

BISHOP'S OFFICE
PASTORAL CENTER
40 NORTH MAIN AVENUE, ALBANY, NEW YORK 12203
FAX (518) 453-6795 • TELEPHONE (518) 453-6611

Friday, March 13, 2020

My dear brothers and sisters in Christ,

Be it ever so humble, home is the safest place to weather a storm. Until this current health crisis passes, the best thing we can do to take care of ourselves and one another is not to wander aimlessly, but to stick together with purpose. We can stay comfortable at home and we can comfort one another.

The basics...food and water, clothing, shelter. Family and friends. Stock up on these and stay put. If we have to go out, let it be only to supply the basics. The game, the party, the trip can wait. Work must go on, of course. Follow the three-foot rule as much as possible. Spread out whether in church, shopping, waiting on a line or eating somewhere.

And pray.

Pray alone and pray together. Use the prayers you know. The Rosary, novenas, the Liturgy of the Hours. Make your home a little church. Make sure the Cross is visible in a prominent place. If you have a statue or a picture of the Sacred Heart of Jesus, or Mary or Joseph, light a candle in front of it. Invite the Holy Family into your home. And get out the Bible. Read it slowly. Especially the Gospels. Let the Holy Spirit speak to your heart through the Word of God. He wrote the Scriptures after all and wants to console your heart. Share with one another what you are hearing. This is a tried and true method of prayer called *lectio divina*, used by so many saints. And, don't forget, these are the challenges of which saints are made, and you are called to be one!

It's Lent. So, fasting and abstaining a little goes with the season. Conserving our resources. Offering up our desires and fears and putting them in the hands of God, trusting that with our faith in the mercy of God, we will get through this together, even stronger as a family of faith.


No one is under the usual Sunday obligation in our Diocese of Albany to go to Mass publicly anywhere until further notice, though public Masses will continue, mostly on their usual schedules, as parishes can best provide. It is important to take this to heart and encourage others to be conscientious here, especially anyone not feeling well, or with health conditions or even if you are just over 60. Stay home. Use your TV, computer or phone. Watch the news, but not too much. Don't have the TV on all the time. Quiet is very important.

Throughout our diocese, we are working together to find safe places for those who do not have family connections or a place to call home. We continue to watch as we receive advice and direction from public health authorities on where to go for testing and care, if and when you are not feeling well. We will keep you posted at rcda.org/coronavirus, on our diocesan social media platforms, and through local TV, newspapers and radio, and our own Evangelist newspaper and website: evangelist.org.

If you feel you want to assist in relief efforts for those who do not have a home, shelter or emergency care, and if you have the means to do so, there is an easy, safe, online way of giving on the Catholic Charities website: ccrcda.org. If you yourself experience an urgent need, there is help for you on that website as well at ccrcda.org/get_help/

It feels a little like we are in a snowstorm, an invisible-but-present blizzard, where it is not safe to go outside, at least not without protection and certainly not unless you absolutely have to. We will all be safe at home! Much safer than outside. And God is with us. Jesus passes even through walls and locked doors, or even the various kinds of masks we might need to wear to defend ourselves from diseases and other harmful invaders. God's breath is pure and healing. Receive the breath and blessing of the Holy Spirit of God, in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

Lovingly in Christ Jesus,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "+Edward B. Scharfenberger". The signature is written in black ink and is positioned above the typed name.

Most Rev. Edward B. Scharfenberger
Bishop of Albany