



# CATHOLIC DIOCESE OF LEXINGTON

THE CATHOLIC CENTER  
OFFICE OF THE BISHOP

25 March 2020

Solemnity of the Annunciation

Dear Brothers in the Presbyterate,

Thank you for your creative ministry to the people of God during these most challenging circumstances. I am appreciative of all those who are reaching out to the faithful by phone, through videos and other means of social communication, and sharing the great message of our faith- that God is with us.

I also appreciate your patience as directives come forth from the Chancery. As you know, we are dealing with an unprecedented reality and one that is changing all the time. I know that everyone is doing the best they can to respond to peoples' spiritual needs and to keep our focus on the Reign of God.

In this message, I would like to address concerns about the Sacrament of Reconciliation. Many of the priests are continuing to offer sacramental confession by appointment, observing the necessary social distancing among penitents and between the priest and penitent. We will continue this practice until there are different directives.

Many have asked about **General Absolution**. By its very nature, "general" absolution presumes a gathering of a number too numerous to have their confessions heard individually. Since we are not having any gatherings at this time, this is not practical. However, according to directives from the Apostolic Penitentiary in Rome and the Secretariat of Doctrine and Canonical Affairs of the USCCB, if conditions become such that a number of patients in the same hospital ward or a place functioning as a hospital ward are in need of absolution, general absolution could be offered to them with a simple explanation by the priests of how the penitents are to participate: ideally with a brief passage from scripture, an act of penance and the formula of general absolution. In necessity, only the formula of absolution is necessary. Every priest with faculties in the Diocese of Lexington has my authorization to use general absolution in the circumstances described above.

It will helpful in more situations to inform the faithful that it is our Catholic tradition that when sacramental confession is not possible, **perfect contrition** obtains the forgiveness of sins, even mortal sins (cf. CCC #1452). Perfect contrition simply requires: the love of God, the sincere desire for forgiveness, and the commitment to receive the sacrament of reconciliation when possible. This should be made known by all means possible.

The Holy See has also offered **special indulgences** related to COVID-19, recognizing the special opportunity to unite our suffering to the redemptive suffering of Christ.

A **plenary indulgence** is granted to the faithful suffering from Corona virus who are subject to quarantine by order of authorities either at home or in the hospital, if with a spirit detached from any sin, they unite spiritually through the media to the celebration of Mass, the recitation of the Holy Rosary, the praying of the Way of the Cross or other forms of devotion or even to simply recite the Creed, the Lord's Prayer, and make an invocation to the Blessed Mother, offering this trial in a spirit of faith in God and charity towards their brothers and sisters, with the intention to fulfill the usual conditions (confession, reception of communion and prayer for the Holy Father's intentions), as soon as possible.

**Health Care Workers, Family Members and all those Exposed to Contagion**, may obtain the same plenary indulgence under the same conditions.

A plenary indulgence removes all the temporal punishment due to sin (CCC, #1471).

Let us continue to pray for each other and encourage each other as we shepherd the people of God through this valley of darkness toward the light of the Risen Christ.

Peace and all good,



Bishop John

*On the next page is a Spanish translation of the conditions for perfect contrition and the special indulgences.*

**Acto de contrición perfecto:**

Cuando no haya la posibilidad de la confesión sacramental, nuestra tradición católica nos ofrece la opción de hacer **un acto de contrición perfecto**. Es decir que los pecados, aun los pecados mortales, pueden ser perdonados si hay: amor a Dios, el deseo sincero de perdón, y la promesa de hacer todo lo posible para recibir el sacramento de reconciliación cuando sea posible.

**Indulgencia especial para COVID-19:**

La indulgencia plenaria se ofrece a los fieles que sufren del Coronavirus y que están bajo cuarentena, o sea en el hospital o en la casa. Se requiere un espíritu libre de los lazos del pecado, y que la persona se una espiritualmente, por los medios de comunicación, a la celebración de la Misa, al rezo del Santo Rosario, o al Via Crucis u otro acto de devoción. Sería suficiente rezar solamente el Credo, el Padre Nuestro, una oración a la Bienaventurada Virgen María y ofrecer sus pruebas con espíritu de fe en Dios y caridad hacia el prójimo, junto con la intención de cumplir las otras condiciones habituales (confesión, comunión y oración para las intenciones del Santo Padre) cuando sea posible.