



**Office of the Bishop
Diocese of Trenton**

March 20, 2020

To All the Faithful of the Diocese of Trenton,

The Holy See has issued a decree regarding the celebrations of the upcoming Palm Sunday and Holy Week/Easter for implementation by Diocesan Bishops throughout the world. I have issued a decree for the Diocese of Trenton, implementing the directives of the Holy See.

These unprecedented measures have been deemed necessary, given the best information we have received from federal, state and local public health authorities.

Although COVID-19 has dramatically affected all of us in so many ways, I want to reach out to you with pastoral care and affection. Our public Holy Week and Easter celebrations will be quite different this year but the underlying mysteries of our faith in the Lord's passion, death and resurrection have not changed. They continue to be the source and support of our faith and we should celebrate them this year, even though in a different way.

Permit me please, as your Bishop, to encourage you to use all the means available, to sustain and nurture your faith. Follow Masses and other liturgical celebrations reverently on-line or via televised broadcast. Read the liturgical readings in your missals, other publications or on the internet. Pray your devotions privately or as families, especially the rosary, Stations of the Cross, and other beloved traditional devotions. Where it is possible and permitted, stop in church to visit and adore the Blessed Sacrament. If this is not possible, make a spiritual communion at home or wherever you may be. The great saints in our Church's history followed that practice. Keep your faith and prayer life alive until things in our public practice of the faith is restored.

Please stay as calm as possible. Faith and patience are good companions in the spiritual life. They become the source of charity in our genuine witness to the Lord Jesus and his Good News. Be kind and attentive to others — your own families, neighbors, friends and those who are elderly and alone. Reach out in the best ways possible. Be grateful to/for those who are working to address COVID-19 in so many different venues. Be generous. The pandemic is and will continue take its toll on families and on our parishes. Keep the needs of others in mind.

Above all, please remember that the Lord Jesus is in our midst, now and always. As he touched lives, healed the sick and ministered with love and merciful compassion throughout the Gospels, know that he will continue to do so for us. Have no doubt about that. "Be joyful in hope, persevere in hardship, keep praying regularly (Romans 12:12)."

God bless us all and protect us. O Mary, Mother of Divine Love, protect and lead us to the heart of your Son.

Sincerely yours in the Lord,
Bishop O'Connell