“Today, in the tragedy of a pandemic, in the face of the many false securities that have now crumbled, in the face of so many hopes betrayed, in the sense of abandonment that weighs upon our hearts, Jesus says to each one of us: ‘Courage, open your heart to my love. You will feel the consolation of God who sustains you.’”

-- From Pope Francis’ Palm Sunday message.

The Diocese and COVID-19 Q&A
Because people want to know …

Why are we not having Mass if the governor says church is “essential?”

The Diocese of Victoria is following the local recommendation that people need to social distance in order to prevent the spread of COVID-19. We continue to make resources available through television and the Internet to serve people in their homes where they are the least likely to become ill.

What does the term “essential” actually mean?

Essential does not imply that we go about worshipping as usual. The potential harm to others remains high if we do so. It refers to having services available to those in need, such as the sick and dying. Parishes are still open in that priests and church personnel are available to assist parishioners. They can call us and we can counsel and pray with them.

Why aren’t we having drive-through confessions?

We are not encouraging drive-through services because we want people, especially the most vulnerable elderly, to remain at home while the virus is still spreading in the community. Some may be compelled to drive long distances to make their confession before Easter – especially the older parishioners – and we do not want to create a new risk for them.

Why aren’t we having drive-in or outdoor Masses?

Although it sounds like a good idea, it would be difficult to control the recommended social distancing between attendees. We could not distribute Communion from car to car without putting the health and safety of the ministers at risk. It is far safer to stay home and watch a televised Mass and make a Spiritual Communion as recommended.

Can we still visit our parish churches?

It depends on the decision of the pastor. Many parish churches remain open for private prayer and adoration. We can pray in our churches privately while keeping the necessary social distancing.

What opportunities does this current experience offer?

We can pray more at home with our families. It gives us the chance to reach out by phone or social media to those who are lonely or suffering. This is a time in which we can go beyond ourselves and consider the needs of others.

“Embracing his cross means finding the courage to embrace all the hardships of the present time, abandoning for a moment our eagerness for power and possessions in order to make room for the creativity that only the Spirit is capable of inspiring. It means finding the courage to create spaces where everyone can recognize that they are called, and to allow new forms of hospitality, fraternity and solidarity. By his cross we have been saved in order to embrace hope and let it strengthen and sustain all measures and all possible avenues for helping us protect ourselves and others. Embracing the Lord in order to embrace hope: that is the strength of faith, which frees us from fear and gives us hope.” – from Pope Francis’ Urbi et Orbi message