

ALL MASSES IN THE DIOCESE OF ALBANY CANCELED UNTIL FURTHER NOTICE, FAITHFUL URGED TO TAKE TIME TO PRAY AT HOME

Due to growing concerns and medical advice related to the rapid spread of COVID-19 in social settings, Bishop Edward B. Scharfenberger has announced that **all regularly scheduled public Masses in the Roman Catholic Diocese of Albany — except weddings and funerals — will be canceled until further notice.** Churches will, however, remain open for private prayer, pending further regulations.

In addition, all Confirmations have been canceled until further notice and will be rescheduled. Funerals and weddings may be attended only by close family and in accordance with social distancing and capacity requirements. Further restrictions may force a change in those guidelines as we go forward.

"Although we know how difficult it is for Catholics to be without the Mass and without the Eucharist, we must do our part to help 'flatten the curve' and stop the spread of COVID-19 in order to protect the most vulnerable among us," Bishop Scharfenberger said when making the announcement. "I encourage the faithful to pray and fast as we continue our journey through this season of Lent. Try to include at least 15 minutes of daily intentional prayer, with family where possible and safe. Use the Bible, say the Rosary, watch Mass on TV, and please remember to pray for those who are suffering from the Coronavirus worldwide and for all those in the medical community who are on the front lines."

The Diocese of Albany is keeping Catholics apprised of changes, updates and resources on its dedicated web page: rcda.org/coronavirus. In addition, a Faith at Home page includes links to livestreamed Mass, daily Scripture readings, saints of the day, and suggestions for creating a sacred space at home: rcda.org/coronavirus/resources.

Giovanni Virgilio, Jr. | Diocesan Chancellor

- MASS IS CANCELLED - ST. JOSEPH'S ROOM, IN THE ICC HALL IS OPEN FOR QUIET PRAYER

**PLEASE REMEMBER THE PEOPLE
WHO ARE ILL, THE MEDICAL
STAFFS WHO CARE FOR US, AND
THOSE WHO ARE ISOLATED AND
AFRAID. MAY GOD'S PEACE,
HEALING, AND FAITH BE OURS.**

God of healing and hope; in Jesus you meet us in the depths of our being, in our places of pain and fear, in our places of joy and adventure. Look with mercy on those who have contracted this new virus, on any who are vulnerable, and on all who feel in danger. Through this time of global concern, by your Holy Spirit bring out the best, not the worst in us. Make us more aware of our interdependence on each other, and the strength that comes from being one Body in you. Rejoin us as one Sacred People. Amen.



Pandemic

What if you thought of it
as the Jews consider the Sabbath—
the most sacred of times?
Cease from travel.
Cease from buying and selling.
Give up, just for now,
on trying to make the world
different than it is.
Sing. Pray. Touch only those
to whom you commit your life.
Center down.

And when your body has become still,
reach out with your heart.
Know that we are connected
in ways that are terrifying and beautiful.
(You could hardly deny it now.)

Know that our lives
are in one another's hands.
(Surely, that has come clear.)
Do not reach out your hands.
Reach out your heart.
Reach out your words.
Reach out all the tendrils
of compassion that move, invisibly,
where we cannot touch.

Promise this world your love—
for better or for worse,
in sickness and in health,
so long as we all shall live.

—Lynn Ungar