



March 16, 2020

Dear Friends,

During this holy season of Lent we are called to various forms of sacrifice and charity. Prayer, fasting and almsgiving are our traditional spiritual disciplines. Even outside of Lent, it is obvious to me that our people are very devoted to the Holy Eucharist and our Catholic faith.

Sunday Mass is priority for our families. Daily Mass, especially during Lent, continues to be a strong practice for many. During this time of crisis in our nation and world with the coronavirus, a number of activities, spiritual and secular, have been changed as we attempt to mitigate the spread of the virus. The Center for Disease Control has recommended that there be no gathering of more than 50 people for the next 8 weeks. Just today, our County Executive, Ryan McMahan, has made that an order in Onondaga County.

No doubt what we feared has become a reality. Bishop Lucia has made the very difficult decision that ***"all public gatherings for Mass, prayer, Faith Formation, and certain parish activities are suspended immediately."*** It is the Bishop's hope to lift the suspension for Holy Week and Easter, though that decision cannot be made at this time. The Bishop shared that this was very difficult for him, but stated, *"It is necessary to keep in mind the common good of public health and the importance of doing our part in preventing the spread of the coronavirus by avoiding large gatherings."* As you know, the Bishop has dispensed our people from their Sunday obligation during this time.

This is a painful reality for all of us as the Eucharist is truly the center of our faith life and our community. While this is not the type of sacrifice we desire in Lent, nonetheless, it is a major sacrifice. **During this time we will tape the Sunday Mass along with the homily and place it on our parish web site (www.icfayetteville.org).** We hope to have the Sunday Mass available by 4:00 p.m. each Saturday for your prayer at home. It will remain online all week.

During this time, I invite you to pray together as a family. This is an opportunity to teach our children that our faith is lived outside the walls of the Church. Listed below you will find the traditional "Prayer for Spiritual Communion." Gather as a family to view and pray the Parish Mass on Sunday. You may want to pray the Rosary together every day or, at least on Sunday, with the intention of an end to this virus as well as for those who have died or are sick with it, along with your personal intentions. Each Sunday read the scripture of the day and share your thoughts. (Go to the website of the United States Catholic Conference: www.usccb.org and click on the calendar date for

the readings.) Also during Lent, pray the Stations of the Cross which can be found online. Please pray also for those scientists and medical people who are working for a vaccine, as well as medical professionals and first responders who are assisting those who are ill.

While these unprecedented days are very stressful for all ages, it really can be a time for rebuilding and supporting each other in family life. Use this as quality time to intimately interact with your spouse and family. Share your faith and your feelings. The gift of grace is always present, even in turbulence. We have to look for it and find it! This time is a unique opportunity to remember what is truly important.

At a time like this, it is important for us to rely on our faith. Our true hope is in the Cross and Resurrection of Jesus. It was through the suffering of Jesus that we gained the hope of eternal life and God's sure love. Even in these trying times, we can draw on faith and Divine guidance, praying that the Holy Spirit will bring healing, peace and comfort to our families and our world. Please know of the prayers of all of us priests at I.C.; in turn, we ask your prayer. We truly look forward to the time when we will once again gather at the Table of the Lord.

Sincerely,

Rev. Thomas J. Ryan, Pastor

PS: The Church will be open daily for personal, private prayer.

**My Jesus,
I believe that you
are present in the most Holy Sacrament.
I love you above all things,
and I desire to receive you into my soul.
Since I cannot at this moment
receive you sacramentally,
come at least spiritually into my heart.
I embrace you as if you were already there
and unite myself wholly to you.
Never permit me to be separated from you.
Amen**

***"Fear not, I am with you; be not dismayed; I am your God.
I will strengthen you and help you, and uphold you with my
right hand of justice." Isaiah 41:10***