the Cross). I want to thank all of you for your openness to exercising such creativity and the zeal for souls which such creativity has expressed. The need for that creativity will only increase as we draw closer to Holy Week and the celebration of Easter.

Effective tonight residents of Scurry County (Snyder & Hermleigh) are being placed under a “Stay Home” or “shelter in place” order. Parishes in those geographical areas where such orders are issued will need to suspend all Confessions as well as the aforementioned distribution of Holy Communion by any means. In addition, Catholic churches and parish offices in such jurisdictions are to remain closed. We must be leaders in promoting public health and safety during this pandemic. Attached with this message is the letter from the Vatican’s Apostolic Penitentiary which describes the Act of Perfect Contrition which conveys the forgiveness of sins in a situation such as this. The diocesan website contains a “user friendly” description of this “perfect contrition.”
Finally, I ask you to take care of yourselves. Make it a point to exercise. Get outside into the warmer fresh air we are experiencing (maintaining appropriate “social distance” of course). Eat well and wisely. Tend to your personal spiritual life. Reach out to one another by electronic means. Beware of depression setting in and fear overwhelming us and our people. Do not hesitate to reach out to me if you have any questions or needs or concerns. I will make myself available to tend to you.

Thank you for your faithfulness and commitment to your ministry and to the people entrusted to your care. Let us continue to be united in prayer. You are loved and cared for!

Your brother in Christ,

[Signature]

Most Reverend Robert M. Coerver
Bishop of Lubbock