

**DIOCESE OF BUFFALO**

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**THE CHANCERY**

Wednesday, March 18, 2020

My dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

Thank you for your ongoing ministry to our people, especially now, when things, even simple things have become difficult. At this time, it is so important for our people to know that we still want to be present to them in any way we can, even as we are challenged to learn and adapt to different forms of presence. The Mass is always present in some way throughout the world, and even locally, being celebrated every day throughout our diocese and by every priest. I am encouraging my priest brothers to continue the practice of celebrating Mass for their people at some point each day, either in church, unannounced, or some other space that is safe and in compliance with current public health regulations (see [www.buffalodiocese.org/coronavirus](http://www.buffalodiocese.org/coronavirus)).

I would ask you to encourage your parish families to pray together at home, at least 15 minutes a day. Families should be aware that as they pray together, they are not praying alone. We are joined with Jesus and one another in the Holy Spirit, in the Lord's eternal prayer to our Heavenly Father.

On the practical side, we have a lot of technology at our disposal. Let's use it. Working at and from home in the interests of family health and stability should be a goal — even when not in crisis. Responsible use of technology can strengthen family and parish life. When you think about it, working offsite may not be any more “remote” than many people working in little cubicles and departments, virtually in silos. There is always room for making better connections, even online. If possible, work with your staff and parish ministries to provide tutorials on the use of ZOOM and other such apps to bring families and parish staff and volunteers together virtually. I will be working with diocesan and parish support staff to develop ways of sharing such tools more widely.

The most important thing to remember is this: We are not alone. Jesus, fasting in the desert, was led there by the Holy Spirit – St. Mark uses the Greek word for “pushed” or “driven” — and always in communion with his Father. So also, we, led into this Lenten and historically challenging desert experience, remain in communion with Jesus and our Heavenly Father. We are being tempted, just as Jesus was, pulled in many different directions, but the quiet can lend our ears to the gentle voice of the Holy Spirit.

Together we will move forward stronger, healthier and holier. As family, let's pray our way through this, share what we are learning and listen to the Holy Spirit, teaching and reminding each other and our people to look at Christ crucified and the mercy that flows from his side.

Your brother in Christ,



Most Reverend Edward B. Scharfenberger  
Apostolic Administrator  
Diocese of Buffalo