

***(BRIEF SUMMARY FOR THE FAITHFUL)***  
**RECENT UPDATES TO THE DIOCESE OF BUFFALO**  
**CORONAVIRUS DIRECTIVES**

**FROM**        **Rev Peter J. Karalus, Vicar General and Moderator of the Curia**  
**RE:**            **Coronavirus Directives: 3-17-2020 Update**  
**DATE:**        **March 17, 2020**

**Update:**

All efforts must be taken to reduce gatherings in order to prevent the spread of the coronavirus. Adults over 60 years old with underlying medical conditions are most at risk, but in Western New York, a 5 year-old child and adults in their 20s & 30s have tested positive for the virus. Each individual must do his or her part and be responsible by following the directives given to prevent, as much as possible, the spread of the virus. We all have a social responsibility.

The Centers for Disease Control have now instructed that people do not gather in groups larger than ten (10) individuals and to follow social distancing instructions. The places where people gather – restaurants, cafes, bars, gyms are now closed. Preventing gatherings is the best approach for successful prevention.

**Directives and suggestions for Palm Sunday and Holy Week will be forthcoming as soon as possible.**

The principles underlying the instructions for each sacrament or liturgy as detailed below:

- Following the advice of entities such as the Centers for Disease Control (CDC) and the directives of governmental authorities (For example: limits to gathering size, following other guidelines such as hygiene/sanitizing, social distance etc.)
- Following Canon Law and General Liturgical norms
- Balancing an abundance of caution with pastoral and spiritual care. It is obviously the case that the sacraments and other liturgies give the gift of grace, as well as providing spiritual comfort and strength.
- Especially protecting the elderly and vulnerable, our priests, deacons, and other lay ministers
- Engaging everyone in fulfilling our common responsibility for self-care and care of neighbor.
- Checking the Diocesan website for resources for praying at home, examples of ‘spiritual communion’, live-streaming Mass etc.

- Churches should remain open as much as possible to provide the opportunity for prayer
- These Instructions are subject to change as the situation develops

**Clarifications:**

It is for the reason of preventing the spread of the coronavirus that Masses and other gatherings across the Diocese have been cancelled. While priests are to celebrate Mass daily, those Masses MUST be celebrated WITHOUT a congregation.

Parish Churches should be open for the faithful to pray – again following social distancing instructions. Stations of the Cross, the Rosary, and other devotions should not be communal.

EASTER DUTY consists of the faithful receiving Communion at least once a year fulfilled during the Easter season. This obligation may be fulfilled between March 1 (First Sunday of Lent) and June 7 (Trinity Sunday). Hopefully restrictions will be lifted and the faithful will have the opportunity to fulfill this obligation within the proscribed time.

Catholic are also bound by an obligation faithfully to confess serious sins at least once a year. Many utilize the season of Lent to fulfill this obligation. Once restrictions are lifted, it may possible to offer Reconciliation Services during the Easter Season.