

Effectively immediately, all Catholics entrusted to my care as well as those who are within the territory of the Diocese of Syracuse are hereby dispensed from the obligation of abstaining from meat on Good Friday as well as on the remaining Fridays during Lent. The purpose of this dispensation is to assist those for whom the practice of abstinence is difficult at this time, for example, because of the current shopping situation. However, those who can abstain from meat are encouraged to do so. Additionally, the law of fasting on Good Friday remains for Catholics between the ages of 18 and 59. It is important that the remaining days of Lent continue to be days of penance and prayer.

At the present moment, all public gatherings for Mass, prayer, Faith Formation and certain parish activities remain cancelled and the faithful remain dispensed from the obligation to participate in the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass on Sundays. In light of what is known about Covid-19 and its duration, the following provisions for Holy Week and Easter must now also be made:

The Light is On campaign is cancelled. General Absolution is not permitted.

All public liturgical celebrations and gatherings, specifically, Palm Sunday, The Chrism Mass, Holy Thursday, Good Friday, Easter Vigil, and Easter Sunday are cancelled. They are to be celebrated by priests in private. Further guidance will be provided in the days ahead by the Office of Liturgy.

Regarding the *Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults*, the elect are dispensed from two of the scrutinies and the celebration of the Sacraments of Initiation may take place outside of the Easter Vigil, namely, on any Sunday up to and including the Solemnity of the Most Holy Trinity (*R.C.I.A.* no. 34, 2). Further guidance will be provided in the days ahead by the Office of Liturgy and the R.C.I.A.

Celebrations of First Holy Communion and Confirmation are postponed. Further guidance concerning when and how the celebration of these sacraments can take place as well as what is required to prepare those receiving them will be provided in the days ahead by the Offices of Catechesis and Liturgy.

Churches and parish facilities (food pantries, offices, etc.) may remain open with limited personnel following the guidelines of the local government and the Center for Disease Control.

Finally, I am doing everything possible to continue to attend to your spiritual needs. Please stay tuned for media-based opportunities for prayer, reflection, etc. Please also read the diocesan updates that will be available each day at 4:00 PM and continue to visit our website and consult the resources that are posted there, particularly the *Frequently Asked Questions*. Be assured of my continued prayers and support as we weather this storm together, with our eyes fixed on the Lord, waiting for his mercy. May the intercession of our Blessed Mother, Saint Joseph, and our own Saint Marianne Cope, bring healing, comfort, strength, and a swift end to this pandemic.

In the Name of Jesus,
Most Reverend Douglas Lucia
Bishop of Syracuse